

Police dispute Miami 'bedlam'

By Eric Robinette
Staff Writer

OXFORD — An Oxford resident has complained of “bedlam” from the noisy parties and other antics of Miami University students — a charge that both the university and the chief of police dispute.

A local resident who would identify only as “A.A.M.” writes in a letter sent to the Oxford Press earlier this month: “When I was new to Oxford nine years ago, I found it to be a charming and tasteful neighborhood. As I witnessed the exodus of families and adults, I became resigned to the cold hard fact that I’m not in Kansas anymore.

“Every weekend is complete and total bedlam in my neighborhood (or should I say what used to be my neighborhood). There is no such thing as quiet after 11 p.m. or midnight or even 2 a.m.” The writer identifies the residence as being on West Walnut Street and complains of “screaming kids,” along with “fireworks, vandalism, trash and impromptu out-of-control bonfires.”

Contacted by the Journal-News, the writer said they did not wish to comment beyond what was stated in the letter. Miami says it works with off-campus students to help them be good neighbors.

Claire Wagner, spokeswoman for Miami University, replied, “We emphasize to off-campus students that they should be responsible citizens and good neighbors. Starting with a visit before classes start, called walkabouts, during which volunteer staff and town residents drop off brochures about safety, laws, trash pick-up, etc. We also have a student government secretary for off-campus affairs who is involved with city officials and a staff member who tries to be a liaison with the city. Residents should not have to deal with disturbances such as the letter describes.”

Wagner also said she spoke with the dean of students, Dr. Michael A. Curme, who said, “We have a clearly articulated set of expectations regarding behavior, formalized in local law, the Code of Conduct, and lease provisions but some students will violate them. The dean of students reminds students at the start of each semester to be responsible, safe and to respect others.”

Student Ari Frum co-chairs the Student Community Relations Commission, which reports to Oxford City Council. Frum emails off-campus students regularly and reminds them of their civic responsibilities as well as personal safety opportunities, Wagner said.

Robert Holzworth, Oxford’s chief of police, described the complaint of bedlam as “hyperbole” and said that the calls for service do not support that assertion. He said year-to-date, the police have received 532 noise complaints, which make up 2.5 percent of the total calls for service. The logs do not specify whether the source is a student or not, he said.

Some of the conduct de-

scribed by the letter-writer does occur, but Holzworth said, they are most common on or around weekends as the uptown bars close.

“I am not suggesting for even one second that the bars are singularly responsible for this behavior ... And, no, this is not acceptable behavior in the least and officers regularly cite offenders who engage in the conduct described in the letter, both uptown and in the square mile,” which is the area bordered by Patterson, Chestnut, Locust and Sycamore roads.

Oxford residents say not only that students are the lifeblood of the town, but that student noise is

part and parcel of the Oxford experience.

“I worked almost my whole career at Miami University. I’m dependent on the students. I was here to serve them. If they make a little bit of noise, it’s OK with me. I don’t spend time here at midnight or 1 in the morning either, so I can understand how people might have a slightly different view,” said Karl Mattox, the former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The chief invited the letter writer to work with the police and stated, “Oxford is too great a place for anyone to become so completely disheartened.”