

Mentors counsel students

By Jeff Wright
Reporter

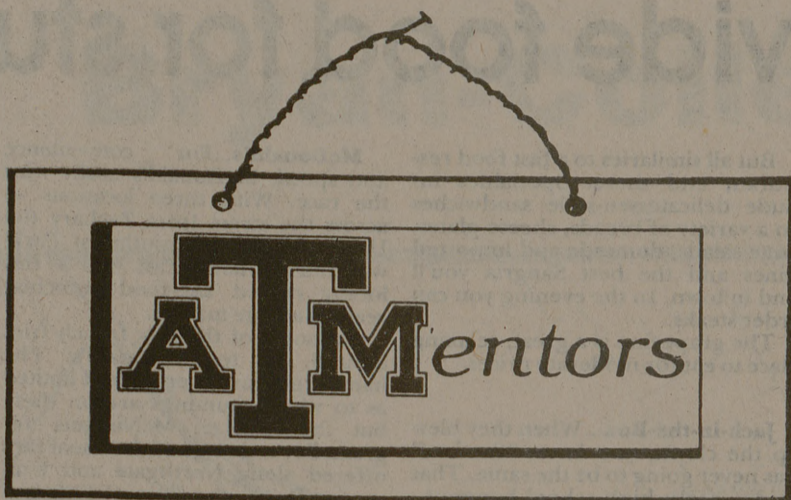
Combine a lot of buildings, students, professors and research and the result is sometimes frustration and loneliness.

"Many students come to A&M unprepared for the mass of people and buildings they have to deal with," says Dr. James McNeal, one of the 330 mentors now at A&M. "Since A&M is so large and research is so important students sometimes feel that they are not important and that they are just another I.D. number."

A group of A&M professors formed the Mentors five years ago to help compensate for those feelings often experienced by students. They chose the name because it means wise and faithful counselor and friend.

"We realize that A&M is not totally student oriented," McNeal said. "We are concerned with students and want to let them know we care."

Mentors can be found in every department on campus and can be recognized by a shingle that hangs beside their office door. The shingle serves as an invitation to come in and



talk, McNeal said. The Mentors are available at any time of the day, on or off campus. They are not trained counselors and do not want to be, he said. The main goal of the group is to be friends to students and help them to be a part of A&M.

McNeal said that each mentor sees about three students a week. He attributes that to the availability and concern that they offer. The sessions are confidential and each student is handled on a one-to-one basis. He says students talk about everything from grades and professors to boyfriend and girlfriend problems.

That is what the Mentors are all about — to listen to anything students want to talk about.

The organization does not at-

tempt to take the place of other counseling services on campus. Mentors exist for students who need a little advice or just a friend to talk to, McNeal said.

"The beauty of the organization is the fact that it isn't held accountable for helping students," McNeal said. "Our concern is from the heart."

Mentors is not an official agent of the University and receives no money from it. Aggie Mothers Clubs and groups in the community support the group.

"In our fast paced life it is easy to disregard one person, but that isn't the proper attitude," McNeal said. "So if we can help just one person to feel more at ease with himself, it makes it all worthwhile."

Service helps students cope

By HOLLY ROBINSON
Reporter

Learning to cope with stress is as much a part of college as English, history, and math. Broken automobiles, major exams, impossible roommates, and approaching term paper due dates make most students frustrated, irritable and depressed at some time during their college years.

The Student Counseling Service at Texas A&M University can help students cope with stress by using instructional tapes on relaxation, books and articles on stress management and short-term individual counseling.

Dr. Nicholas Dobrovolsky, a counselor on stress, said some amounts of stress are good for you by motivating you to productive action.

"If there is no stress, there is not much performance," he said.

He added that when stress and anxiety are too great or last for an extended period of time, they can become harmful, causing depression, irritability, and decreased productivity.

Dobrovolsky said it is important to recognize that what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another person. He said environmental conditions influence how we react to stress. For example, if an A student made a C on a test, he would react more negatively than a B student.

"Past experiences make a difference," he said. "Some people deal better with situations than others."

A brochure put out by the Off Campus Center and the Student Counseling Service suggests some stress management techniques that can help build resistance to stress.

—Eat a balanced diet, get adequate sleep every night, and exercise regularly. Keeping healthy and fit can help you cope with stress and can even prevent stress.

—Manage your time effectively. Setting realistic goals and postponing unimportant tasks can help control stress. Making a daily "to do" list and breaking large tasks into smaller tasks can help eliminate procrastination.

—Consider alternate ways of viewing a situation. Sometimes it is not the situation but the way you interpret it that creates stress.

—Use family members, friends or counselors for support. Many people can help you if you ask for help and discuss your problems.

—Learn relaxation techniques. Books, tapes and biofeedback training are available at the Student Counseling Service to teach ways to relax and manage stress.

Dobrovolsky said more people come to the Student Counseling Service each year. He attributes this to awareness of the center and rising academic standards.

"The competitive aspect is becoming more accentuated," he said.

Strict entrance requirements and higher academic demands send all levels of students the center, from freshmen to graduate students.

The Student Counseling Service is located on the third floor of the YMCA Building.

Off Campus Center helps students in roommate hunt

By Julia Nunnallee
Reporter

For the 27,000 Aggies living off campus, roommate selection and compatibility can be a big headache.

Nancy Ludwig, an adviser at the Off Campus Center at Texas A&M, says it is important to know the habits of a prospective roommate.

"A student should spend quality time getting to know the roommate before any leases are signed," she said. Too often, she said, students rush into selecting roommates.

Because of the overabundance of people looking for roommates, students should have 10 to 15 possible roommates to choose from, Ludwig said. The OCC's roommate locator service can provide a list of students

with housing and roommate needs.

Best friends don't necessarily make the best roommates, Ludwig said. "Best friends have a preconceived idea about the living relationship," she said. "Too often, sparks begin to fly, and so do tables and chairs."

Living with someone who has not been a close friend can help students — especially freshmen — meet new people, Ludwig said.

Once a roommate is selected, Ludwig suggests signing a tenancy contract; a legally binding agreement covering financial matters such as rent, utilities and deposits. The contract, which is available at the OCC, can also be a guideline for food and shopping arrangements, cleaning responsibilities and

general "house rules," such as entertaining and studying.

If roommates are unable to settle conflicts among themselves, a neutral third party could help, Ludwig said. She suggests either a mutual friend or one of the counselors from the OCC.

"It has to be someone both individuals respect and feel comfortable talking with," she said.

Because of legal obligations, such as leases or contracts, moving out is not the solution to a roommate conflict, Ludwig said. The roommate who is left often is responsible for the entire rent unless the lease is broken, she said.

Ludwig said the OCC has many resources to help students find, and keep, compatible roommates.

Theft recurring campus problem; negligence common most cause

By MICHAEL RAULERSON
Reporter

Theft — especially of items such as computers, bicycles and backpacks — is a continuing problem on the Texas A&M campus, but a police official says students can avoid the carelessness that invites theft.

Negligence of students and custodial workers — leaving windows and dorm room and office doors unlocked — has caused thefts to increase slightly, Wiatt said.

"If people would take care of their property the burglars would have to work harder," he said.

Computers have become a coveted item for fencing, as well as for personal use, Wiatt said. A majority of computers being stolen from the campus are being used in the home or apartment, he said.

The users of computers on campus must do something about the problem of theft, Wiatt said. He suggested securing the unit by attaching an alarm system or putting them in a room with solid core doors and walls that don't stop at the ceiling tiles.

"We (the police department) talk security to all the departments,"

Wiatt said. "It's up to them to implement the suggestions."

Bicycles are another favorite of thieves on the campus, Wiatt said. He urges students to lock their bicycles securely to an immovable object with strong locks and chains. Wiatt recalled a case in which people were stealing bicycles with the wheels locked to frames by picking them up and putting them in the trunk of a car. Many bicycles that are stolen are locked with a cheaply-made lock and chain or are not locked at all, he said.

Wiatt also urged students to register bicycles with the department. He said that many bicycles are found each semester, but the department can't return them because they don't know who they belong to.

Backpacks left in dining halls, in hallways and outside the bookstores are easily stolen, Wiatt said. He suggested using a drop area, but cited a possible problem in identifying the owner when the backpack is claimed.

Wiatt said the parking lots are patrolled frequently to deter such thefts. He said plainclothes officers sometimes patrol the lots.

Wiatt said the department has an on-going crime prevention speaking

series for incoming freshmen, and officers speak periodically to groups on campus about security.

The College Station Police Department uses several programs to promote security in residential sections. The programs are called Residential Security, Rape Awareness and Neighborhood Watch, said Lt. Bernie Kapella, officer in charge of crime prevention and community relations.

The Residential Security program provides information to help homeowners protect themselves against the potential burglar, Kapella said.

The Rape Awareness program provides information for protection against becoming a victim of rape, he said.

The Neighborhood Watch program, found only in certain neighborhoods, has three requirements for participation: 75 percent of the residents in the neighborhood must be willing to participate in the program, these participants must label their valuables with their drivers license number and they must have a home security survey, Kapella said.

The survey provides homeowners with the information they need to upgrade the security of their house.

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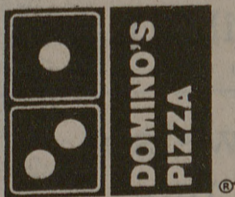
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