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Dalhousie students apathetic about AIDS walk

BY JENNIFER CALDWELL

Only twelve Dal students came out to support the AIDS walk



photo by Mimi Meir

this past weekend.

On Sunday afternoon a

handful of people met inside the Student Union Building and walked to the Halifax Commons to participate in the fourth annual AIDS walk.

The walk's low numbers — 650 less than last year — were attributed to the soggy conditions. But these numbers have also left some wondering where all

the AIDS activists have gone.

Dean Naugler, DSU vice-president of community affairs, says he was surprised at the lack of student participation.

"It's pretty well known on campus that Dalhousie has been pretty apathetic," he said. "I don't want to blame anyone [but] the message was out there, it was just a

matter of people responding to it."

Naugler also says that support for causes has a tendency to dwindle after a period of time.

"It's hard to pick [a cause] and keep it going strong... a lot of people think that one cause has been dealt with and move on," he said.

According to the Canadian Aids Society 8,500 people

worldwide are newly infected with HIV everyday.

At Dalhousie, the few students participating in the walk to fight the disease didn't have much to say about why they bothered attending.

Chryssa McAlister, in her

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Dal's race against time

Will computer system run smoothly before digital doomsday?

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Dalhousie's complex new registration system was purchased to side-step the year 2000 problem — but the real problem is getting the entire system running smoothly in the 15 months left before the lights go out.

The year 2000 problem, also known as Y2K, is associated with storing dated information using only the last two numbers of the year as an identifier. The year 2000 will be indistinguishable from the year 1900, possibly causing computers to crash and systems to fail.

The university's new computer system, called Banner, was bought in part to address these problems.

It will be implemented in stages, the first of which will be the new student information and admissions component. Put in place by the end of October, it will accept applications from students entering the university for the 1999/2000 academic year.

Over the summer, the plan is to transfer current students to Banner and activate the system's personnel, finance and alumni components.

Ted Chiasson, Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) president, says the tight schedule has left the university vulnerable.

"I was under the impression that they were going to run it as a dry-run... to make sure that there were no bugs," he said. But with only weeks until the first stage of implementation, Chiasson says the stakes are much higher.

"They've got one shot and, from my experience, with anything this complicated you don't get things like this right on your first try," he said.

"It runs everything... I just hope they get it right."

Gudrun Curri, Dalhousie

registrar, says there is little need for concern.

"I don't know why people would make these predictions," she said.

"Our most experienced people, the most knowledgeable people, [are on] the Banner project."

She admits the pace of implementation is hectic, but says the worst she expects are minor irritations.

"I feel confident we will be able to get through it without a disaster," she said.

"I would never be able to guarantee that we won't [have problems], but certainly that's the last thing we want."

Curri says Dalhousie's pace of implementation is not unusual, and points to the successful integration of Banner at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where the system has been in place for more than two years.

"We did a site visit with them and it was very impressive," she said. "They are very pleased with it and so are the students, apparently."

McGill University has also purchased Banner. But McGill opted to fix the Y2K problem in their existing system, then integrate Banner after the year 2000.

"This is insane from our perspective," Curri said.

"We couldn't afford to go this route — to fix [a system] that most people were not happy with."

But Roger Rigelhof, McGill's project manager for the Banner Information System, says the high demand for replacement systems, and the complexities involved in implementing them, could drive costs up in the next 15 months.

"We made the decision to look after the Y2K problem before choosing a new packaged system," Rigelhof said.

"It might, in the long run,

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photo by Mike Davenport

Dal Womens' Soccer shut out the opposition in both of their games on the weekend. See story on page 23.

Disputing sides will meet in conciliation

BY TRISTAN STEWART-ROBERTSON

A conciliator has been appointed in an effort to avert a potential strike by one of Dalhousie's service unions.

Talks to be held on Oct. 13th and 15th between Dal and Local 77 of the Nova Scotia Government Employees' Union (NSGEU) will be mediated by Robert Duran, a conciliator in the Nova Scotia Dept. of Labour.

The union is made up of approximately 700 to 800 members, including secretaries, employees in payroll services, financial services, the registrar's office, and lab technicians.

Brenda Crozman, president of Local 77 of the NSGEU, also known as the Dalhousie Staff Association, says the union plays an important role in the university.

"Dalhousie would look very seriously at the possibility of the NSGEU going on strike," she said.

"It would create a dent... certainly the [lack of] support services that we provide would create a problem."

Crozman cites wages as one

major stumbling block.

"There are no monetary items on the table [at this point]," she said. "So there are issues like vacation, severance... [but] issues that can be deemed as monetary have not been settled yet, at all, haven't even been discussed," she said.

The union has proposed a five-percent wage increase, effective November 1997, followed by increases of three-and-a-half percent in each of the following two years. Crozman says this would increase wages above the average \$25,000 a year union members currently receive.

The university says it hopes conciliation will resolve any outstanding issues.

"We are committed to reaching an agreement with the assistance of a conciliator," said Christine Smith, a spokesperson with the university.

However the university's tone was less positive in a statement released Aug. 13.

"While the university acknowledges that conciliation is often a component in the negotiation process, we were surprised with the union's application at this time,

especially given the significant progress in the negotiations to date," it stated.

Employee benefits, a single job evaluation process to replace the current two, and the employer's ability to exclude members from the bargaining unit are cited as the other contentious issues still unresolved.

The union last went on strike in Jan. 1991 for about a month. It was a rotating strike, rather than a full walk-out, enabling some union services to remain operational. This diminished the adverse effects associated with a full strike.

The issues then were much as they are now, revolving around wages, job evaluation, and sick leave.

Conciliation is intended to help negotiations and avoid strikes. The conciliation process, however, is a complicated one.

Should talks break down, the conciliator files his report with the Dept. of Labour, at the request of either the union or the university. Once this has been done, the union or university is legally bound to wait two weeks before filing notice

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