



Brian Boyer, Battalion photo

Hacky sack gymnastics

Mike Bloemer executes a difficult clipper kick at the Brazos Valley Footbag Open Saturday afternoon at Bee Creek Park. The footbag itself appears to be perched on his right

foot. The tournament, which was organized by the Brazos Valley Footbag Fanatics, featured both competitive events and informal kicking.

New 47-foot ship added to Texas A&M's fleet

By Debbie E. Warren

Battalion Reporter
The Texas A&M Oceanography Department now has a 47-foot, steel-hulled yacht thanks to a Houston businessman and amateur scientist.

The 1967-vintage vessel is similar to a Norwegian trawler, sleeps eight and is equipped with satellite navigation equipment, radar and sonar.

Richardson Electrical and Instrumentation Co. president H.K. Richardson says he has always been interested in the Texas A&M Oceanography Department.

"I did some experimentation with shrimp myself for 25 years," Richardson says. "Most of the information I got from Texas A&M's marine operations at Galveston."

The \$185,000 boat, named the "Deborah Suzanne" after Richardson's two daughters, will be used for oceanographic research along the shoreline in the Gulf of Mexico, says Jim Parrack, the University's oceanographic operations manager.

Parrack says he was pleased for economic reasons to add the boat to Texas A&M's fleet of three research vessels.

"One of the advantages of the smaller boat is the fact that it costs \$7,000 a day to operate the Gyre," he says. "It costs \$500 a day to operate the Deborah Suzanne, so people who can't afford to charter the Gyre and go on scientific cruises will be able to afford the Deborah

Suzanne."

"We already have a large, deep ocean research ship, the Gyre, a mini-submarine and a converted cabin cruiser which is used for inshore work," he says.

Parrack says Texas A&M students have been going out on commercial charters to collect data, but those were quite expensive also. The charters will not be necessary now and students will be able to go out more frequently.

Parrack says the University

also has been using a 32-foot, wooden-hulled boat called the "Lamer." The Lamer also was a gift to the University, but was not properly outfitted for research purposes.

"This one (the Deborah Suzanne) has more radio gear, more navigation gear, a more reliable engine and more horsepower," he says. "It's about 25 feet longer and has a lot more space. The Lamer would crew five people."

The boat will carry eight peo-

ple plus a crew. The Lamer was a light boat — not heavy enough to be equipped with winches.

"We couldn't put winches on it and they are a necessity for gathering core samples and biological net samples," Parrack says.

Parrack says the boat will have to have some minor repairs and equipment modifications, but it's in good condition.

The only problems with it, he says, happened during Hurricane Alicia.

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Mental health program will help the elderly

By Debbie E. Warren

Battalion Reporter
Trained volunteers will soon be going into four local nursing homes to help residents there with their mental health needs; needs that are sometimes under-served because of time and financial constraints.

The paraprofessional volunteer program is being developed at Texas A&M by Michael Duffy, an assistant professor of educational psychology and project investigator.

The elderly comprise about 12 percent of the population, a figure predicted to increase in the next century, Duffy says.

"The fastest growing group of the elderly is the older segment of the elderly," Duffy says. "The very old are living longer." Those statistics are making long-term care a critical issue today.

"I'm concerned about the mental health aspects of that care," he says. "Clearly there isn't available funding for a mental health service delivery system in nursing homes."

Duffy, Texas Agricultural Extension Service aging specialist Judith Warren and director of the Bryan Retired Senior Volunteer Program Shirley Hupp are working together on the project to provide a partial solution to the problem.

Warren says the program will encompass recruiting, training and supervising volunteers to work as mental health paraprofessionals in the Brazos Valley Geriatric Center, Crestview Retirement Community, Sherwood Health Care Facility and Leisure Lodge Nursing Home. An executive committee, including nursing home adminis-

trators and representatives from the area aging agency and the Texas State Health Department, are working out criteria for recruitment, techniques for training and specific types of services to offer the elderly, Warren says.

"I think the success of the program depends on the nursing home environment, the staff and how well our volunteers are received," Warren says. "We're trying to work very closely on that angle by involving the nursing home administration and staff. We want to find out what they think and what the problems are, if there are any."

The two-year project, funded by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Austin, is not designed to take the place of professional mental health care.

"We won't be working with cases that are desperately in need of professional help," Warren says. "We can attend to people who are having adjustment problems, for example if they have just come into a nursing home."

"We can help people who are getting over a loss and haven't completed the grieving process.

I don't think we can be a solution to all mental health problems. We will just supplement the current volunteer programs with about four paraprofessionals in each facility."

After the local project is completed, a packaged program for training paraprofessionals will be made available to other communities through the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Warren says.

"By looking at four different nursing homes we will be able to better understand what some of the problems are we might encounter in other areas," she says. "If it works here, what about the rest of Texas? Are we going to encounter different kinds of concerns there? I don't know."

"The ability to replicate this program is critical. We'll run the project, find out how it works and put that into communicable form."

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