

'To help women help themselves'

Women's rights seminar planned

By SUZANNE BLACK
Special to The Battalion

"I moved here nine years ago. My first impression was that this was a very oppressive place for women."

Nine years ago, the population of Bryan-College Station was just over 50,000. There was a shortage of resources for women — no crisis hot lines, no shelter, few child care or family planning services, few women's organizations and few career opportunities.

"Our divorce was in Dallas. When he stopped sending the child support payments I thought I'd have to return there to file suit."

Today, the population of Bryan-College Station is about 90,000. Women from all over the country make up a large percentage of the migration to this area. When they moved here, they brought their problems and needs with them.

"The conference is designed from an objective approach, rather than an emotional one," Rita Marsh-Birch said.

"It's only natural for women to band together for support and to pool their efforts."

These quotes come from Bryan-College Station residents who have something distinctive in common. They're part of a collection of women who have joined in an attempt to help women help themselves. The culmination of their efforts is the upcoming conference, "The Legal Rights of Brazos County Women."

The conference will be held Saturday at Bryan High School from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It will focus on how state and national laws affect women in terms of family, employment, credit, education and crime. Participants will be familiarized with the county-wide resources available to them. It will be held in the spirit of local cooperation, not activism.

"The conference is designed from an objective approach, rather than an emotional one, to give a comprehensive coverage of different issues and problems," said Rita Marsh-Birch, the program coordinator. Marsh-Birch is a member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the group that initiated the conference.

"The AAUW branches in San Antonio, Houston and Dallas had similar conferences and some of our members who went to one were very impressed," explained Marsh-Birch. That was last April and by June, plans for a local program were under way.

"The other conferences had the cooperation of the local bar association and maybe one or two additional groups. Ours is a bigger conference. Besides the bar association, we have 12 other co-sponsors."

"Another difference," Marsh-Birch said, "is that Texas A&M University is not officially sponsoring us and our conference isn't being held on the University campus. Each of the other conferences was on a university campus and had the school somehow involved. We decided to get away from the University so we could also reach women other than those at A&M."

Greta Fryxell, president of the Bryan-College Station branch of the AAUW, said there is no doubt that the conference was designed for a community audience. "It has been organized by a community-based coalition of groups," she said. "The University would limit our accessibility."

Participating in any kind of coalition of groups is new to at least 10 of the 14 sponsoring organizations. It is also their first involvement in such a community-wide project. However, the members all seem to feel there will be benefits to their organizations as well as the community.

"Our members aren't involved enough in the community and I think this will help motivate them," said Vera Martinez, president of the Ladies LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) Council. "We have our own planned activities, but we thought this conference was a worthwhile project to announce to the Spanish community."

"We decided to get away from the University so we could also reach women other than those at A&M," Marsh-Birch said.

"We're organized for the purpose of promoting women's studies as a discipline and would only become involved in a project involving women," said Charol Shakeshaft, president of the student chapter of the South Central Women's Studies Association.

"There's a need for women to know more about everything, in-

cluding legal rights. That's why these women have come together as a coalition, to seek information and services," Shakeshaft said.

Shirley Plapp, president of the Altrusa Club, said, "We're definitely interested in things for women and in assisting others in the community through vocational services and scholarships." Altrusa is an executive and professional women's organization.

"We haven't been involved in such a large group effort before," Plapp said, "We were very anxious to participate."

"There's a need for women to know more about everything, including legal rights," said Charol Shakeshaft.

"We're certainly interested in ensuring that as many women as possible are aware of their rights," said Merrill Whitburn, president of the Brazos Civil Liberties Union.

Merrill said the Civil Liberties Union recently had its largest meeting ever. He said he thinks many other organizations are going to have a resurgence in membership, and the conference is an example of growing community interest.

"It's in the interest of these different organizations to cooperate in order to be more efficient and effective. I think the community will see more of this," he said.

What the AAUW members would like to see is a continued cooperation between women's groups and between groups concerned with women's rights. Referring to the legal rights conference, AAUW president Fryxell said, "We'd like to use this as a beginning. The conference isn't the end of our objectives."

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Wood cutting begins for '78 Aggie bonfire

By CLAY WEBER
Battalion Reporter

With the Texas A&M University-Texas football game a little more than three weeks away, preparations are being made for the 1978 Aggie bonfire.

The bonfire, which symbolizes the Aggie students' love for their school and their "burning desire to beat the hell out of t.u.," will be at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 30, at the intramural field.

The center pole for the 60-foot-tall bonfire will be raised Friday, at noon.

The cutting of bonfire wood has already begun. The Texas Municipal Power Agency has allowed Aggies to

secure wood for the bonfire from land outside Carlos on Highway 30. Wood is cut at the Carlos area and transported to the bonfire site by truck.

All Aggies may help with the bonfire preparation. In order to cut wood a person should go to the animal science pavilion between 5:30 and 6 p.m. during weekdays. He will receive a brief course in cutting safety and will receive a "cutting card" which will enable him to work on the bonfire.

The origin of the bonfire is hazy but there is some indication in old Texas A&M yearbooks that the bonfire began between 1908 and 1912. The old bonfires were made of

trash, old lumber and outhouses, supposedly unoccupied.

The height of the bonfire traditionally rose a foot each year and in 1969 reached a height of 109 feet. Concern over the safety of surrounding buildings from falling ashes blown in the wind has resulted in bonfires since staying at a maximum height of around 60 feet.

Corps members are required to work on the bonfire. Non-reg students living on campus who wish to work may contact Wendell Pool at 845-1948. Off-campus students desiring to participate may contact Tim Meier at 693-4121.

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Denver police raid pot 'vending machine'

United Press International

DENVER — Four suspects at a house one block from a high school set up a "pot dispensing machine" at which students could buy marijuana, police said.

Detective Tom Fisher said Wednesday the "machine" was in the form of a booth, and buyers would slide their money through a slot cut in a door. Police said many of the customers were high school students.

Fisher said a person sitting on a stool on the other side of the door would slide a quantity of marijuana and change through the slot and was never seen by the buyer.

Police raided the house, located one block from Manual High School,

Tuesday after receiving complaints from neighbors, Fisher said. Three adults and a juvenile were arrested at the house after five Denver vice officers broke down the door.

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