

The Diamondback

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GREGORY GORIN—THE DIAMONDBACK

Bill Ross, who has been sober for 14 years, performs in the Student Union last night during an event for Alcohol Awareness Week. Ross performs at locations across the country promoting sobriety.

JUGGLING ALCOHOL EFFECTS

Program: 'Last Call' event part of Alcohol Awareness Week to showcase negative aspects of drinking.

By REBEKAH KATES
Diamondback staff writer

A man juggled dangerous objects, such as a knife, bowling ball and fire, while he spoke about the dangerous and potentially deadly topic of alcohol abuse last night in front of a crowd of about 600 people.

Bill Ross, a juggler who has been sober for 14 years, has brought his message to conferences, high school and college students for 10 years. He said he performs in about 150 places every year.

Ross said he has two major goals and objectives when performing. He said he wants to create an awareness of violence, addiction, alcohol abuse and sexual assault. He said his other goal is to

focus on a smaller population who has experienced addiction and violence.

"I am in recovery myself, and I want them to see a ray of hope," Ross said. "People are going through a tough time."

Ross said he is also glad to refer students to counselors on and off campus where they can turn for help.

Last night's event, "Last Call," is part of Alcohol Awareness Week. Alcohol Awareness Week is sponsored by University Police, University Health Center, Greeks Advocating the Mature Management of Alcohol, the Center for Substance Abuse Research, the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Association.

Lt. Jay Gruber of the University Police said Alcohol Awareness Week is funded by a grant from Combating Underage Drinking in Maryland and other community sponsors, such as the Allstate Foundation.

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Program: Event showcases

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Stephanie Raden, a junior education major and president of GAMMA, said she was pleased with the performance.

"It was a creative spin, while getting a good message across," Raden said.

Seth Rosenzweig, a junior Jewish studies and history major and vice president of academic affairs and vice president-elect of internal affairs for the IFC, said all new fraternity members and 60 percent of the chapter members were required to attend the performance.

"I hope people realize responsible risk management and recognize all of the things that can go wrong and how to be proactive," Rosenzweig said.

Allison Grad-Lynch, coordinator of alcohol, tobacco and other drug education programs at the health center, said she first saw Ross in Albany, N.Y.

"He held my attention," Grad-Lynch said. "It was the last day of the conference and everyone was cranky. The message is definitely a

good one."

Ross combined personal stories, music and juggling with statistics. Ross said 16,000 people die in alcohol related car accidents each year. An additional one million people are injured each year in these crashes.

Ross also said alcohol and violence are linked. Four out of five men who commit date and acquaintance rape are under the influence of alcohol, he said. Fifty-five percent of the women who are raped have been drinking. Ross said women who are raped and have been drinking should not be blamed, but said he wants to stress that alcohol shuts down the body's ability to reason properly and makes a person more vulnerable.

Ross said everyone can be affected when a family member, a sorority sister or a fraternity brother abuses alcohol.

Gruber said, "Students get a good honest account of problems related to alcohol. There are not hidden issues, and this performance talks about real life problems and solutions."