

UPEI Health Fair Stays Strong After 13 Years Showcases Relevant Subjects

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Reporter



Students, staff, and community members were treated to an array of sights, sounds, tastes, and a few stomach turning displays at the 13th annual UPEI Health Fair last Wednesday.

Passers-by at the W.A. Murphy Student Centre cafeteria were quickly reeled in by the bright colours of displays in the Courtyard Café. In the breeze way, near the main entrance of the centre, one could hear rhythmic rave music at the Ecstasy presentation, get a chocolate treat from the safe sex kissing booth, then meander over to the Sexually Transmitted Infections presentation to witness graphic pictures of gonorrhea and syphilis sufferers; visually warning fair-goers about the dangers of unprotected sex.

Passers-by were also given a chance to win six semester hours of free tuition by completing an evaluation form and were treated to fun things like healthy snacks, frisbees, and (you guessed it) condoms.

The Health Fair is part of the Nursing health teaching course and the Community Nutrition course, and is put on by students and staff from the School of Nursing, and family and nutritional sciences. Non-government organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, Aids P.E.I., and the Lung Association also took part and raised awareness for their causes.

Jill MacKinnon, a third-year Nursing student said the health fair was also a success because the students chose relevant topics to present...and pulled no punches when it came to controversial issues.

"The topics the students chose are relevant to everyday life. For example the portion size display that the Family and Nutritional Science students had. It put in perspective how big a portion size really is," said MacKinnon. "It also had topics which some may consider "taboo" like relationship violence and date rape drugs. Things like this even happen at UPEI."

Barb Mulally, UPEI's wellness coordinator and fair-organizing committee member, echoed the comments of MacKinnon. She added the nursing students deserve kudos for their creative efforts.

"The students did an excellent job of both organization and booth presentation. They are focusing on topics that directly are of interest to students, (and) are including more technology in the provision of the information. Their methods and focus is current."

"This is a great experience because this is the type of activity that Nursing or Family and Nutritional Science students would be doing if they are working in the community. They learn organization, as well as development of interesting booths - a way to attract people to stop and get info."

And they've done their job, said MacKinnon.

"This fair helps promote health and wellness to not only the students and staff at UPEI and AVC, but it is also open to the general public. The turn-out this year was probably the largest crowd since the fair started."

Mulally did not confirm whether it was the largest crowd ever, but the fair did attract about 500 people, she said.

According to MacKinnon's observations, there may be more people next year.

"Each year, the Health Fair keeps getting bigger and better. Each year the students' booths get more and more imaginative ... There is definitely one in the works for next year."

And what was the verdict of the fair-goers?

"I'm sure it is safe to say everyone who walked through today learned something new, and they probably had a lot of fun doing so," guessed MacKinnon.

Marla Morrow, a third year nursing student who manned the

Sexually Transmitted Infections display, confirmed at least one person left learning a lesson.

"One guy in his 20s stopped by earlier, saw the pictures and said 'I will never have unprotected sex ever again. And that's what we wanted to hear,' she said.

Some fair-goers even received neat parting gifts like Hawaiian necklaces from the travel immunization display of Nursing students Ashley Martin, Candice Rochford, Misty MacKenzie, and Ami James.

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