

Art by Josh Joseph

## Hidden cameras expose questions

- Lab Schools Board may examine school's use of surveillance devices for security purposes
- Cameras caught students in illegal activities in Belfield basement on a Saturday afternoon
- Administrators cite their responsibility to protect safe environment for students

By Benjamin Zimmer  
Associate editor

With one exception, surveillance cameras in the school will be kept in place following recent disciplinary action involving them, but the Lab Schools Board will likely review their purpose, according to Lab Schools Director Lucinda Lee Katz.

Whether the school should employ surveillance cameras for security has become a renewed topic of discussion in the community following the discipline case.

A surveillance camera hidden in the basement of Belfield Hall recorded a senior and 2 juniors conducting illegal activities in a basement area April 20 while they were working on the spring production. Administrators April 25 suspended the students for 3 days.

Though the Belfield basement camera has been removed, other surveillance cameras in the school have not been removed and more will be installed if further reports of illegal activity occur, administrators say. But they add they are aware of concerns in the community about using such cameras.

"A few Board members have told me that ethically they think hidden security cameras, even in private places, create an unfriendly school atmosphere, and I have also heard about similar concerns of some students and High School faculty members," Mrs. Katz said.

"Though we don't have anything officially planned yet, the Board is going to meet at some point soon to review how surveillance cameras can best fit into our safety policy, taking into consideration all the different views that have been expressed at the school."

Security cameras were first installed in private areas of the school in 1995 because of security concerns and suspected illegal activity, Mrs. Katz said. The Midway devoted a front page to the topic in November of 1996.

"A few years back we had a number of reported thefts in the school, and the U. of C. police told us that one of the best ways to stop them is to use surveillance cameras," Mrs. Katz explained.

"Because of their recommendation, we do use cameras once in a while to confirm such activities and to identify individuals who create security difficulties. We tend to place them in areas where there have been instances of theft, but we will do it whenever we feel it will help in any way to protect the safety of anyone in the Lab Schools community."

"Still, we only set up cameras when we have tangible evidence of illegal activity, and we never place them in public areas, with the only exception being the hallways after midnight when the janitors have left the building."

The camera in the Belfield basement, placed in a room in which theater props are stored and which connects to the theater, was installed in early April after Director of Auxiliary Services Tony Wilson found empty beer cans and wine bottles there while fixing a door, according to administrators.

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## 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 Board is going to meet at some point soon to review how surveillance cameras can best fit into our safety policy."

—Mrs. Lucinda Lee Katz  
Lab Schools Director



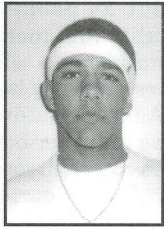
"When a person does something wrong, they need to be mature enough to take the consequences. It's called accountability."

—Mr. Ron Tunis  
counselor



"I think there is a lot of disrespect for students here and I think this was the epitome of it. I think instead of putting a hidden camera up, students should have been given a chance to improve."

—Jessica Laser  
sophomore



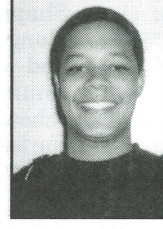
"I think it's bogus that there are cameras around the school and we don't know about them. We might do something we don't think is wrong but the faculty may disapprove of it."

—Mitchell Newsome  
junior



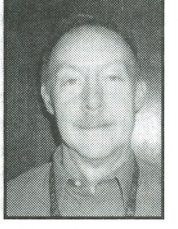
"I feel a little bit nervous ever since the whole situation arose because now lots of people are wondering where the cameras are. I think we should have known about it from the beginning."

—Aina Tan  
freshman



"I think we should be informed on what's going on around us. How else are we supposed to feel comfortable in this school environment?"

—Aaron Summers  
sophomore



"I think there are certain decisions that administrators need to make and I think that in issues including safety and security if they choose to keep their decision private they are entitled to."

—Mr. Bob Bachand  
counselor



# Cameras, Questions

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"The room where we put the camera has a door that leads outside to Scammon Garden," Mr. Wilson said. "For some reason, that door had been propped open, and when a door is open for a long time it sends an alarm to my office. When I went down there to check it out, I found the room littered with empty beer cans and wine bottles.

"I went to Associate Director David Stafford with my findings, and after checking with the U. of C. police and the U. of C. legal office, he authorized the installation of a camera there to find out who was propping open the door and who was leaving that stuff there since we didn't know if it was kids or adults.

"After the camera was installed I figured the High School administrators should know about it, so I told Principal Jack Knapp and Dean of Students Larry McFarlane and showed them the room."

No students nor faculty members were told of the camera at the time because administrators did not know who was responsible for the illegal activities there,

**"The Lab Schools couldn't violate anyone's Constitutional right to privacy even if they wanted to."**

**- Geoffrey Stone**

Harry Kalven Jr. Distinguished Service Professor of Law

Mr. Stafford said.

"The room where we installed the camera is not a public area; it's school 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 getting props for the play and then leaving.

"Also, because the room has a door to the outside that had been propped open, 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 occasions when random people from the street have tried to get into the school, so we didn't assume anything about who was leaving the stuff there.

"We recognized it was possible that it was students from the theater, but it also could have been workmen, people from outside the school, or any number of possibilities.

"If we had told the drama teacher or students about the camera, it would have been as if we were targeting them and assuming they were the ones leaving the stuff down there, and we didn't want to give that impression because we weren't assuming anything. It could have been anyone, so I had the camera installed to determine those responsible and to prevent further security breaches and illegal activities from taking place."

Legally, administrators can place cameras in the school without telling anyone because U-High is a private school, according to Geoffrey Stone, Harry Kalven Jr. Distinguished Service Professor of Law at the U. of C., former University provost and Dean of the Law School and a former U-High parent.

"First of all, all Constitutional rights, including the right to privacy provided in the 4th Amendment, are irrelevant at a private school," Mr. Stone told the Midway. "The liberties in the Bill of Rights were created to protect individuals against the government, not against other individuals, and for legal purposes a private institution counts as individuals. So the Lab Schools couldn't violate anyone's Constitutional right to privacy even if they wanted to.

"Since the Constitution doesn't apply at private schools, people's legal rights turn to Illinois state law. My understanding of Illinois state law is that inside private premises it is appropriate to place cameras without telling anyone. That is because the Supreme Court has set the pre-

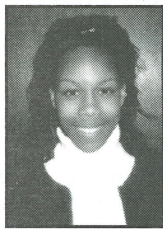
# Reactions, opinions

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production crew last year in attempt to stop any possible illegal activity going on."

Though some faculty members believe the teacher should have been told about the cameras, others feel such a notification wasn't necessary.

"It would have been good for public relations reasons and the teacher's relationship with the school to know about the camera but I don't think she had a right to know," Mrs. Shapiro explained. "It's a difference between



**"Just because these 3 kids betrayed a teacher and the school, the entire student body is going to suffer."**

**- Gabby McCoy, junior**

'must' and 'should.' In terms of 'must,' the answer is no. In terms of 'should,' yes—out of respect for the teacher."

Though no teachers were notified about the camera, theatre members feel they had a right to know about the cameras' placement.

"As part of theatre, I think I deserved to know about the placement of the camera," senior Lexi Gewertz said. "I am in theatre and I think we all should have known. That is a part of a classroom I use—there aren't cameras in English classrooms or history rooms.

"Granted, it wasn't a changing area—it was only used for storage—but still, I felt somewhat violated that I could have been watched any time I was in that room.

"Also, the only things I heard about what happened were from rumors and informal conversations. There are meetings and formal statements about small inconsequential things, so why wasn't there anything about this?"

Other teachers feel administrators should have addressed the entire U-High community about what occurred.

cedent that in general, a right to privacy, wherever that right may come from, means you are entitled to privacy only when there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

"For instance, in a lockerroom, which exists for the purpose of changing, private activity, a person could reasonably expect to have privacy, so the right to privacy would apply there. But school storage space does not exist for the purpose of private activities, so legally a person would not have an expectation to privacy there, and it would be legal for the school to place hidden cameras."

After the camera was installed in the basement, Mr. Wilson said he reviewed the tapes every few days.

"The camera recorded silent tapes which lasted 24 hours, and every day I would go down to the room to change the tape," he explained. "Every few days I would look at the tapes to see if they showed who had been propping the door open and who had been leaving the beer cans and wine bottles down there. For about a month, I found nothing.

"Then, Wednesday April 24, I viewed the tape from the previous Saturday and saw the 3 kids doing illegal activities down there. I immediately showed the tape to Mr. McFarlane, and the next morning Mr. Knapp viewed it and verified who the 3 kids were. They then took appropriate disciplinary actions."

The 3 students were called into Mr. McFarlane's office later that day, according to both Mr. McFarlane and the students involved.

"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 way in as well," said the senior involved. "At the time I had no idea why I was down there, so the junior and I just started chatting.

"After questioning Mr. Knapp several times, we asked him if it was about the beer bottles in that room, since we knew about them even though they weren't ours, and he told us there was a camera down there. At that moment I realized what it was about and I looked at the other junior and from his expression I could tell he knew too.

"Also at that moment the other junior who was involved came down with Mr. McFarlane, and then Mr. McFarlane told him about the camera. I was just wondering what they would do.

"Mr. McFarlane then took out the Handbook and read the school policy about the consequences for our violation. He said we would probably get a 3-day suspension, but the next day they would decide for certain and tell us.

"They then told us they were going to call our parents, who were coming in, and we sat in silence outside Mr. McFarlane's office for about half an hour while we waited for our parents to get there.

"When each of our parents did get there, Mr. McFarlane and Mr. Knapp took them into Mr. McFarlane's office and told them what had happened. The administrators then told me to get my stuff, go home, and come back the next morning for a meeting to get my official punishment.

"The next day we all had our meetings at different times," the senior continued. "Mine was at 8, and when I got to Mr. McFarlane's office, he pretty much just told me I was officially being suspended for 3 days with that day, Friday, being the first day, and that I was prohibited from coming on school grounds over the weekend too.

"He said I could appeal the suspension to the Disciplinary Review Board, but I decided not to because he told me if I did the board would see the tape of what we had done. Also, he said if we did appeal it, the punishment could become even more severe and I didn't feel the punishment we had was unjust. The administrators had followed the rules in the Handbook and handled the case correctly, so I saw no reason to appeal it.

"The only thing that bothered me was the fact that they hadn't told us about the camera earlier. If the school had really been concerned about us and wanted us not to do what we did, they would have put the camera in and then told us about it, so we wouldn't have done anything illegal in the first place. It just seems to me that the administrators would have preferred to catch us than to not have us down there at all."

Though some students and faculty members have said they felt administrators installed the hidden camera in the basement just to get the students in trouble, administrators have told the Midway that is not the case.

"In spite of people's protests, we are not out solely to try to catch and punish people," Mr. McFarlane explained. "I would love to go through an entire year without having any disciplinary violations whatsoever, but unfortunately that just doesn't happen. As administrators, we have a responsibility to the school to create a safe school environment, and part of that is making sure people are not involved in illegal activities on campus.

"So when we have evidence of illegal activities going on at the school, we have to find out who's doing them. It's not always pleasant, but it's our job."

When the students got involved in illegal activity, they hadn't thought at all about the consequences for them or the faculty member responsible for them if they got caught, they told the Midway.

"We didn't really think about what the consequences would be if we got caught, since the idea of getting caught never entered our minds," the senior explained.

## AS THE MIDWAY SEES IT

# Surveillance effort outweighs education

By now, everyone has heard. Rumors about the 3 U-Highers violating school rules on school grounds spread almost as quickly as the backlash towards administrators when it was discovered that the 3 students were caught by a hidden video camera.

But as people focus on both the legality and morality of the camera's installation, a whole different and far more pressing issue needs attention.

Administrators were notified that wine and beer bottles had been found in the storage room by members of the Auxiliary Services staff. Instead of trying to deter or keep anyone from doing anything again, administrators set out to catch the culprits by installing a camera without telling any students or faculty members.

The fact that there were 3 students violating school rules on school grounds means that whatever substance abuse prevention program is in place at U-High isn't working.

The lack of an adequate substance abuse prevention program extends

beyond U-High, though. In order to have an effective substance abuse program preventative educational measures must be taken earlier, such as in early Middle School.

While the Lab Schools could have been devoting its resources searching for a substance abuse counselor for U-High and researching and renewing an effective substance abuse program for the entire Lab Schools, instead of attacking the root of the problem, administrators have gone for the symptom, the easy target.

But to effectively deal with substance abuse both on and off campus, administrators need to utilize deterrents, such as video cameras, in tandem with methods of prevention, such as a substance abuse counselor or substance abuse programs.

Granted, illegal activity in the basement of the theater has stopped. But the time and the energy that administrators put into nabbing only 3 offenders could have been spent tackling a far bigger issue which affects far more students at the Lab Schools.

## midway extra

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