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# Alcohol abuse ends in tragedy

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by Christopher Ramirez  
News Reporter

Binge drinking claimed the life of a second New Mexico State University student in four months last week.

Christopher Berry, a junior majoring in anthropology, was pronounced dead at 8:02 p.m. Wednesday and was taken off life support Friday morning at Memorial Medical Center.

Berry's blood alcohol concentration was 0.459, said Lt. Todd Gregory of the Las Cruces Police Department.

Berry's roommate called an ambulance after he found Berry in bed and unresponsive after a night of partying Tuesday to celebrate Berry's 22nd birthday, according to the LCPD.

Michael Martin, president of NMSU said: "We are deeply saddened by the news of Christopher's death. Our hearts are with his parents, friends and loved ones."

Berry's death comes four months after NMSU student Steven Judd died after a night of binge drinking with his fraternity brothers while celebrating his 21st birthday.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, binge drinking is defined as "the consumption of five or more drinks in a row on at least one occasion." Drinking large amounts of alcohol in small amounts of time may affect a person's central nervous system, causing areas in the brain that control consciousness, breathing and heart rate to shut down. This causes a person to die or slip into a coma, according to the Department of Health.

The NMSU Student Services Office and Counseling Center have offered their support to anyone in need of counseling in the wake of Berry's death.

Karen Schaefer, a psychologist in the Counseling Center, said the center is available to all NMSU students, counselors are on call and a student does not need an appointment to be seen for counseling. "It's unfortunate that this happened," she said. "All too often young people think that they are invincible [and] do not think of the ramifications of their actions. Couple that with peer pressure, and it's a recipe for disaster."

The overuse of alcohol has become a national issue. Berry's death is only the latest in a series of binge drinking deaths at college campuses across the nation this year.

Sarah Marquez, member of the NMSU Wellness, Alcohol, Violence Education program, works to educate NMSU students about the dangers of alcohol.

"We are working to make alcohol and sexual assault awareness classes mandatory to all incoming freshmen," Marquez said.

WAVE gives presentations to students in University 150 and Brewing Science classes, as well as the fraternities and sororities on campus, Marquez said.

Lessons on how to identify and care for someone who is drunk are included in the presentations.

"The best thing to do is to stay with the person, and lay them on their side," Marquez said. "If they are on their back and need to throw up, they could choke, but if they are on their stomach, they could drown in their own vomit. It's also important to let them vomit on their own. If it looks like they are unconscious and not breathing, get help."

The Counseling Center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call 646-2731.

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