Betrayals at heart of issues, students, faculty believe

By Shilpa Rupani

Associate editor

In a school in which community and unity are constantly stressed, students, faculty members and administrators do have a common meeting ground on the matter of students discovered on surveillance camera participating in illegal activities on school grounds. Everyone feels some kind of community betrayal was involved.

Associate Director David Stafford had authorized the installation of a surveillance camera in a basement of Belfield Hall after evidence of illegal activity was found. Three months later, a senior and 2 juniors were suspended for 3 days after administrators reviewed an April 20 tape showing them participating in illegal activities during a May Festival play rehearsal.

By committing illegal actions while being supervised at school, U-Highers believe the students betrayed their teacher's trust.

"I think it's stupid that these kids did illegal stuff at school," junior Gabby McCoy said. By doing it during a rehearsal when they were supposedly supervised, it shows a lot of disrespect to the teacher. They didn't seem to care about breaking the law and didn't consider how bad it would reflect on the entire theatre.

"I think the rest of the student body will be watched more now. That's just not fair. Just because these 3 kids betrayed a teacher and the school, the entire student body is going to suffer." Even with supervision, the theater is so large one person cannot oversee students in all areas and the students should not have violated their teacher’s trust despite the opportunity, said Costume Mistress and actress Jennifer Sydel, senior.

"The theater has a lot of rooms and they are very spread out," Jennifer said. "There's no way a teacher could watch all areas at the same time and in that respect the kids betrayed us, as other theatre participants, and the teacher. I am hurt by what they did because they put us all on the spot and then we needed to work doubly hard."

Although the teacher in whose area the camera was placed was not notified of the camera's placement, she had been warned earlier about possible illegal activity, according to Principal Jack Knapp. Mr. Knapp was told of the camera after Mr. Stafford authorized its placement.

"I spoke to the teacher last year about possible illegal activities occurring in the theater," Mr. Knapp said. "But she wasn't told this year about the camera. However Mac met with the entire

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The Lab Schools couldn't violate anyone's right to privacy even if they wanted to." - Geoffrey Stone
Harry Kalven Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law

Mr. Stafford said.

The room where we installed the cameras was a part of the basement storage space," he explained. "Although it contains props that are used by the theater, it is not a part of the theater, so people shouldn't be down there unless they are taking props for the play or the then playing.

"Also, because the room has a door to the theater and no windows, we had no idea who was leaving those beer cans and wine bottles down there. Though it doesn't happen often, there have been a few times when random people from the street have tried to get into the school, so we didn't assume that it was just locals living upstairs or down there.

Because we had told the drama teacher or students about the camera, it would have been as if we were targeting them and so would have violated their Constitutional right to privacy. Though it doesn't happen often, there have been a few times when random people from the street have tried to get into the school, so we didn't assume that it was just locals living upstairs or down there.

"First of all, all Constitutional rights, including the right to privacy provided in the 4th Amendment, are irrelevant at all times, we asked him if it was about the beer bottles in that room, since we knew someone had been looking through the window. I found nothing.

"The only thing that bothered me was the fact that they hadn't told us about the camera earlier. I and one of the juniors involved went down to Mr. McFarlane's office and when we got there the other junior was on his cell phone, 'as well,' said Mr. Wilson. "At the time I had no idea why I was there, so the junior and I just started chatting.

"As part of this community, I think we should have been told about that particular camera," junior Alex Chiu said. "By not telling us about the camera, administration breached our trust and seemed like they only cared about catching and punishing students rather than deterring them from this type of action in the future.

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