

# Local

## Handicapped children helped by 1972 ruling

Editors note: This is the first of a three-part series on the special problems of handicapped children.

By MARJORIE MCLAUGHLIN  
Battalion Staff

Why Johnny can't read is an increasing concern for both parents and teachers. But, what about the education of the Johnnys and Marys who can't walk, hold a pencil or hear a lesson?

The United Nations has declared 1981 the Year of the Disabled. Increased awareness about the rights of the handicapped has been brought about, in large part, by the recent actions in the area of education.

In the face of increasing post-World War II lobbying by parents, the United States Office of Education established the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped in 1967. Handicapped children were defined as those with speech, vision, hearing or learning problems, as well as those who were crippled or were mentally or emotionally disabled.

In 1972 a landmark ruling, Mills vs. the District of Columbia, stated that every child, regardless of handicap, has a constitutional right to free public education.

This ruling was reinforced by the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited any type of discrimination against the handicapped.

There was need for a comprehensive education bill for handicapped children in the United States, only 40 percent of whom attended school. The remaining

60 percent were either at home receiving no education, or were living in state institutions.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL-94-142) of 1975, established the right of every handicapped child to a free education with individually designed course programs. The federal government made \$400 million available to the states to help finance the special education programs.

The success of that 1975 law can be seen today in local school districts.

"People are more aware of individual needs. People just see special education as a part of the (educational) program," said Phyllis Perkins, director of Special Services for the College Station Independent School District (CSISD). CSISD has 475 disabled children enrolled.

"When I was younger, severely handicapped children were either in state hospitals or kept at home," remarked Pat Fox, Perkins' counterpart at the Bryan Independent School District (BISD). Her district has an estimated enrollment of 1,000 handicapped children.

"The stigma of having a handicapped child is being erased," Fox said. "Parents keeping their children at home is not nearly so much a problem as it was even ten years ago."

Fox and Perkins, who are responsible for overseeing all aspects of their school district's special education programs, are enthusiastic proponents of the mainstreaming concept.

Mainstreaming means integrat-

ing handicapped children into regular classrooms. Studies done in the 1960s and 1970s showed that a large proportion of handicapped children functioned better, both academically and socially, when placed into regular classrooms.

Although this approach is not feasible for the most profoundly mentally handicapped, the technique is being used extensively with the physically and mildly mentally handicapped children.

Both school districts use the resource room strategy, providing a special homeroom where the handicapped meet periodically for individualized instruction.

BISD and CSISD provide such other special services as counseling, speech therapy and adaptive P.E. classes, designed to strengthen muscles and improve motor skills.

In addition, both school districts contract with the Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center for in-school physical therapy sessions.

What are the costs to the taxpayers for such individualized education programs?

"Each child is different, with different needs," said Fox. "You can get an average cost, but that is not a true picture for each child."

Perkins agreed, saying that expensive equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, closed-circuit televisions and buses with lifts for the physically handicapped, are often obtained through agencies such as the United Way and with special federal grants. BISD has seven such buses and CSISD has one.

The education programs begin early. PL-94-142 requires that children aged 3 to 21 must be provided with educational services, even at home or in a hospital if necessary. Fox said that visually-impaired children can start Braille lessons as early as 2 or 3, and children aged 3-5 can attend the federally-funded Head Start program for the handicapped.

Vocational education classes, provided for by the Vocational Act Amendment of 1973, are available for older children. School districts are required to provide vocational guidance counseling, job placement services and follow-up programs as needed.

"It is very hard for parents of handicapped children to let them take the risks that normal children take," said Fox. "But, they must let them take the risks of growing up."

NEXT: The parents, the children, and the teachers.

## Library sponsoring logo design contest

The Sterling C. Evans Library is sponsoring a logo design contest. Students, faculty and staff are asked to submit designs by April 1. The winning designer gets a \$50 prize.

The logo should represent library services and its purpose of service to the University.

The contest rules are as follows: — The contest is open to Texas A&M students, faculty and staff. Multiple entries may be submitted.

— Any shape is acceptable. The design should be contained within a 12 inch by 12 inch square with a 1/2 inch border.

— The design should be reproducible and in black and white — that is, without color.

— The design should be on heavy illustration board like India ink, zip-a-tone, black acrylic paint, possibly black and white photography. No charcoal, pencil or water color should be used.

— Contestants must be completely identified on the back of each submission with name, University department and telephone number.

— Entries should be submitted to Evelyn King, Room 200, Sterling C. Evans Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, Telephone 845-6111.

## Right-wing activist and defeated senator to debate

By BELINDA McCOY  
Battalion Staff

A liberal and a conservative will battle tonight, although their weapons will only be words.

Former Senator Birch Bayh, D-Indiana, will debate Terry Dolan, co-founder and chairman of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) at 8 p.m. in the Rudder Theater Complex. MSC Political Forum is sponsoring the debate.

"We were very fortunate in getting this debate," said Sam Gillespie, chairman of Political Forum. "It will be the political event of the season."

NCPAC played a major role in last fall's defeat of Bayh, Gillespie said. This debate is unusual because it marks the first time Dolan has publicly faced a man he defeated, said Susan Still, chairman of the debate.

Political action committees were created to sup-

plement federal funds for political candidates, Gillespie said.

NCPAC, a prominent political action committee, instituted a political "hit list" last fall, Gillespie said. NCPAC targeted five liberal senators for defeat, using extensive media advertisements to weaken their reputations. Four of those senators were defeated in re-election.

Bayh, an 18-year Senate veteran, authored and sponsored the proposed Equal Rights Amendment. He also sponsored bills regulating the oil industry and was one of the main targets of the hit list, Gillespie said.

The debate will cover the rise of the religious right — mixing politics and religion, the changing mood of the electorate, the prominence of political action committees, the newfound strength of conservatism, and the redefining of liberalism — including the growing trend to call liberals "progressives."

## Sam Reeves

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Sam, an Aggie sophomore from Alice, won the free spring break vacation to Winter Park, Colorado, compliments of Shear Class. We hope he has a terrific time.



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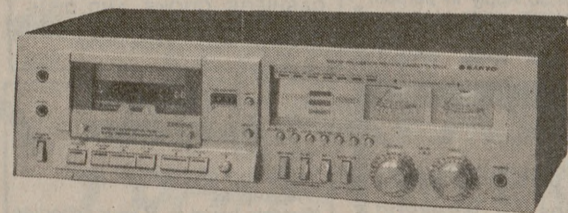
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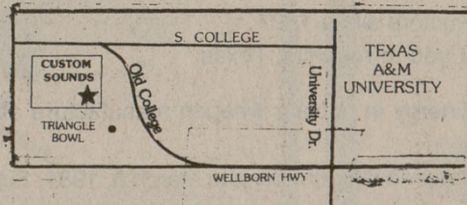
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