Laurier Brantford’s first beer fest

By: Samantha McGregor

Tucked in the back corner of the research and academic centre courtyard among brightly-coloured tents stands a small table with a wooden sign that reads Meuse Brewing.

They stand out not only because of their small size, or because the vendor behind the table is the only female vendor present, but because no one has ever heard of Meuse Brewing.

And that’s simply because Meuse is debuted its first batch of beer at the event.

“We have been working on this for over a year probably, and this beer is maybe two months old,” says Meuse co-founder Estelle van Kleef.

Meuse is 20 minutes south-west of Laurier Brantford, in Scotland, Ont., and will officially open this spring.

Van Kleef is from the Netherlands and wanted to create a beer that blends her European roots with her new home in Norfolk County, Ont.

But what does a small, local brewery have to do with Laurier Brantford?

They were one of five breweries participating in Laurier’s first beer fest, hosted by the students’ union.

During the week of Feb. 6, the students’ union held annual snow week events — a winter alternative to the fall orientation week — the centerpiece of which was the beer fest.

Along with Meuse, the event featured Waterloo Brewing, Cameron’s Brewing in Oakville, Pommies Cider in Caledon, and Steam Whistle Brewing in Toronto, and was open to the Laurier community.

Andre Thames, vice-president of programming and services at Laurier Brantford, hopes that events like beer fest help students understand how to drink in moderation.

“I think this is an opportunity to explore another avenue for students and bring in a new culture here, where students can enjoy and have the option of having alcohol and being able to be respectful and responsible,” says Thames.

Those who were 19 years of age and older were given wristbands and access to a fenced-in area guarded by security. Only those permitted inside could purchase alcohol but there were other activities for minors.

Students like Michael Okunola were surprised by the idea that Laurier would have a school-sanctioned drinking event.

“I didn’t know what it was going to be like,” said the second-year criminology student. “But I think it’s good to have more people aware of what we have on campus and I think the more awareness we have about [drinking] the better we can deal with [it], especially here at Laurier.”

Thousands of students — 33,000 by police estimates — gather at an unsanctioned street party every March on Ezra Street, near Laurier’s Waterloo campus. Police arrested 18 people last year.

Despite this reputation, Laurier Brantford wants to create a positive drinking culture.

The event focused on sampling from local breweries, said Anthony Massi, director of operations at Laurier Brantford.

Vendors sold five-ounce samples and half of the proceeds went to vendors with the rest donated to Nova Vita, a local women’s shelter.

Thames said that students have been asking for an event like this for years but most assume that it is against the rules.

The university worked closely with Laurier’s safety, health, environment and risk management (SHERM) department to make sure the event didn’t break any rules, said Massi.

Van Kleff supported the event not only as the owner of a brewery but because, “it promotes students drinking in small quantities rather than going to a frat party with overconsumption.”

The event was a success, says Thames. About 60 students attended and there were no incidents, showing that Laurier students can drink responsibly and respectfully when given the opportunity.

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Sam,

This story is really clean. Well done. I’d like to post on DMJZone (but you need to make some edits to your digital piece first. We can talk about that in class. Really well done.

For your next assignment:

* Keep up the good work ☺

Story pitch: 3.5/5

Written: 4.5/5 + 1.25 bonus for DMJZone = 5.75/5

Digital: 3/5 +1 for using Shorthand = 4/5

Total: 13.25/15