



The Whirligig News

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BSU Students Dying for a Drink

The recent death of a 19-year old Boys State University freshman has shocked the campus community and renewed calls for the college to do more to curb the abuse of alcohol. Elizabeth Ashley, a nursing major from Tyler, died from alcohol poisoning after attending a sorority formal. Her parents have chosen not to file charges against anyone in her death, despite the fact that Ashley was not old enough to legally be served or sold an alcoholic beverage. Ashley's death comes on the heels of a survey that showed 63 percent of BSU students admit to having more than 4 drinks in a row at least one night a week. The number of students who consider themselves binge drinkers at the college has almost tripled in the past 15 years. Nationwide, eleven hundred college students die each year from drinking and driving related-deaths. Boys State University President John Bailey said the university has taken steps to address the problem on campus. "We provide alcohol-free activities, offer alcohol-free dorms, and work closely with all of our student-run organizations to make sure our students are safe," Bailey said. Many disagreed that the university has done enough to fix the problem. Local leaders are concerned that a young woman died after an event ran by a student organization. "Who was monitoring the students at that party? President Bailey still has not answered that question," Boys State Council for Responsible Drinking Chairman Eduardo Sanchez said. Some students openly complained that the campus climate contributes to the problem. "The old saying "the weekend starts on Thursday and ends on Wednesday" is becoming more literal every year I am here," senior Brian Pollard said. "It's almost expected in some circles that having a drink means getting drunk," he added. The president of the sorority hosting the formal where Ashley consumed the fatal amounts of alcohol had no comment on the matter. Ashley's parents have declined to speak publicly since their daughter's death. Candidates for the Boys State University Board of Trustees have yet to be nominated, but it is expected that the alcohol issue will be crucial in this year's election. Pollster Geoff Smith said the issue is one that both

Nationalist and Federalist candidates will have to take seriously as they prepare to face the electorate. "It's become apparent that binge drinking is a problem that is affecting many students, and citizens are looking for answers from those they empower to run the college," Smith said.

GAS PUMP RELIEF

With the price of the gasoline at an all time high, the people of Boys State are looking for some relief. Every gallon of gasoline the flows from you neighborhood gas pump is being taxed 30 cents. Suppose you pump 13 gallons of gasoline into your vehicle, you are paying \$3.90 in state taxes. Nationwide gas prices are at an all time high. Boys State cannot control the price per barrel of petroleum set by OPEC. What we can control is the state tax we pay. The United States Federal Government collects an 18.4 per gallon tax on every gallon of gasoline sold in the U.S. When you add this to the 30 cent tax paid per gallon in Boys State, citizens are paying 48.4 cents a gallon. "I drive from Jeffersonville to Jefferson everyday for work. I drive over 60 miles a day just to get to work and back to support my family," says Ronald Davison, resident of Crosswell County. Davison continued, "I spend over \$50 a week on gasoline. Two years ago I was spending around \$30 a week. It's simply too much. I figure I am spending over \$1000 a year more now to drive to work than I did two years ago." The grassroots group, Citizens Needing Relief, maintain that lowering the state gas tax would bring much needed relief to Boys State citizens. A recent survey shows that only New York (31.9), Pennsylvania (31.1) and Wisconsin (32.1) have a higher state gasoline tax than Boys State. Opponents maintain that the gasoline tax brings much needed revenue to Boys State in these tight economic times. Cutting the Boys State gasoline tax in half would cost the state approximately 35 to 40 million dollars in revenue. With the upcoming elections there is no doubt this will be an issue that candidates will have to address.

BOYS STATE UNIVERSIYMEDICAL HOSPITAL GETS HIGH RATINGS

A report was just issued from the American Medical Institute for Better Health. This report ranked Boys State University Medical Hospital

in the top ten hospitals for health research. This is an honor that reflects the dedication and hard work of our men and women her at Boys State University Medical Hospital, says Director of operations at the hospital. The report was published throughout the world medical communities and is a boost to Boys State.

ENVIRONMENT VERSUS BUSNIESS

Throughout Boys State the issue of protecting the environment is in contrast to profitable businesses. The industrial community denies any problem with being in compliance with state environmental laws. However, the State Department of Environmental Equality has issued several violations to businesses throughout Boys State. Even many city governments are in violation of environmental pollutions. This collision of ideas is about to collide with the bottom line being money. The businesses affected could close down or layoff employees, while others may try to fix the problems. The cities will be hit with heavy financial burdens to correct their problems with the environment. The taxpayers will carry the tab for this, no doubt. So, the question is do we as Boys State try to loosen environmental laws or enforce these laws and ensure the changes are made regardless of the economic burden?

ECONOMIC DECLINE?

The Boys State economy is now beginning to suffer the inevitable automotive downturn. The car companies are slashing the bottom lines to prevent further losses to their market shares. Cost cutting is the key to these companies and Boys State may be the target for this slashing. The economic base in the northern cities of Boys State are geared toward automotive and suppliers of parts. They are slowly seeing this cost cutting in their production. Boys State, as an island is costing these companies big money in logistics and transport costs. This is why many economists in the government fear a hard time in the future for Boys State automotive companies.

STARR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT POOR SECURITY RATING

The Federal Government just issued a security document showing that Boys State Starr International Airport ranks poor for security.

(SEE STARR INTERNAIONAL)
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

STARR INTERNAIONAL CONTINUED

The airport ranked in the bottom ten of the worst security in the nation. Boys States geographic location allows for many international flights to pass through. This presents a serious concern in this global war on terrorism. Our home soil is vulnerable as we are an extension of the United States. Many enemies will no doubt see this report and focus on Boys State as a soft target, says former terrorism expert for the state department. For many years the State Government has given us no help in funding or manpower when dealing with Starr Airport. We as the city of Fillmore carry the burden with a little help from the federal government, says a former Fillmore City Councilmen. He is right in the fact that the cost to upgrade Starr International will be heavy and all of Boys State has a vested interest in the safety of our state.

SUPREME COURT TO HEAR ASSISTED SUICIDE CASE

The Supreme Court is to hear the case on assisted suicide. The case calls for an individual to make the decision for himself or herself whether to live or to die? The State Legislature has made it illegal to commit assisted suicide. This is the core of the case to be heard by the Supreme Justices. A new term of elections is to come and what will the newly elected legislature do? Will they change the law or will the Supreme Court hear this case as it stands now?

STUDENT TO FILE SUIT AGAINST ADAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

A young male student wore a T-shirt to school with the President's picture on the front. The caption on the shirt was "International Terrorist". The School Principal ordered the student to turn his shirt inside out. The student refused and he was sent home. The school sent a letter home informing the boy he was not allowed to wear this shirt to school. The parents of the student hired a law firm to file suit against the school district. "This is a question of the basic right of free speech. The student is free to say he thinks the President is a terrorist. The school may not like it but they can not infringe on this right", said the family attorney. The school district attorney did comment saying, "It is the school's responsibility to maintain control and a safe environment while the students are at school. It would be disastrous to allow students to wear whatever they wanted to school".

AUTO INDUSTRY TO DELIVER**HITS TO LOCAL CITIES?**

The auto companies have made several announcements that the closing of plants may be coming to Boys State. The economy in McClelland County depends heavily upon the auto industry. "The automakers have lost money in production and must make some serious changes", said one-company spokeswomen. "We can not continue to do business and loose money". The companies are looking for tax relief help or assistance here in Boys State. There is no doubt that the new city governments are going to have to work with these companies or face unemployment problems. "I do not know what I would do if I lost my job. My family depends on my paychecks", says one autoworker in Washington City.

RACIAL TENSION RISING IN BOYS STATE

The national association of NAACP has sent representatives to meet with city of Tyler officials. "We can not believe that this type of discrimination is taking place here in America today. The Boys State citizens should be ashamed that this type of racial discrimination is taking place right here", said the NAACP lawyer. The civil rights group has charged that the city of Tyler is refusing to hire African-American workers.

The NAACP has also held two marches in two Boys State cities in the past week.

A Buchanan Police Officer shot a 14-year-old African-American boy last week. The Officer believed he had a weapon in his hand; it turned out to be an iron rod. The boy was fatally shot after he broke into a warehouse and fled. The Police Department spokesperson stated, "The Officer was affecting an arrest and the young man turned on him with a weapon in his hand. He had an iron rod and that is a weapon". The march had over 18,000 people condemning the shooting and supporting the young boys' family.

The city of Polk has on its city flag the confederate stars and bars. This dates back to the American civil war when Polk joined the confederacy against the rest of Boys State. The city fathers incorporated the confederate battle emblem into their city flag. The local minority groups have had several demonstrations against this symbol. "It is a symbol of hatred and should be removed from this cities emblem. We will work hard to fight against this city as long as it holds onto this symbol of hatred", said a rainbow coalition spokesman.

The past Mayor of Polk refused to remove this symbol calling it, "A symbol of a great history. We contributed to the confederate cause and this is what it shows. We will not be told by anyone how to live our lives". A new cycle of elections are coming and the new city officials

will have this on their plate.

STARR AIRPORT MAY LOOSE TERMINALS

The City of Fillmore will have to make some serious improvements to the Starr International Airport. The FAA has made it clear through a letter to the city that much needed improvements are necessary to keep the airport open. The former city council made no appropriations toward any improvements counting on the state to help. Boys State has sent no funds to the city as of yet. "This airport is very important to all the state and to industry", said a local businessman. The Department of Homeland Security has also filed complaints that the Starr airport is in need of security updates. "It is very possible for a terrorist attack in Boys State. The airport has earned a poor rating in terms of security", said a Homeland Security Agent. The bottom line is funding and where is it going to come from?

High School Graduation Requirements: Good Enough?

There was once a time when the culmination of one's educational growth came at the completion of high school. Graduation from the 12th grade was all the preparation some individuals needed in order to be successful in this country. The majority of jobs did not require higher education and it was possible to live a productive, successful, and financially sound life. These days of simplicity are now long gone and the race to effectively prepare the leaders of tomorrow is speeding up everyday.

Boys State needs to be at the forefront of this race; however, in order for this to happen, constant reevaluations of our standards must take place so that we stay current with the rest of the world. Our current high school graduation requirements call for minimum credit attainment in major academic areas such as mathematics, English/language arts, science, etc. We live in a fast-moving, high-tech society that requires the competence levels of our students to be at a level that was not previously necessary. By the time a student has graduated from high school, he/she must have mastered fundamental skills and developed a strong, well-rounded foundation in all areas of education.

The Department of Education recognizes this great responsibility and has stated that current requirements are currently under review. They are as follows:

**(SEE HIGH SCHOOL)
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

HIGH SCHOOL CONTINUED

2 credits – Mathematics

2 credits – English/Language Arts

2 credits – Science

1 credit – Social Studies

1 credit – Physical Education

Along with these requirements, the state gives the Boys State Assessment Test (BSAT) in both 10th and 12th grade. The test does not determine whether or not students will graduate.

Boys State Citizens for Educational Change (BSCEC) President Johan Timmersee feels that the requirements need a serious facelift.

“Boys State must establish themselves as a shining example to the country and the world as a state that believes in progress and success in their educational system. The current standards that we have for high school graduation are a joke and need to be rectified immediately. The BSCEC will be present at the next State Board of Education meeting to address our concerns.”

This is a growing issue across the state that is developing into a hot debate topic.

Monroe CLOSE TO CRISIS POINT

Emergency and public safety services in Monroe City have been cut, putting citizens at risk. The company in charge of providing ambulance services went out of business. The city has been unable to replace the service. Additionally, the city’s police and fire departments are understaffed. Citizens are upset at the lengthy amount of time it takes the two departments to be on the scene following a call. The city has pointed out that with unemployment on the rise tax revenues are down and hiring any new personnel at this point is not feasible.

Not just safety services are under funded. The Monroe School District has an important millage election coming up. A defeat in that election would leave the District with a \$6.3 million shortage. An increase in gang activity at one high school has been blamed for over 50 assaults that have taken place.

The city faces a trash issue as well. No yard waste removal services are available. The new city council and mayor have many difficult challenges facing them in their new term.

JEFFERSON CITY COUNCIL MAY LEGALIZE MARIJUANA

The Jefferson City Council has entertained the motion to legalize marijuana within the city limits. This has sparked serious debate on all levels of government. The City Council tabled the motion last year and will be decided by the new City Council? “If someone wants to smoke marijuana it is their own choice”, said a 27-

year-old resident. If this measure passes the

ordinance will undoubtedly be challenged in the courts. What will Jefferson City Council do?

CIVIL RIGHTS FIGHT TO ENSUE IN MADISON

The local adult entertainment establishments will more than likely seek relief from the courts. The last City Council passed Ordinance #193 stating, “No establishment within the city limits may have any type of nudity displayed”. This has caused the local adult entertainment businesses to file suit. “It is a clear violation of our rights to speech and expression. This City can not take away our constitutional rights, what is next our homes”, stated one business owner-filing suit. The new City Council may take up the ordinance and repeal it? Many residents like the ordinance and wish this type of attention would leave Madison City. “I have lived here all my life and to see this type of trash makes me sick to be in Madison”, stated the 54-year-old resident. This fight is far from over but this cycle of elections will tell the tale?

HEALTH CARE COSTS TO HIT CITIES HARD

The rising health care costs are going to hit the local governments hard this year. Many union contracts are up and city employees are concerned over this health care battle. “The cost has risen over 20% in the past year alone”, stated a spokesman for state budget office. “The local cities are going to have to pay approximately \$820.00 per employee a month for family coverage”. The school districts are all going to face the same issues. Is there any end to these costs or what should happen to control such costs? In Tyler City many residents do not have health care coverage through their employment. This puts a heavy burden on the State to cover health care needs through tax dollars? This issue will be on the front in this year’s election.

BRAKES PUT ON WASHINGTON CITY GROWTH

The manufacturing difficulties that have plagued Boys State as a whole have begun to hit hard in Washington City. General Motors and Shaft Brakes are both looking for an assist to maintain operations.

GM is looking for city tax abatements in order to avoid laying off workers at the Washington North Plant. “We enjoy the relationship that has developed with our workers and the local community over the years. Foreign competition has forced us to look for ways to cut costs,” said the company’s district spokesperson. “Tax assistance from the city will be an important consideration for our company as we move forward.”

In contrast, Shaft Brakes is seeking tax help

from the state. A previous Legislature had sought to increase import taxes on automotive parts. The company relies heavily on imported parts to keep their prices low. Shaft employs 2,600 workers in the city, and a loss of that many jobs would create a huge dent in the city’s budget.

POLK SHALL RISE AGAIN?

Polk City is a tense place to live. Tensions based on class and race threatens to consume the city. Polk has a per capita income of just \$15,000 and most residents depend on agricultural concerns for their livelihood. Those who live and work in the city are taxed at a higher rate than those who work only in the city.

Polk features the Confederate battle emblem on its city flag. The city of 7,000 people is almost 33 percent minority, yet those who support the emblem say it honors the heritage of the majority of people in town. “That symbol reflects the pride we have for our ancestors who fought for the lost cause, not any current hatred for folks of color,” said Curtis McLean, a 50 year resident of Polk whose great-great-grandfather served as a sergeant in the Confederate army.

Minority advocates, however, note that the Ku Klux Klan have filed a permit to march through the city’s downtown later this week. Taken along with the battle flag, some leaders say that it’s becoming harder to tolerate. “We have a right to live in this city without fear. We have a right to be treated as equals in this city. The Confederate cause and the Ku Klux Klan were not committed to those ideals,” said community activist Mark Beverly. “We demand the City Council deny the KKK a permit to march here, and we will make life difficult for them if that does not happen. We would also like to see that emblem of hate removed from our flag, and the city does not want to see who we can bring out to fight this.”

A new city council is expected to vote on the KKK’s permit later this week. No city officials were available for comment.

STREET GIVES OUT IN JACKSON

The Main St. in downtown Jackson actually collapsed yesterday. Two cars fell into the sinkhole and both drivers were injured. “I could not believe the road just caved in”, said one eyewitness. “This city has to work on the infrastructure or else the entire city may sink”, stated another eyewitness. A city block in the downtown business district lost all sewer services since the sewer line burst in the sinkhole. The DPW Director said, “We have a serious problem here and it is going to take some time.

**(SEE STREET GIVES OUT)
CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**



STREET GIVES OUT CONTINUED

The city is doing what it can at this point to keep sewer services available for the rest of Jackson". There were many reports of sewer lines going out since this main line went down. The issue, as usual, is much-needed repairs through funding? The State has limited any infrastructure funding in the past year. "The City of Jackson is trying not to increase any taxes or services", said the last years Mayor.

ENVIRONMENTALIST MAD AT HARRISON LOGGING INDUSTRY

The beautiful woodlands of Harrison City are becoming scarce? The logging industry has picked up production and this concerns many residents. "I do not want this beautiful land destroyed. Maybe the Governor or Mayor will step up and stop this terrible destruction of our woodlands", said one resident. The environmental community has sent protesters to picket the logging, but this has not affected the trucks from rolling. The outgoing City Council made no attempts to address this issue they left it on the table. Now it has become a major topic on the streets of Harrison City. The Logging Company has made a promise to reseed the entire area once trees are cut. "We do not want to destroy anything, but it is a necessary to make paper products", said a company representative. "We are committed to planting the trees once they are cut to help growth return".

SAME SEX MARRIAGE AN ISSUE FOR BOYS STATE

The state legislature will most likely be forced to address this issue in this year's session. Many of the State Representatives and State Senators have not touched this hot button issue. The issue is being pressed at the local levels when same sex couples are applying for marriage licenses. "We simply turn them away and tell them it is against the law", said the outgoing Williams County Clerk. "It is a violation of my civil liberty and it is another form of discrimination", stated one couple trying to get a marriage licenses. Many state elected officials have taken the road of letting the courts decide this political fight. "If we do anything the law will be challenged in the court, so let the court decide this issue", said one outgoing State Representative. No matter what takes place this issue will be on the agenda at the state level.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES ON THE RISE

Many of the crimes committed have some type of substance abuse related activity attached to them. Over the past five years Boys State has watched almost all of the

treatment centers close due to lack of funding. "This issue is simply not going to go away. It is going to cost way more money to house these people for diseases not crimes", said one substance abuse counselor. The State has slashed the money allocated for these treatment centers and the Cities have made no attempt to pick up the lack of funding. A survey was conducted and over 40% of all incarcerated inmates have been convicted on some type of substance abuse crime. "This number is seriously high for us to do nothing about. Let us treat these people not simply incarcerate them", stated the substance abuse counselor. The new state legislature will have to examine this when the budget is being reviewed.

NO MONEY TO WASTE IN VAN BUREN

Van Buren City is suffering from a huge financial crisis. The city has no landfill and dumps their waste into an open field on the south side of the city. The Boys State Department of Environmental Quality has threatened to fine Van Buren City until the problem has been cleaned up.

Improperly dumped waste has already contaminated the soil at the dumping site. Officials are concerned that contamination may have seeped into the groundwater the city uses for its water supply.

As Van Buren is being threatened with fines the city is also facing difficulties on several other fronts. The city lacks snow removal vehicles, which shuts the city down in the case of large snowstorms. Traffic is bad on the Drake Highway but an upgrade would cost the city approximately \$21 million. The Newman Casino Corporation has an interest in moving into the city, but expects to pay no property taxes if they do.

State budget cutbacks have made it difficult to provide any assistance to cities struggling with similar financial problems. Van Buren officials could not be reached for comment, but it is apparent that a newly elected city administration is going to inherit some challenges.

STATE FLAG BURNING LAW

Many residents have sent petitions into the Governor for some type of law protecting the flag against desecration. The Governor took no action on this issue and a bill died in the State Senate last year calling for the ban on burning the flag. "I hope this new legislature will take up this fight and protect the flag. It is a symbol of our freedom and our country. These people who desecrated it can leave anytime they want to", stated one petitioner for the law. Many in the Senate voted against the bill saying, "If we pass any such law the courts will likely overturn it on

the freedom of speech"? Many veteran organizations have put new life into the drive for the new legislature and Governor to take action. "This is exactly why we elect them to make laws. This issue is a must and we demand they do something about it", said one veteran. Boys State would be the first state to enact such a law prohibiting the burning of the flag. "It is an issue of free speech and you can not take this from us. The very thing this flag stands for you are trying to limit", stated one opponent of any such law.

WANTED

Beat Writers and Photographers for the longest running paper in Boys State history;

The Whirligig News

Write about city, county and state events. Be the one tells the news not the one who reads it. For further information meet in the Multi Purpose Room C at 12:45 p.m. on Sunday.

WHIRLIGIG NEWS UNDER GOING RENOVATION

The long time running paper of Boys State has begun renovation. In the upcoming issues readers will notice ongoing changes to bring this great paper into the 21'st century. So if you think you have what it takes to help with this transformation stop in at the Whirligig Paper located in the computer lab in Brody.

WHIRLIGIG NEWS ARTICLES

All the articles in the Whirligig pertain to Michigan Boys State and to its participants and are overseen by an advisor.