

S.H.O.C.— not ultra-radical condom Nazis

Justin Broughton

In light of two editorials in last week's Davidsonian, I feel that there needs to be a clarification as to the nature of the AIDS Action Committee (since renamed to Student Health Options and Concerns or SHOC), its purpose, and the intent of the survey which it has distributed. Criticism of what SHOC is trying to accomplish should be done only with a clear understanding of for whom and what the organization consists, and not based upon isolated statements, conjecture and an incomplete grasp of the facts.

First and foremost, SHOC is not a group of ultra-radical condom Nazis "high-handedly" attempting to rush through any wild measure under the pretense of "emergency" measures against the AIDS epidemic. Nor is it an immoral group of self-appointed reactionaries who have taken it upon themselves to "feed" condoms to Davidson students in an attempt to save students from themselves. If the two individuals had actually taken the time to show interest in the problem of AIDS and other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) on college campuses, and what could be done to prevent their spread on this campus, rather than waiting and expressing their indignation when suggested measures dared offend their delicate moral sensibilities, then they would have attended any one

of the several announced meetings of SHOC to voice their feelings. If they had actually shown concern for their fellow students, venturing to come to SHOC meetings, they would have seen that their concerns and suggestions would have been welcome.

SHOC is composed of caring faculty members and students distressed about the possible (and according to experts, inevitable) disastrous consequences of the spread of

AIDS and other STDs on college campuses, consequences which can easily be avoided if timely steps are taken to inform students on how they may best protect

Condemned

Miz Robinson don't sleep with us
Uncondomed crackhouse debutants, young dead
Walk paths we schoolmate prostitute
Once innocent now play percentage risk;
Your youth is younger still than we, who courting
Also flirt with Lady Deth.

Peter Tavernise is an English major from Washington, DC [murder] capital of these Great States.

themselves. SHOC is composed of persons such as Dr. Kimmel, Harriette Fulton, Service Coordinator Caroline Craig, Health Educator Georgia Ringle, and students who are interested in giving input and volunteering time towards finding and carrying through with solutions. How to best deal with what is not a "tactically contrived crisis," but a frighteningly real threat to Davidson and its students, is one of the main goals of SHOC. Simply put, SHOC is a group

open to everyone with the explicit purpose of feeling out student consensus and opinion upon which effective measures can be based.

Which brings us to the petition. The petition is designed for just such a purpose. It is intended neither as ballot nor as a means of denying all students opposed to such a measure the right to speak. It is merely a tool to see if a majority of Davidson students are amenable to such an action, and carries with it no implications of immediate implementation. Obviously, the portion of the student body which refrains from signing will be considered either opposed to such action, believing that condom availability, or condom machines per se is not the best course of action to take, or simply undecided for any number of reasons.

SHOC is not out to undermine the moral foundations of this college, but is an organization interested only in considering all angles of the STD problem with maximum student support. However, even while acknowledging that Davidson is founded upon Christian principles, in this day and age, mere calls for "moral courage," and inveterate Bible-pounding pontification, I am afraid, will not stop the spread of AIDS and other STDs at Davidson; enlightened criticism and constructive action will.

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Teaching and helping, not judging and condemning, are also Christian ideals

Kathryn Barnett

The March 2 issue of the Davidsonian included two editorials fiercely attacking the plan of making condoms available on campus. These rely upon emotion and moral outrage, with naive idealism, rather than clear argumentation and a command of reality. Boyd Miller postulates five primary objections to the availability on campus. Paul Renner's editorial expands on two of these. I will address these concerns in the order they were established.

Miller's first concern is the unreliability of condoms. He cites studies showing that condoms are only 90 percent effective as birth control and then moves to show how that rate would probably be even smaller in AIDS prevention. He fears that the machines will place an invalid security on the use of condoms. First, Miller is wrong in stating that abstinence offers 100 percent protection against AIDS. AIDS is also transmitted by blood and through birth. Let us assume that he refers only to sexually transmitted AIDS. In which case, Miller is correct. However, his figures on the reliability of condoms correctly used are wrong. The latest issue of *Consumer Reports* cites a study which finds reliability much greater than even 90 percent. His higher figures may come from couples who do not correctly use condoms, which is why S.H.O.C. thinks it especially important to focus on condom education. Also, for those that choose sex, condoms are the best protection, and far better than no protection.

Miller continues by asserting that available condoms will increase promiscuity on campus. He quotes a local writer who says that despite 17 years of sex education and easy access to contraceptives, and the expenditure of \$2 billion, pregnancy and abortion rates continue to climb. These facts, however, fail to establish any causal connection from education and availability of condoms to sexual activities. These years of education and condom distribution have also been accompanied by increased proliferation of nuclear weapons. Miller likely would not want to argue that this education and distribution has increased weapons manufacture. Miller might answer that the design of education programs is to stop irresponsible sexual behavior and the statistics (which he never offers) prove that this goal has not been achieved. Thus, the nuclear weapon example is not a valid comparison. But, the goal of these programs is to lessen irresponsible sexual activities, they do not hope to end them all. It is very difficult to chart the success of a sexuality education program. Those who are convinced to end irresponsible behavior are hard to identify. These programs address those who are already or may become sexually active. It is hard to imagine the student who does not engage in sexual activities now, but who would start simply because condoms became available in bathrooms.

Miller next argues that the placement of condoms on campus will rid women of a good excuse not to have sex. Note first that Miller argues later that Davidson men should procure condoms elsewhere, exercising their responsibility. If this is his plan, then the "no condom," excuse will also be invalid. I think both sides of this issue can agree that female students must take responsibility and confidence in their decisions. A woman who says that she will not engage in sex because her partner does not have a condom leaves open the possibility that this potential partner need only find a condom, now or the future, and come back for sex. The peer education programs that S.H.O.C. (Student Health Options & Concerns) will begin in addition to condom distribution will help students deal with their sexuality. Hopefully females will need never to resort to such ploys to avoid sex, but can discuss the issue and make responsible, mature decisions.

Miller moves on to a claim which Renner seconds. The availability of condoms on campus will undermine student responsibility. However, these machines do not, as Miller suggests "tell students that we are not mature enough to handle the obligations of our own personal decisions," but will encourage students to take such responsibility. Condoms on campus say that the college notes student sexual behavior and is concerned for student health. Condoms are not forced or "fed" to the students. Rather, they are made available so that students may decide, when engaging in sexual activities, to act responsibly.

Miller asks why condoms are not put in the offices of single professors. First, professors do not live in their offices, and are not likely to bring potential sexual partners there. Second, professors, as a group, have not been shown to be as sexually active as students. Studies report now that anywhere from 70 to 80 percent of students on campus are sexually active. A study at Oregon State revealed that 81 percent of surveyed students had engaged in sexual intercourse in the past year. Of those, 60 percent had done so without the use of a condom: these stats, even though virtually all of those polled demonstrated sufficient knowledge of AIDS. What these students did not demonstrate was any sense of being at risk. Yet, college students are at high risk of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Facilitation those who have sex and would use a condom if they were available can save lives. Making condoms available does not undermine responsibility, but encourages it. While, as Renner states it, "calling ourselves adults," relies on many things beyond the sexual realm, part of it must be choosing to act responsibly with our sexuality. If not choosing abstinence, choosing to secure a condom legitimately shows responsibility.

Further, I think we all admit to making mistakes. The

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Condom Sense Week:

March 13-16

S.H.O.C.

For the Davidson College community to begin a program of addressing and dealing with the complex issues of student health, especially sex-related health issues (such as unwanted pregnancies, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, etc.) there first must be a radical breakthrough. Students who are afraid or embarrassed to think about or talk about sex and protective measures cannot act responsibly.

Thus, S.H.O.C. (Student Health Options & Concerns) believes it necessary to sponsor Condom Sense Week. The purpose of this week is to promote discussion of, and familiarity around condoms. While this institution and S.H.O.S. ideally favor monogamous relationships, and note that abstinence is the only 100 percent effective deterrent of sexually transmitted disease, we recognize that the students of this campus are sexually active. The message of Condom Sense Week is not that one should have sex, or must have sex, or that everyone has sex. Rather, recognizing the reality of sexual activities on campus, and the real dangers involved with such behavior, we hope to rid condoms of the negative and guilty feelings associated with them. Next to abstinence, correctly used condoms are the most effective way to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. Condoms are a valid protection device, necessary for responsible sexual activity. For the sexually active, condoms can save lives.

Moving into Spring Break, the student body of Davidson College faces greater danger of infection with sexually transmitted diseases. In 1986, 16,000 Americans died from AIDS; by 1991, an estimated 180,000 will have died from AIDS. America has lost more people to AIDS than were killed in the Vietnam war. Further, the bulk of unintended pregnancies and new cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis and venereal warts occur in the 18-24 year-old age group. Studies report that 70 to 80 percent of college students are sexually active. Thus, we find it imperative to de-sensitize students to condoms. Rather than adopting an initial, sober and overbearing serious attitude, we choose humor as the medium for our message, to avoid alienation.

This increased awareness of and comfort with the issues of sex and responsibility will serve as starting points for more serious explorations of the moral, emotional and ethical values involved in human sexuality, and further education on sex and health issues in the Spring and the coming years as the campus of Davidson College finally recognizes its sexuality.