

The Salem Leader
Educationally Speaking
Justin Harter
04/28/08

I really know how to party

On April 19, 2008, I reached another milestone: I turned 21 years old. My birthday was celebrated like any other American 21 year-old. I spent the evening pretending to make imaginary snow-angels on the floor at a local Denny's restaurant while continuing to down shot after shot of free birthday booze. At least that's what my friends tell me my birthday should have been like.

Actually, I woke up on that Saturday and attended the annual Susan G. Komen Indianapolis Race for the Cure. This was my second year in attendance at the event, which is the largest single-event fundraiser in Indiana and the largest Race for the Cure event in the nation. Unlike last year, this year's race did not have cooperative weather. Up until about a minute before the race was scheduled to start rain continued to drench those in attendance. Ponchos and umbrellas muddied the usual sea of white and pink T-shirts. However, just as the race was beginning, the sun broke through and stayed with us as the crowd was cheering. Forty thousand people took part in the non-competitive event this year raising over two million dollars.

After the race, my good friend Brandon and I went to lunch at my favorite Indianapolis restaurant and I indulged on cheesecake. Afterwards, I went to Lowe's and purchased more mulch for my lawn in addition to two trees, two bushes and a 20-pound bag of potting soil and fertilizer. As I was walking out to my car, I was wondering how I was going to fit it all in the Beetle. After some finagling of the seats, trunk and awkward glares from passers-by, I managed to fit it all in the car.

Upon returning home, I proceeded with weeding, trimming, mowing, digging, planting, watering, cleaning and seeding. My roommate Mitch joined in on the fun by coming outside to watch me dig a hole. He's very supportive that way.

While I was working and he was standing, he asked me where I wanted to go for my birthday. Initially, I wanted to go to Cheeseburger in Paradise – a Jimmy Buffet themed restaurant here in Indy. However, one of our other guests is a semi-professional vegetarian in that he doesn't eat meat when he doesn't feel like it. Then, I suggested Red Lobster just because I was in the mood for the biscuits. However, Mitch does not take well to seafood. Ironically, he loves sushi.

So, for my twenty-first birthday, Mitch, Brandon and our other friend Dezra all decided on Applebee's. That's right – Applebee's – your neighborhood bar and grill. Assuming, of course, your neighborhood is two exits up the bypass and a mile down the road.

Mitch drove and when we arrived we promptly went in and were quickly seated. When the waitress took our drink order Mitch and Dezra asked for a martini. Brandon asked for a soda. I asked for a sweet tea (un-sweet tea is pointless). Then, Mitch demanded I order something a little more appropriate for my twenty-first birthday. So, I asked for a sweet tea *and* a strawberry daiquiri. Evidently, the waitress saw this as selfish because she looked at me and asked, "You want an iced tea *and* a strawberry daiquiri?" I replied with "Yes, it's my birthday and I'm allowed to have two drinks today."

She returned with our beverages despite never asking for ID from any of us that ordered alcoholic beverages. Mitch and Dezra enjoyed their martinis and, because of their empty stomachs, it became apparent they were certainly having a nice time. I, having ordered what amounts to a strawberry milkshake, ended up having to drive my slightly tipsy friends back home. I do not believe that is how the American tradition of twenty-first birthdays is supposed to be.

Nevertheless, we returned home safely and I was cozy and in bed by midnight. Anyone that ever dares say I lead a very uneventful existence and that I don't know how to party is evidently wrong. I clearly know how to let my friends have a very good time.

Although, I must say that turning 21 has been a real pain. I fancy a bottle of wine once and again and my normal grocery-shopping day is Sunday. Thanks to outdated laws, I can't buy any alcoholic beverages on my normal shopping day. I guess that's to prevent people from making imaginary snow-angels on the floor at a Denny's.