

Students defend reproductive health access

By Brandon Cortés
Features Editor

Students gathered in Room 217 in the Adanti Student Center this week for an advocacy event aimed at protecting reproductive health care in Connecticut.

Public health major Chekeenah Jeudi, a senior and co-president of SISTAS, organized the event through her internship with Planned Parenthood’s Generation Action program.

“Generation Action interns act as the face of Planned Parenthood on their campus,” Jeudi said. “Today’s event is all about using our voices to support funding for Planned Parenthood and

the people who rely on its services.”

Participants were given scripts to use while making calls, along with information about how recent changes in federal and state funding have affected access to reproductive care.

Hosted by SISTAS in partnership with Planned Parenthood Votes! Connecticut, the phone-banking session encouraged students to call state legislators to support continued funding for Planned Parenthood and its health programs.

Jeudi explained that Planned Parenthood has faced major funding cuts in recent years which have threatened basic services

such as cancer screenings, STD testing and reproductive education.

“In Connecticut, a lot of people are on Medicaid — almost half the state,” Jeudi said. “If that’s your only coverage, and you can’t use it at Planned Parenthood, you’d have to pay out of pocket. That’s not something everyone can afford.”

Jeudi said she hoped the event would help reframe how students view Planned Parenthood. For many, the organization is often associated only with abortion care, but she emphasized that its reach extends far beyond that single issue.

Planned Parenthood offers a range of preventive and diagnostic health

services that are vital for communities across the country.

“I hope people realize that Planned Parenthood is about so much more than abortion,” Jeudi said. “They provide pap smears, breast exams, HIV and STI testing — things that save lives and keep communities healthy.”

The event drew a mix of volunteers from SISTAS, students from various majors and supporters from other campus organizations.

Tables were covered in flyers explaining how federal funding restrictions have limited access to care since 2019, when Title X changes barred many clinics from receiving funds if

they provided abortion referrals.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, those restrictions led to an estimated 46% drop in patients served nationwide in Title X programs, highlighting why advocacy remains essential.

For Jeudi, the afternoon was about more than making calls; it was about creating space for students to understand how local policy affects their own communities.

“We talk about national issues all the time,” Jeudi said, “but it’s important to remember how these decisions impact us right here in Connecticut.”

Between numerous-phone calls, students discussed the upcoming

legislative session and shared ideas for future events.

Jeudi said SISTAS plans to continue collaborating with Planned Parenthood throughout the year, hosting educational sessions and community drives to promote reproductive health and awareness.

As the event wound down, Jeudi said she felt encouraged by the turnout and by how many students took time to participate and take action into this matter..

“Advocacy starts right here,” Jeudi said. “If we can inspire even a handful of students to care about reproductive justice, then we’re doing something meaningful.”

Fraternity raises funds with annual Pumpkin Smash

By Brandon Cortés
Features Editor

Tau Kappa Epsilon hosted their annual Pumpkin Smash, a fall tradition that combined stress relief with philanthropy. Students took turns hurling pumpkins onto tarps outside the Adanti Student Center, raising money for the fraternity’s upcoming events and charitable causes.

Biology major Michael Brandi, a sophomore, said the Pumpkin Smash has become one of the fraternity’s most anticipated fundraisers each fall.

“Sometimes, we raise money for our chapter, and other years, we donate it all to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, which is our national philanthropic partner,” Brandi said.

The event gives

students a chance to let loose while supporting a good cause. Each participant donates a small fee to take part, and proceeds go either toward chapter activities or to St. Jude, depending on the year’s fundraising goal.

Brandi said pumpkins are gathered from local farms or donated through campus partners.

Special education major Quinn Eyrich, a junior, said the Pumpkin Smash has been going strong for three years and continues to grow in popularity.

“This is my second year doing it,” Eyrich said. “We’ve been running this event for three years now, and it’s always a great way to bring people together.”

The event’s atmosphere was lighthearted, a mix of laughter, friendly competition and the satisfying

sound of pumpkins shattering on impact. For the fraternity, though, the fun is grounded in service.

TKE has long partnered with St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, raising funds to help cover treatment costs for families affected by childhood cancer.

Psychology major Ivin Garcia, a senior, said he is proud to see the chapter maintain that focus even in a casual, campus-centered event.

“When we do it for St. Jude’s, all the money goes directly to the hospital,” Garcia said. “It all gets put into treatment. That’s what makes it meaningful for us.”

Beyond fundraising, events like the Pumpkin Smash also help the fraternity strengthen ties with the university community.

Students who stop by often learn more about TKE’s mission and its ongoing charitable efforts.

Brandi said that while this year’s funds will help cover chapter expenses for future programming, philanthropy remains a central value for all members.

As the last pumpkins were cleared away, fraternity members reflected on how something as simple as smashing pumpkins could unite students behind a cause.

The event, they said, was less about competition and more about community. It offered a chance to unwind, laugh and contribute to something meaningful

“It’s fun, it’s messy and it’s for something good,” Brandi said. “That’s what this event is all about.”



PHOTO | BRANDON CORTÉS
Pumpkins lie smashed in the Academic Quad.



Tau Kappa Epsilon’s annual Pumpkin Smash.

Owls Decide: Do you prefer comedy or horror?

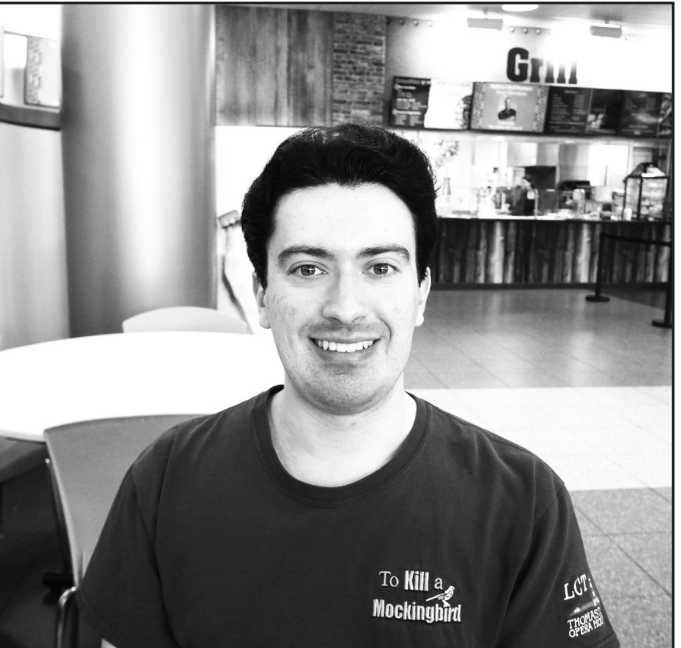
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PHOTOS | WADE BARILLARO
“Comedy because I don’t really like horror movies.”
-Exercise and sport science major Jadyn Westcott, a sophomore



“Comedy movies because they are more enjoyable.”
-Theatre major Anthony Forbs, a senior



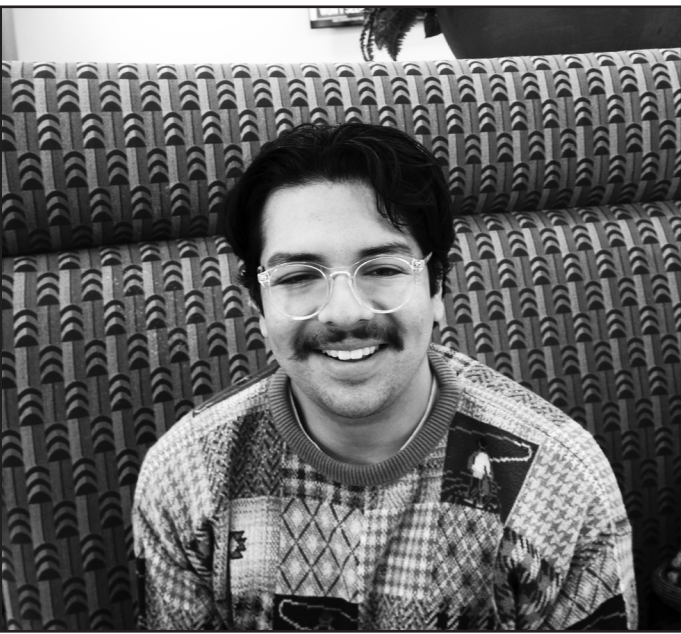
“Comedy because it’s more entertaining and family friendly.”
-Theatre major Tyler White, a senior



“Horror because they have more interesting stories.”
-Art and design major Cole Shanley, a freshman



“Horror because a good movie should stick with you.”
-History major Jack Abbot, a senior



“Comedy because the thing I like the most in this life is to laugh.”
-English major Justin Ayora, a senior