

## Editorial

# Be responsible when partying

Over the weekend, 12 students from Central Washington University — 11 of them women — were hospitalized after attending a party where their drinks were spiked with an as-of-yet unknown substance.

Several people used the same bottle of vodka to make mixed drinks, and most of the students ended up vomiting or losing consciousness.

It may sound like a cautionary tale ripped straight from “Saved by the Bell,” but it’s a sobering reminder of the dangers of partying, no pun intended.

We’re hardly party poopers. That being said, this is an issue that some of us have had to deal with on more than one occasion. There are countless stories of girls who, after a few drinks, wake up 18 hours later to find themselves having been sexually assaulted, and that’s absolutely disgusting.

We can’t fathom what would possess someone to drug and rape another. We have adjectives to describe the practice, none of which are suitable for print.

It’s a shame this kind of thing is commonplace, and how often these incidents go unreported.

College parties enjoy a mythos of sorts — feature films and sentimental anecdotes from our parents are plentiful.

We don’t endorse binge drinking or underage drinking, but we most certainly advocate safe partying.

GHB and Flunitrazepam — an anaesthetic and a hypnotic — are the two drugs given the “roofies” moniker. Both have strong sedative effects, both significantly impair cognitive function, both cause temporary amnesia, and both are virtually undetectable in alcoholic beverages. Victims will seem extremely drunk, incoherent and lack motor control.

You should definitely pour your own drinks. If the party is BYOB, keep an eye on your booze at all times. A lukewarm drink is better than a stolen drink, and both are better than a spiked drink.

If you’re at a kegger, fill your own cup. Be careful about where you set your cup down, and don’t accept drinks from strangers.

We also advocate shooting at cups full of water during beer pong — it’s safer, easier to clean and a lot more sanitary.

If you’re at a party and you think someone’s been roofied, let someone else know. One of our board members shared a story in which a girl got sick after leaving one of their parties — a party that complied with local and federal laws.

A few minutes after hearing this, another girl came up to them, asking if there was supposed to be anything foamy or salty in her drink.

Realizing that someone at the party had been spiking drinks, they turned off the music, threw out the batches of jungle juice, sent guys to the doors, and told everyone they’d be leaving, single-file, and frisked on their way out.

They didn’t find any pills, but did earn the appreciation and respect of their guests.

If you suspect someone has been roofied, get them immediate medical attention. If you suspect someone is spiking drinks, don’t hesitate to alert the authorities.

There is no place for sexual assault or victimization, and it’s a shame that it’s something we have to concern ourselves with.

It’s ultimately up to you to ensure your safety at parties, and if you’re the ones throwing the party, you have a responsibility to your guests.

Stay safe. Party responsibly. Enjoy your adventure.

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## Space



Astronomers at the Keck Observatory in Hawaii have found a planet orbiting a distant star that could support life. Courtesy photo: Wikipedia

# In search of E.T.



By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

## Possible Earth-like planet found outside of our solar system

I’m not sure how many students at Iowa State stay up to date on the latest space science news.

But, if you don’t pay attention to what scientists are learning about the galaxies beyond our atmosphere, the recent big news was that a group of astronomers had used the Keck Observatory in Hawaii to find a planet orbiting a distant star that could be much like Earth.

This causes me to ponder the question “Will we discover other life forms in space in my lifetime?”

After that discovery, I think my answer has to be a guarded “yes.” Why? Well, the fact that we discovered a planet outside of our solar system in the “goldilocks zone” — the orbital area where we believe life can exist — is not the biggest part of this news story.

The biggest part of the story is that this planet was found after the researchers had studied only nine of the few hundred stars that are closest to Earth.

The fact that they found a planet similar to Earth so quickly amazed even the astronomers conducting the experiment.

With an estimated 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone, finding a goldilocks-zone planet orbiting the ninth star they decided to look at is quite astounding.

We’ll have to find a few more planets in this zone to figure out what the true average occurrence of goldilocks-zone planets is, but at this rate, there could be hundreds of thousands — conservatively — in our Milky Way galaxy alone.

Now, it’s quite a trick to observe planets orbiting stars because of the blinding brightness of the stars themselves.

The recent news comes courtesy of an investigation that uses a technique that investigates the radial velocities — or “wobbles” — of stars to determine what planetary masses are tugging on each star.

Another technique that complements the first is to closely examine the light coming from the stars over time to “see” the slight dimming of that light when a planet passes between us and the star. The issue is that the planet must be orbiting in a plane where it passes between its star and our Earth observatories.

Sadly, this isn’t the case with the planet found by astronomers last week — Gliese 581g — which has an orbit that doesn’t bring it between its star and Earth, where our new Kepler space telescope could take a look at it.

That means that we can’t detect the planet’s size or whether it has the right mix of elements to support life there. But, with this early discovery, it’s likely that we will soon find other planets orbiting nearby stars that we can study closely for the telltale signs of life.

Then, of course, we will have to examine whether or not to try to contact any intelligent life that exists in our galaxy or the universe.

Recently, Stephen Hawking said this would be a bad idea, though in reality, we’ve been sending various “hello” messages — and advertisements for Doritos — into space for more than 35 years.

Some Russians actually said hi to the Gliese system back in 2008 — and the message should get there in 2029.

For this question, I’m not sure if I should side with Hawking or Alexander Zaitsev, a Russian scientist who has sent out many of humanity’s messages to the cosmos.

It would be a bad thing if we sent all these messages and managed to bring a hostile, intelligent space-faring alien species to Earth to investigate a la “Independence Day.” But, it would be helpful if a benevolent alien species responded to our messages, offering higher technological and scientific knowledge and becoming our space pen pals of sorts.

In the end I would side with Hawking and be a bit wary of sending messages to the stars until we at least have a way of reaching nearby planets and nearby stars and might have some chance of fending off interstellar attackers.

Looking again at the search for life beyond Earth, I believe that we will eventually fund a follow-up mission to the Kepler Mission to supplement the observations being made right now from Kepler and Earth. In the next few years, a mission like the Terrestrial Planet Finder mission will materialize and do the last bit of detective work on planets similar to Gliese 581g. But, in the meantime, maybe we’ll decide to send explorers to Mars where they might find microbial life beneath the Martian soil.

In any case, it’s a very exciting time for those of us who are interested in new discoveries light-years beyond Earth. And who knows, we could find alien life forms or receive messages from space even sooner than decades from now if we discover new techniques for investigating nearby stars. Unless science provides me with new surprises in the interim, I’ll just be waiting on the early scientific results of the Kepler Mission that are rumored to be planned for publication around February 2011.

Hopefully when we do discover life it will be of the friendly or harmless variety. Otherwise, we may be in need of a Will Smith character to save the day. Any volunteers?

## Gaming

# Prioritize online, real-life friends



By Heath.Verhasselt@iowastatedaily.com

## Find a balance between digital life, actual life

I love online gaming. And quite frankly, who doesn’t? Pwning noobs, throwing frags, defusing bombs. Not to mention how you’re also working as a team, accomplishing objectives, and most importantly: making friends.

You make friends while doing it. You work well with someone, you enjoy playing the game with them, and so you add them to your buddy list to get in contact with them for a later game.

Sometimes you never talk to them again, sometimes you do actually befriend the person, and in some cases, a meeting in real life is arranged. But for the most part, this friend is online

only. And that’s exactly it — this friend is different, they are online, they aren’t real, right? Are they actually your friend?

What is a friend? A friend is defined as “a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard,” according to [dictionary.reference.com](#).

You both enjoy playing games, enjoy each other’s company, and might joke around when not in a game through chat.

Some games, such as “World of Warcraft,” you literally sit in a voice chat with them for hours on end, more than once a week.

This person is your friend. They were there when you got that crazy kill streak, they were there when you killed the final boss, they were there when you were having an “off” day.

This friend, however, can’t be there all the time. They too are a real person somewhere,

with a separate life and with their own friends in real life. That raises the point, what about your IRL friends? Your “in real life” friends.

They’re there for you, they may not play your games, but they are real people. You can enjoy hanging out, going out to eat and playing sports with them, right?

The problem you create for yourself is that of modern gamers everywhere. Who gets priority?

You literally have created for yourself a second life. For those of you that play that game, no pun intended.

Truly amazing how the Internet and video games have changed the way we live our lives.

You have created a second life for yourself without even realizing it. And in that life you have created a second set of

peers with new inside jokes, new stories and new drama. This is a problem that you will now have to face. You have to keep track not only of different aspects of your life, but two different lives entirely. Think you’re up to it?

It’s a matter of making priorities. Who do you want to give priority to in your life? Do you want to live your life locally or globally?

You might never see these people in real life, but they can become your best friends without you even knowing it. Personally, I like to find a balance between the two, and even better, I only play games my real life friends are playing.

That way there’s no chance of losing friends due to video games.

Now, girlfriends and video games? That’s a different article all together.