The Student Health Center Shares Tips to Avoid the Flu!
Contributed by Dan Bruey, Director of the AU Student Health Center

Flu season is upon us. The Student Health Center has created the following short list of tips to help you stay healthy.

- Get your flu vaccine. Flu vaccines are available at the Student Health Center for FREE! Stop in between 9:00AM and 6:00PM. No appointment necessary.
- Wash your hands often. Frequent hand washing helps protect you. The alcohol in sanitizer gels and wipes helps kill cold and flu viruses you pick up from any surface you touch. Plain soap works just as well as antibacterial soap.
- Try not to touch your face. Try not to rub your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can enter your body this way, or be spread from your hands to others.
- Cover your sneeze or cough. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve to trap the germs. If you cough into your hands, wash them as soon as you can. Use disposable tissues and throw them away immediately after each use.
- If you get sick, keep it from spreading!
- Limit your exposure to others. Stay home and rest.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- Treat your aches and fever. Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Advil) can help provide relief. Be sure to follow the instructions on the label, especially for children. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without using fever-reducing medicine.
- Viruses – not bacteria – cause colds, flu, and chest colds. Antibiotics don't kill viruses, so they don't work for colds or flu.

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, please schedule an appointment (202.885.3380) with the Student Health Center between the hours of 9:00AM to 6:00PM Monday through Friday. When the Student Health Center is closed, call the Nurse Line for medical advice at 866-900-7162.

Your Winter Responsibilities Living Off-Campus

Winter is upon us and that brings new responsibilities as an off-campus student. Your lease should designate responsibility regarding winter clean-up: shoveling the drive-way, parking areas, pathways, stairs and sidewalks.

District law requires that property owners clear snow and ice from sidewalks, handicap ramps and steps within the first eight hours after the snow, sleet or ice stops falling.

If ice cannot be removed, property owners may spread sand or salt to make the sidewalks safe. The District government does not plow alleys. If necessary, alley trash collection will be moved curb-side.

The D. C. Mayor determines when it is necessary to declare a snow emergency. ALL vehicles must be removed immediately from SNOW EMERGENCY ROUTES. Illegal parking vehicles are subject to a $250 fine with additional towing and impound fees.

www.american.edu/offcampushousing
Message from the Associate Dean of Students—Michelle Espinosa

Welcome back!! I hope you had an enjoyable winter break and that the time away from campus gave you a chance to re-energize for your new classes and the excitement that the spring semester brings. We all have visions of warm spring weather that will eventually arrive, but there are still a few months of cold winter weather to manage. Winter weather can present unique challenges to students living off-campus. Here are a few tips and recommendations to make your lives easier and safer!

Trying to warm up your house or apartment? Be Safe!

- Don’t overload electrical outlets with space heaters or electric blankets.
- Unplug blankets and space heaters when not in the room.
- If you have a working fire place, talk to your landlord and be sure it has been properly maintained and is ready for use before lighting a fire.
- Keep a container of water close by the fire place at all times and never go to sleep or leave your residence without first completely extinguishing the fire.
- Don’t place any flammable items near the fire place (blankets, pillows, newspapers, etc.)
- Talk with your roommates about a fire evacuation plan and make sure all windows and doors can be opened and used as an exit in an emergency.

Hoping for a snow day or two…or three? Be prepared!

- Buy a snow shovel and other snow removal equipment.
- Buy a few bags of rock salt to help melt ice and keep your front walk and porch steps safe.
- Make arrangements for snow removal if you are required to do so as a tenant.
- Establish a plan with roommates for shoveling your front walk and the sidewalk in front of your house. (Go the “extra mile” and shovel the walk and sidewalk for your closest neighbors too!)
- Let your landlord know if your gutters and downspouts need to be cleared or make arrangements for it to be done if you are responsible for this.
- Buy a few bags of rock salt to help melt ice and keep your front walk and porch steps safe.
- Make arrangements for snow removal if you are required to do so as a tenant.
- Establish a plan with roommates for shoveling your front walk and the sidewalk in front of your house. (Go the “extra mile” and shovel the walk and sidewalk for your closest neighbors too!)
- Let your landlord know if your gutters and downspouts need to be cleared or make arrangements for it to be done if you are responsible for this.

Know and abide by the parking rules in your neighborhood as they relate to snow removal in the streets.

Planning to host friends at your residence this semester? Be mindful and considerate of your neighbors!

- If you host a gathering, take steps to monitor and control your guests’ behavior. Keep noise levels to a minimum, and end your party at a reasonable hour.
- Communicate with neighbors about your plans and provide contact information so they can reach you if needed.
- Identify one or two roommates as “house managers” any time you have friends over. Think of them as your “Designated Drivers.” They can manage guests, monitor noise, clean up the yard and surrounding area, and respond to phone calls or neighbor concerns if the need arises.

Best wishes for a successful spring semester!

Know Your Resources—Office of the Tenant Advocate

Contributed by Christina Medico, Off-Campus & Guest Housing Coordinator

The Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA) is a District of Columbia independent agency that provides technical advice and other legal services to tenants regarding disputes with landlords; educates and informs the tenant community about tenant rights and rental housing matters; advocates for the rights and interests of District renters in the legislative, regulatory, and judicial contexts; and provides financial assistance to displaced tenants for certain emergency housing and tenant relocation expenses. OTA was established in April 2006 and is located in the Reeves Center, 2000 14th St. – Suite 300N.

OTA is working in collaboration with area universities and colleges to educate student tenants on their rights and provide assistance in resolving disputes with their landlords. Student tenants can seek assistance from the OTA in a number of ways. First, a student tenant can contact the office at 202-719-6560 and go through intake, after which the case will be forwarded to one of the Case Management Specialists. A student tenant can also visit the office during walk-in hours and meet with the Case Management Specialist on duty.

The walk-in hours are Monday and Wednesday from 8:45AM until 3:30PM, Tuesday and Thursday from 8:45AM until 4:45PM and on Friday from 1:00PM until 3:00PM. A third option is to visit the OTA website at www.ota.dc.gov and click ‘Ask the Director’ to submit a question online.

Finally, the OTA holds a monthly chat session to answer live questions submitted online from the tenant community. For additional information, including the scheduled dates and time, go to the website and click on the OTA Live Q&A Chat link.

During the Off-Campus Housing Fair on January 30th, a representative from the Office of the Tenant Advocate will have a table at the fair. Students are invited to bring any questions regarding their lease or landlord challenges.
Getting to Know the Director of Community Relations—Andrew Huff

The Office of Community Relations works to grow and sustain positive relations with AU’s neighbors. AU neighbors are invited to attend lectures on campus, enjoy musical performances and openings at the Katzen Arts Center, show their support as “Friends of the Library”, take advantage of special rates at the university fitness center and pool, and make use of campus amenities such as our bookstore, retail food outlets, and ATM machines.

Andrew Huff began his work as American University’s new Director of Community Relations in November 2012.

When asked about his new position, Huff commented: “As the Director of Community Relations, I’ll be working with the University and the surrounding neighborhoods to help ensure there are strong and productive relations between the two.”

Huff comes to American University from the office of Ward 2 Councilmember Jack Evans where he served as Director of Communications. Prior to that, he served in Mayor Adrian Fenty’s Office of Community Relations and Services. Huff has also worked at the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). Andrew holds a Masters of Public Administration from American University School of Public Affairs, and a Bachelors of Arts from James Madison University.

It’s Getting Cold. Will You Have Heat? It’s Your Right in D.C.

As temperatures drop in the Washington area, tenants look to their building’s owners to provide adequate heat.

If landlords fail to comply, they could face a fine of $1,000 and other potential penalties and fees from the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). District law also requires minimum temperatures be maintained in living areas during cold weather regardless of the calendar date. It is your right to be warm in the District.

What Landlords Must Do: Keep heating equipment in good repair and capable of maintaining temperature of at least 70 degrees. If any living unit where the tenant cannot control or set the temperature, the buildings heat must be kept at least 68 degrees between 6:30AM and 11:00PM, and 65 degrees between 11:00PM and 6:30AM. Additionally, they must get every furnace, boiler, and central heating system inspected between March 1 and September 1 of each year.

What Tenants Must Do: Check your thermostat to make sure it’s on and it heat mode. Contact your landlord, property manager, or building superintendent to report your problem immediately. If your problem is not solved, call DCRA’s housing inspector staff at (202) 442-9557.

What DCRA Will Do: Contact the property owner or agent to tell them about the complaint. Dispatch an inspector to investigate the solution. Issue a Notice to fix the problem. Any property owner who does not comply with any Notice of Violation may get a fine of $1,000 and other penalties and fees.

311.dc.gov

Use the online service or call 311 for the following issues:

* Trash Violations * Rat Abatement * Illegal Dumping * Street Repairs *
* Order New Trash Cans * Broken Utilities * Bulk Trash Pick-Up * Safety Hazards *
* Missed Trash Pick-Up * Parking Enforcement *

Download the 311 app at ouc.dc.gov/page/dc-311-smartphone-app
Accessibility in the City

Contributed by Jennifer Baron, Disability Support Services

It’s no secret that the city of Washington, DC is a huge part of the AU student experience. While the city is most known for its history, politics and culture, it is also one of the most accessible cities in the world! Consider a baseball game at Nationals Park. The stadium has many Universal Design features, a primary example being large ramps that allow fans to travel to every area of the stadium without using stairs. The concept of Universal Design means creating facilities that are friendly to all types of users. In this case, ramps benefit the person pushing a stroller, the person using a wheelchair, and the person who just doesn’t feel like walking up a flight of stairs.

AU is committed to providing all students with or without disabilities access to all university services and programs. As an off-campus student, however, you encounter non-AU facilities, transportation, housing and entertainment on a regular basis. Think about all of these areas in your life. Are there elevators or accessible entrances where you live or work? Do you ride a bus that announces what stop you are at visually, aurally, or both? Does your favorite restaurant have wide aisles between tables? Do you notice curb cuts on the sidewalks of your neighborhood? While the answer is not always going to be “yes,” we encourage you to think and ask questions about accessibility in all areas of your off-campus experience.

Whether or not you identify as a person with a disability, access relates to you. Think about your friends, house guests, family, boss, coworkers and classmates. Disabilities are not always visible, and they may change or develop over time. Learn about the accessibility resources at AU and DC and understand the rights of all people to access our city. You can also do little things to ensure that your environment is usable to all people. The restaurant you go to may have been designed with a wide aisle, but if you leave your chair in the middle of it you can block the route of access.

Commit to recognizing how you impact your environment, involve yourself in creative problem-solving to provide access when it may not seem possible, and interact with all types of people to build a larger understanding of how others learn, use facilities, communicate and engage off-campus.

Making Modifications

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for landlords to refuse to let tenants make reasonable modifications to a house or apartment if the tenant is willing to pay for the changes. The tenant will probably have to restore the apartment or house back to its original state when leaving if the landlord wants it restored; however, added accessibility features often make the unit marketable to more populations and a landlord might be willing to share the cost or take the cost off the rent due.

A housing provider must allow a tenant with a disability to make changes to the physical structure of the premises, that (1) are reasonable and (2) give a tenant with disabilities equal access and full enjoyment of the residence. These could include:

- Installing grab bars
- Replacing doorknobs with lever handles
- Widening doorways for wheelchair access
- Installing an entrance ramp to the building

Adapted from The National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s “Affordable Accessible Housing: A Guide for People with MS in the District of Columbia” publication.

Landlord Trouble?

Questions about your lease?

For tips and assistance, check out the following resources:

- D.C. Tenants
  Office of the Tenant Advocate
  http://ota.dc.gov/

- Maryland Tenants
  Maryland Attorney General's Office
  Consumer Protection Division
  http://www.oag.state.md.us/consumer/

- Virginia Tenants
  Virginia Fair Housing Office
  http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/FairHousing/
Update from Student Government (SG) President - Emily Yu:

Events, Advocacy, Reform and Resources

We hope you had a chance this past semester to make it out to some SG events, give us feedback on advocacy via forums or social media, and take advantage of some of the many resources we provide.

Founders’ Day has been announced to take place on Saturday, February 23rd! Like American University Student Government on Facebook and follow @ausg on twitter for more updates on location, how to get tickets, etc.

Get involved with some of the big issues SG is continuing to work on this semester. From the smoke-free initiative to the university budget to dining services, SG is looking for your input for advocacy. Keep an eye out for open forums and other events posted on facebook or twitter, email updates, and the like. If you have any comments or suggestions for any advocacy issues email me at president@ausg.org.

We will also be holding a special election on a new constitution for the Student Government, which will change the current organizational structure and purpose and turn the American University Student Government to the American University Student Association. The election will take place online Tuesday, February 5th - Wednesday, February 6th via the MyAU portal. Questions can be directed to elections@ausg.org.

SG’s Community Service Coalition is one of our main resources for providing opportunities for those of us who live off-campus to engage in service projects in our neighborhoods close to campus.

The MLK Day of Service, an annual tradition that we partner with the University on, will be held on Saturday, January 19th. Service work will be followed by a Hurricane Sandy Benefit Concert in the Tavern. More information can be found at csc.ausg.org.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our many upcoming events. If you’re interested in joining us in our work we’d love to have you! Just contact outreach@ausg.org or visit outreach.ausg.org for open positions.

Renting Licensed Spaces

Residential housing licenses are required for all rental properties in the District of Columbia including homes, apartments, condominiums, basement apartments and apartment Buildings.

It is important to make sure that the person you are renting from has the appropriate license to rent. A licensed space is up-to-date with fire and safety codes. It also means that there are no structural issues with the space. If you currently reside in a space that does not have rental license, It’s possible that you may be forced to leave.

We are currently working with Off-Campus Partners, the host of our off-campus posting site, to verify that all off-campus housing rental opportunities posted on the site have the proper license to rent.

You can find more information through the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs at dc.gov/DC/DCRA.

Conflict Resolution Services

GOT CONFLICT? We can help.

AU Conflict Resolution Services provides free services to all AU Students, including those living off-campus. We can help with roommate conflicts, landlord-tenant conflicts, and more.

Services provided: conflict coaching, mediation, and facilitated conversations.

Peer mediation training will be held February 21st—24th 2013!

All services are free, voluntary, and confidential

Please email conflictresolutions@american.edu for more information
Top 5 Tips for Being a Successful Commuter Student

Contributed by Nazran Baba & Corinne Acosta—International Student & Scholar Services

Commuter students face particular challenges that on-campus residents take for granted. While the chances are that commuter students don’t have to share their bathrooms, count precious meal swipes, and be susceptible to false fire alarms, a significant amount of commuter students sometimes feel disconnected from the goings on of the AU campus. And yet, this doesn’t always have to be the case. Take it from your seasoned seniors. We have compiled the following top 5 tips based on our years of off-campus living experience.

1. Be pro-active – nothing just happens, sometimes we have to make things happen. Taking that extra step to speak to a classmate before class or attend the first meeting of the semester for a club you heard about a few hours ago. It can make the difference between meeting your next best friend and never knowing of their existence. Think more like a “yes-man” and before you know it, you’ll see a world of new opportunities open up.

2. Read Today@AU – with all that goes on in AU it’s hard to keep track of it all or even know of what’s happening. Today@AU provides ample information for one to actively be involved on campus and find new opportunities to explore, and occasions to be a part of. Since it’s a public forum anyone is invited. The range of opportunities may just be your next step forward socially, academically or even professionally.

3. Find your spots – where do you go when you want to study, socialize, rest or think? Finding your perfect spots to suit your mood and wants will enable you to be productive while you’re at AU. Did you know that the 4th floor of Butler Pavilion has an open roof garden that awaits you, or that some areas in the Katzen Arts Center rival the pin drop silence of the Quiet Floor in the Library? Are you aware of the Commuter Lounge in the East Quad Building or the Commuter Corner in the library? Scout around AU and find your spot. Before you know it you won’t be able to do without it.

4. Reach out – AU’s middle name has to be resources because there’s a resource for everything. Feeling blue? There’s the Counseling Center. Feeling curious about different cultures and the world? Head on down to the International Student and Scholar Services Office (4th Floor Butler Pavilion) to find out about their resources such as the Talk Program or learn more about the upcoming “International Vibe”. Talk it out or ask aloud and you’ll be surprised at the answers you’ll hear back.

Further information about the TALK Program: http://www.american.edu/ocl/issss/TALK.cfm

This year’s International Vibe will take place on Friday, February 22. Join us for an international buffet dinner, cultural performances, and the after party! Tickets will be available soon from the International Student Leadership Team.

5. Be open-minded – the college experience is as good as you make it. AU offers bridges for students to walk across in every direction and ultimately it lands on us if we wish to take the step. As a commuter student, while the need to take the ride back home is always on one’s mind, think openly and go beyond the daily routine of arriving at 9AM and leaving sharply at 5PM. You never know who you may meet or what you may learn by being open minded and spending a few additional hours to explore a new opportunity. Only you can find out where it will lead you.
Maximize Your Experience Living Off-Campus

Contributed by Curtis Burrill, Student Activities

Living off-campus has some definite benefits. Planning what and when you eat is a simple pleasure and having your own space and friends who come only when invited is sweet. However, as you may have already discovered, off-campus living takes a little more work and carries with it some responsibilities.

That’s where the University Center and Student Activities can help. No, we don’t clean toilets, but we do have some resources that can help you work with neighbors and roommates to ensure a positive living environment.

As a student, you represent AU as well as your student organization in the neighborhood. The folks who live around you frame their opinions of the university and its value as a part of the community based on how you respect your surroundings. You have to remember that you are living in an area where families (with early bedtimes) are heavily invested in keeping the area clean, attractive and peaceful.

The Office of Campus Life has a well developed “good neighbor” plan that can help you start off and stay on good terms with the folks you live with and around. Here’s how to access that document www.american.edu/ocl/scrs/index.cfm. All of the UC/SA staff are happy to work with you if you have any questions.

Two AU Students Elected as ANC Commissioners

Contributed by Tom Schad, Off-Campus Community Assistant

The beginning of a new semester was something else for AU students Rory Slatko and Joe Wisniewski: the beginning of a new job.

Slatko and Wisniewski were elected in November to serve on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC), a local governing body that advocates on behalf of residents in neighborhood discussions. The students were sworn into two-year terms on January 9.

Wisniewski represents Ward 3D10, a student-friendly district that includes the Avalon, Berkshire and Greenbriar apartments on Massachusetts Avenue. Slatko won his seat as a write-in candidate in Ward 3D07, which includes Anderson, Centennial, Hughes, Leonard and McDowell Halls.

Both are excited to advocate for students both on and off campus in the upcoming year.

“I think the best course of action I’m willing to take is making sure everyone comes to the table,” Slatko, a sophomore, told The Eagle.

The two School of Public Affairs students have followed in the footsteps of classmate Deon Jones, who recently vacated the seat that Slatko now occupies. Slatko and Wisniewski were among nine students in Washington D.C. who campaigned last semester for seats on ANCs. Seven of the nine won their respective races.

ANCs are the most local level of government in Washington D.C. They meet monthly to discuss issues ranging from parking and economic development to recreation and sanitation. Each commissioner represents about 2,000 residents, and Wisniewski said he does not take that responsibility lightly.

“I think the moment it hit me that this was something special was when I had more residents helping me than students during the campaign,” Wisniewski said. “I ran to bring the community together and bring common sense into local politics.”

Service Opportunities Available through DC READS!

Interested in getting involved in the DC community? Have a passion for tutoring children? Apply to be a DC Reads tutor for the spring at one of our nine sites. Each site ranges in location, time, age group, and the type of tutoring so you are sure to find one that fits your interests and needs. Students with FWS are encouraged to apply. To get involved come to any of our information sessions (January 22nd in MGC 245 at 5PM, January 30th in MGC 247 at 5PM, and February 5th in MGC 200 at 5PM), or you can fill out the application at www.american.edu/volunteer. If you have any questions call DC Reads at 202-885-7378. Or email at DCReads@american.edu.
Clawed’s Corner

By Clawed Eagle
AU Mascot & Off-Campus Housing Expert

Clawed, How much can my landlord require me to pay as a security deposit?
Security Deposits cannot be more than one month’s rent. No landlord should charge you two or three times one month’s rent as a Security Deposit fee. Additionally, your landlord cannot ask for your Security Deposit after you have moved into the space.

Clawed, What should I do if I have a suspected housing violation?
If you feel that your apartment or building does not comply with the standards outlined by the D.C. Housing Code, please contact The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs at (202) 442-9557. You can also request an inspection via email at dcra.housingcomplaints@dc.gov. Please include your name, phone number, and summary of your issue.

Clawed, Who should I contact if I have mold in my apartment?
The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs does not cite for mold. However, they do cite for damages caused by mold. If you have mold in your apartment it is important to contact www.mold.dc.gov

Clawed, What does it mean that my apartment is exempt from “Rent Stabilization”?
Rent Stabilization, commonly referred to as “Rent Control” is the regulatory policy that limits and/or restricts the rental amount and frequency of rent increases in property deemed non-exempt to the provisions of the Housing Act of 1985. If your property is exempt, it means that it is not subject to rent stabilization.

Got questions for Clawed???
Email him at offcampushousing@american.edu
American University
Off-Campus
Housing Fair

COME ONE, COME ALL

JAN. 30TH 2013

4pm-6pm University Club, Mary Graydon Center 2-6
exhibitors, refreshments, door prizes, and more!

Email: offcampushousing@american.edu
Wwww.american.edu/offcampushousing