

# Visiting anti-abortion group raises 'hell' on W&M campus

*W&M students are disturbed by the graphic and condemning message of an anti-abortion group visiting schools in Virginia.*

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**WILLIAMSBURG** — Caitlin DeMarco, a freshman at the College of William and Mary, is a Christian who attends a Southern Baptist church most

Sundays. She has also joined W&M's Students for Life, a pro-life group first organized on campus 20 years ago.

But Monday, angry protesters on campus shouted at her and many other William and Mary students — "Turn

to Jesus, or you're going to hell" — because as public university students they are pursuing a secular education, and some engage in pre-marital sex and use birth control.

A religious anti-abortion group, Life and Liberty Min-

istries has staged impromptu protests this week at many of Virginia's universities, including the University of Virginia, James Madison University and Old Dominion

*Please see W&M/C2*

# Student group worries about negativity

University, and at even a few high schools. The group also drives what it calls a "truth truck," displaying graphic images of mutilated fetuses, around each campus they visit.

When the group appeared at William and Mary on Monday, students from pro-choice and gay rights groups prepared a counter-demonstration in Crim Dell Meadow, but the Students for Life were caught by surprise.

"They were just upsetting for everyone on campus, even those who weren't on any side of the abortion issue," said W&M junior Katie Poandl, vice-president of Students for Life. "I had to watch that truck go by when I was eating my lunch."

W&M students from pro-choice and other progressive groups launched a tolerance week in response to Monday's events.

"We were very impressed with the student response," said junior Mary Walters, vice-president of VOX, W&M's pro-choice group. "You don't want apathy in the face of that kind of hatred and intolerance."

Pro-life and pro-choice students alike wished the William and Mary administration had warned them about the Life and Liberty demonstration (the "hell people," as some in the Students for Life group called them), but the college was never

officially contacted before the group's arrival.

"I repeatedly tried to get ahold of them to confirm the time, place and manner of their visit," said Mark Constantine, assistant vice-president for student affairs, after reading of the group's tour on a Web site. "But we were never contacted."

As a public university, the college had to uphold freedom of speech, so long as it didn't disrupt the academic environment. But Constantine said the situation devolved into "a shouting match on all sides," particularly since another group, separate from Life and Liberty, came on campus to preach a fire-and-brimstone gospel to students at the same time.

The Students for Life were particularly worried that Life and Liberty spread negative stereotypes about the pro-life message. Just last week, the group hosted a speaker from the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, to reach a wider audience.

"We had just made a big step forward and then boom!" said Amy Green, the president of Students for Life.

"We work so hard to build this unity — that's the way to change minds — but it's harmful to just hit students with offensive signs and then leave. That's exactly what we're not trying to do." ■