

## **Party.0 promotes alcohol-free parties for UWO students**

by Derek Paulus - Wednesday, December 26, 2012

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/23660/party-0-promotes-alcohol-free-parties-for-uwo-students/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students Jake White and Steven Vanevenhoven know how to throw a raging party “and still remember every friend you met, every funny moment you had and every stupid decision you made.”

That is how White describes Party.0, the duo’s alcohol-free alternative to weekend drinking parties. He said getting drunk is not the party it’s advertised to be.

“Contrary to popular belief, the sober life is the real party,” White wrote on his Party.0 [blog](#).

White and Vanevenhoven both entered college at the UW Oshkosh as nondrinkers, struggling to fit into the typical college social scene where drinking is the thing to do on the weekends. The two began to wonder why they felt differently about alcohol and whether they were alone in their sentiment.

“There’s a lot of pressure to drink,” Vanevenhoven said. “Not wanting to drink really took a toll on us.”

Rather than giving in to social pressures, the two decided to do something about it. They took a survey of more than 100 UW Oshkosh students and found many had equally strong reservations about drinking.

On the first weekend of the 2012 fall semester, they held their first Party.0 “sober party.” Around 80 people came out to enjoy the night of free food and drinks, music, dancing and games.

“Our parties have been growing ever since then,” Vanevenhoven said.

On Dec. 1, Party.0 held its sixth party and now averages 150 people per party, with 180 being their highest attendance. Their next event will be Jan. 12, during the UW Oshkosh winter interim.

Vanevenhoven, a marketing major, said UW Oshkosh has provided the skills and opportunities needed to create and operate Party.0.

“I believe that the success of Party.0 can partially be attributed to our academic fields but also our involvement in campus organizations,” Vanevenhoven said.

While Vanevenhoven takes responsibility of the budget, finance and marketing work, White, a journalism major with an emphasis in public relations, focuses on planning the events and operating Party.0’s social media sites. Party.0 provides up-to-date information on their [Facebook page](#) and communicates with students from their [Twitter handle](#).

White said sponsorships from local businesses have also been a crucial aspect to their success. Party.0 receives free food from Subway and Papa John’s Pizza, free energy drinks from Rockstar, free music

from a UW Oshkosh club called the Fox Valley Disc Jockey Association and games and prizes from Order Oshkosh.

“People just like the idea,” White said. “They wanted to jump on board and help us, and we try to make it worth their while with little Facebook plugs and letting students know about the deals that they’re having.”

Despite help from their education at UW Oshkosh and advising from the University’s Business Success Center, Party.0 is not associated with UW Oshkosh. It was created by students, for students.

Melissa Albright is a freshman education major who said Party.0 allows her to have fun without the negative consequences.

“I don’t drink, but I love to dance and have a good time,” Albright said. “These parties allow my friends and I to let loose without the stress of getting caught drinking.”

Party.0 provides the fun with music and dancing, free food, games, prizes and themed parties. Their last party went by the theme of “ugly sweaters,” and during the Halloween season they held a costume themed party complete with a costume contest.

White said it’s all about providing a fun place for nondrinking students to feel welcome.

“I really believe that every person should have a place in college,” he said. “If you decide you don’t want to drink, I think there should be a place you can go on the weekends too.”

White also said Party.0’s sober parties allow people to be themselves, avoiding the cover and influence of alcohol.

“I think partying sober is something that... actually pushes you,” he said. “It’s a new experience. You have to build up your own confidence. You have to talk to people.”

White said the students and community have been supportive of Party.0, and the University’s Community Service Officers and the Oshkosh Police Department have both been understanding and supportive of their weekend parties.

Party.0 parties are hosted by various fraternity houses in the neighborhoods surrounding the UW Oshkosh campus. White said he is grateful to the fraternities who have helped, as finding a venue for their events has been the biggest challenge with their increasing numbers.

Recently, Party.0 has implemented plans to make their involvement a permanent feature of the UW Oshkosh community even after White and Vanevenhoven graduate. They are in the process of forming a four-person committee of UW Oshkosh students to work together in carrying Party.0 into the future, calling them Party.0 Ambassadors.

“What we do want to have is Party.0 continue to run here at Oshkosh forever, even after we leave,” Vanevenhoven said.

White also said he hopes to carry his passion for Party.0 into the job world, becoming an alcohol prevention speaker.

“This is just one way that I can break into the market and show people and inspire students over the country,” he said.

The two students have already received recognition for their work with Party.0. The American Democracy Project awarded them second place and \$750 in their Creating A Stronger Community Contest in October.

UW Oshkosh sophomore elementary education major Theresa Van Hecke said Party.0 “is one of the best things for our campus.”

“They are really helping to keep students from drinking and showing them that you don’t have to drink to have fun or have alcohol at a party,” Van Hecke said. “Party.0’s atmosphere is excellent, it’s fun and it’s a great way to spend a Saturday night.”

White said Party.0 proves that students can have a good time without the alcohol and without the consequences.

“We can show people that you don’t have to drink to have a good time.”

Read more:

- [Entrepreneurial spirit leads alumna, UWO students to win community-building contest](#)