

## 'A dizzying experience'

Speaker warns of trying to juggle alcohol, drugs with school at WVU

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Bill Ross has been telling WVU students this week how he juggled schoolwork and partying — and became an alcoholic.

"College can be a dizzying experience," Ross said as he juggled bowling pins. "Whether you party a lot or not, college still promises a plethora of potentially painful pitfalls perilously perched and poised to pounce upon improperly prepared people."

It's Drug/Alcohol, Sexual Assault and Health Awareness Week at WVU, started this year by Student Administration.

The week includes performers, panel discussions, open-mic sessions and a booth with information on drugs, alcohol and sexual health. University Health Services also passed out free condoms and

candy.

Ross, a professional performer, does juggling, unicycling and other tricks in his show, called "Last Call — A Sobering Look at Alcohol Abuse." He will perform from 1-2 p.m. today in the Mountainlair commons. Free ice cream will be available, too.

At noon Wednesday, students packed the commons for Ross' show.

Ross said he started drinking when he was 13. He said he comes from a family with a history of alcoholism.

He also smoked marijuana regularly while growing up.

"That first high was incredible," Ross said. "For the first time, I felt like I was on top of the world."

But he said he wasn't, even though he was known as the class clown and "Mr. Personality."

He started failing classes and

quit playing football in his sophomore year of high school.

He started blacking out and passing out.

He tried other drugs, but didn't enjoy them as much as alcohol.

When he started college, he only found more opportunities for partying. "I was living on the edge," Ross said.

Drinking led to more drinking, he said, and took away from the important things in his life: schoolwork, sports, family.

When he was 21, he got a DUI charge. He lost his driver's license for three months and had to go to drug and alcohol classes.

Finally, he turned his life around. He's been a recovering alcoholic for 13 years.

At WVU Wednesday, he also spoke about the dangers of alcohol-related sexual violence. As he juggled, he told the audience:

■ A woman is beaten every 15 seconds; one of every three women will be sexually assaulted.

■ Two out of three victims know

their attackers; domestic violence is the reason stated for 22 percent of middle-class divorces.

■ Three out of four police calls regarding domestic violence occur after the couple have broken up; men who grow up in a house with domestic violence are three times more likely to beat their wives or girlfriends.

■ Four out of five men who commit date rape or acquaintance rape are under the influence of alcohol at the time.

■ Fifty-five percent of the women who are victims of date rape have been drunk at the time; 50 percent of spousal homicides are alcohol-related.

Ross was a leader of his peers in his younger years, getting them to party. Now he's a leader in helping others face their addictions.

At age 37, he has a wife and three kids, and performs variations of his show for elementary and high school kids, and college students. He said he tones down the content and wording for youngsters.