
DOWNTOWN, FENWAY-KENMORE

BU junior rallies classmates to Occupy Boston cause

Posted by Roy Greene

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By Eric Baker, Globe Correspondent

Instead of riding long boards, studying Plato, and playing bass for his band, Brandon Wood, a Boston University junior, has spent recent weeks organizing other BU students to support the Occupy Boston movement.

Wood is not what critics like to emphasize when analyzing the Occupy movement. He is in many ways a normal college student -- he has a 3.5 GPA, a girlfriend, and likes to go to parties, though he doesn't drink.

But when it comes to organizing for BU Occupy Boston, he's passionate and a bit sleep-deprived from spending so much time in Dewey Square.

"My main issue is that a very small group of individuals outside our government having a significant impact on the rules and regulations that everyone of our democracy has to live by which therefore diminishes said democracy," said Wood, who is from Milford, Conn.

Wood helped to organize BU Occupy Boston on the Kenmore Square campus two months ago, around the time the main movement set up camp downtown. He created the Facebook page and within two hours over 200 people had joined. The group now has 509 members.

"I saw ... something we could really get the BU community involved in, and there are a lot of passionate people here," he said.

Students are a major component of the Boston movement. Many of them say they feel "swindled" by a broken economy with limited jobs after paying copious amounts of money to attend universities that were supposed to help them get jobs.

The BU movement has yielded large groups for recent protests. Wood said that at their first event, on Columbus Day, around 150 students marched down Commonwealth Avenue to the Boston Common where they met up with a large group of students from all over Boston and then met up with a labor march that peaked around 10,000 people.

"Something incredible happened that day," he said.

Wood, however, has met one challenge: Whether he likes it or not (he doesn't), he is seen as a leader in the movement that is supposed to have no leaders. Wood considers himself to be well informed, interested, and impassioned, but not a leader.

"I call myself an organizer, which functions similar to a leader ... as an organizer, getting people together with worries and concerns, establishing those forums, making small decisions such as

what time to meet or you know suggesting those kind of things,” he said. “I have my ideas, I bring them up, and I make sure that I hear everyone else’s.”

With winter and finals bearing down on the Occupier students, Wood said that numbers have not dropped, though students have less time to participate. The students hold a “BU Occupies Boston” General Assembly meeting every Sunday night and discuss what various working groups can do to attract more students, work on policy ideas to submit to politicians, and organize teach-ins and rallies.

“On a more student level, we’re focusing more on trying to branch out to the colleges in New York that are really strong, too, and have a more united front,” Wood said.

Wood has been involved in most of Occupy Boston’s activities so far, including the march that led to the arrests of 141 protesters on Oct. 15. Protesters, Wood included, were arrested for trespassing after hours in a private park. Wood joined one of the two human chains at the second park.

“We were doing the right thing -- standing for civil disobedience,” he said.

Wood said he was arrested by three officers in riot gear who kicked the back of his knees to force him to the ground before placing him in plastic cuffs.

Officers drove him around to various police lock-ups before they found room for him. Then he had to wait more than four hours before he was processed, he said.

Oddly enough, he said he enjoyed the experience because he had the camaraderie of friends during the ordeal.

In court, he was ordered to pay a \$50 fine for being in an unlawful assembly and trespassing in a public park after 11 p.m.

As the movement endures, Wood said he has faith that the larger movement will only grow and that politicians might begin to talk about what he calls “the actual national issues, not what the politicians decide the issues are.”

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