

STATE AND LOCAL

Local benefit to help family pay bills of boy in semi-coma

By **JERRY OSLIN**
Staff Writer

A special benefit to help pay the medical expenses of the family of Bart Van Leerdam will be held Saturday, June 29, at the Brazos Rodeo Arena.

The 20-month-old College Station boy has been in a semi-coma since March 31, when he wandered away from his home and fell in a pond.

The proceeds from the benefit will go to St. Joseph Hospital to help pay medical expenses, said Monique Dekker, Bryan special events coordinator.

The benefit, which will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., will include an all-day barbeque, an auction and a horseshoe pitching competition, Dekker said.

The Dallas Mavericks, Houston Rockets, Dallas Cowboys, Houston Oilers, Texas Rangers and Houston Astros all have donated tickets to the auction, she said.

Employees of the city of Bryan organized the benefit, and several area businesses and individuals donated food and other items, Dekker said.

Tickets to the barbeque cost \$3.50 and the registration fee for the horseshoe pitching contest will be \$15 per team. Teams may register from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and the winners will be given trophies, she said.

The benefit also will feature two bands.

Bart's condition has improved since 56 volunteer workers started working with him, Dekker said.

She said the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation was responsible for organizing the volunteer effort.

"MHMR was responsible for rounding up the volunteers by getting the message out through public service announcements and news stories," Dekker said.

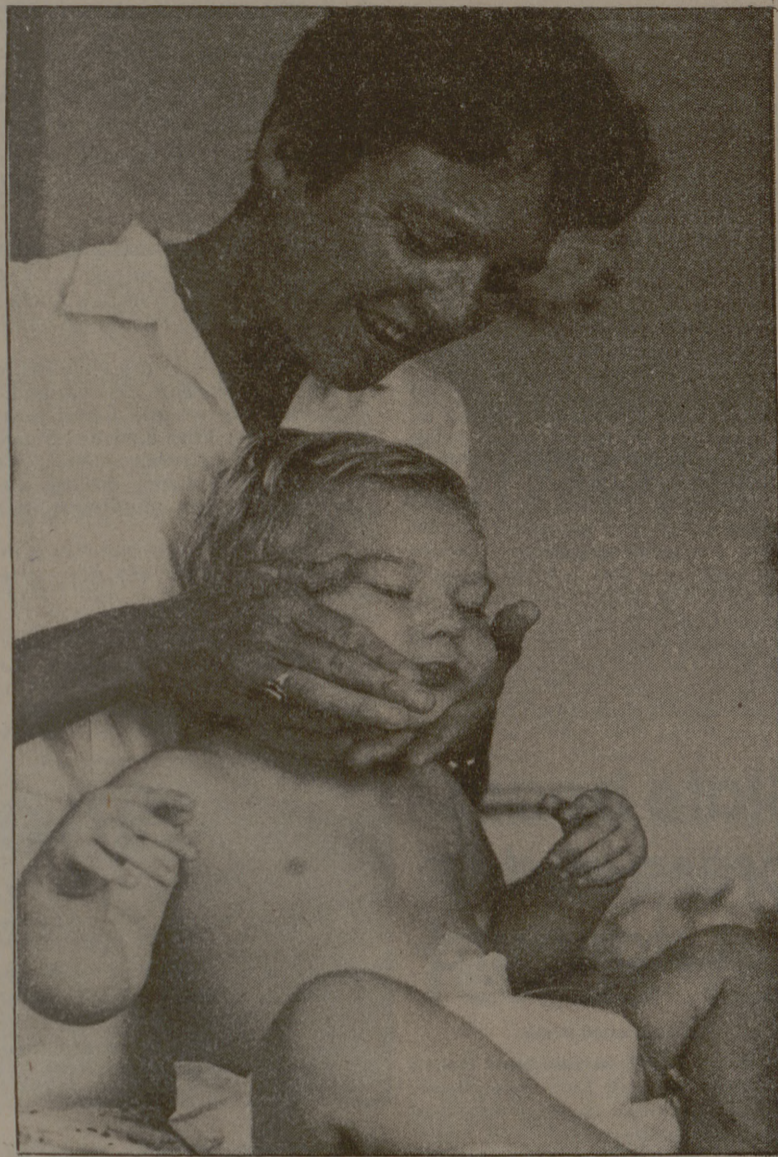


Photo by Anthony S. Casper

MHMR nurse Debby Babb gives Bart some encouragement while checking on his progress.

Grants from USDA to A&M get renewed

By **NANCY JUMPER**
Reporter

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has renewed grants to Texas A&M totalling \$115,956, continuing support of Ph.D. graduate fellowships, U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm says.

The Department of Agricultural Engineering awarded five three-year fellowships of \$15,000 each to students beginning their doctoral programs. The fellowships were awarded to A&M through the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowships, a USDA project.

Dr. Edward Hiler, A&M professor and head of agricultural engineering, says, "Texas A&M's agricultural engineering department is one of 10 universities in the country to receive the USDA fellowships."

The A&M biochemistry and biophysics departments also received grants, providing seven fellowships of \$15,000 each to students beginning their doctoral programs. The fellowships were awarded by the USDA Biotechnology Training Grant, A&M and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

The grants were awarded after each academic department applied for them and sent a proposal to the USDA with ideas for individual programs. After the proposals were reviewed by authorities across the United States, the USDA selected the outstanding proposals for the fellowships.

After A&M was notified it had won the grants, each specific department began searching for qualified candidates for the awards.

The fellowships were awarded on two competitive levels: the university level and the academic or student level.

A&M was awarded twelve fellowships, the maximum any university can receive, says Dr. Thomas Baldwin, associate professor with biochemistry and director of the biotechnology training program.

A&M officers fight unfair image

Police work not just issuing tickets

By **LAMYA SOURYAL**
Reporter

Many Texas A&M students don't realize the University Police Department does more than give parking tickets, "harass" bicycle riders and tow away cars.

What do the police think about this unflattering image?

"Officers are often verbally abused because people are acting out of ignorance as to what our duties are," says Bob Wiatt, University Police Director.

Students don't believe the same laws apply to the campus as to the rest of the world, he says.

Prior to 1967, A&M had a security force of non-commissioned officers who were little more than watchmen with no power to enforce laws.

This past image causes people to take the University Police lightly, he says.

"We are a real law enforcement agency that enforces laws like any other law enforcement agency," Wiatt says. "People do things on campus they wouldn't think of doing in a city."

"When they get stopped, they are surprised when the officer gives them a ticket," Wiatt says. "They don't realize the police are doing their jobs."

Sgt. Mike Buckley, a patrolman for the University Police, says he believes a contributing factor to the image of the University Police is the coverage it receives in The Battalion.

"The Battalion does not always give the University Police fair coverage," Buckley says. "I don't expect any special coverage, but I would like them to be fair, show the good with the bad."

Detective William Scott of the investigations division says he agrees the image of the campus police is not good, but he thinks it's getting better.

"It is unfortunate that a lot of students don't have a high regard for us because of the parking problems, but I really think that is changing," Scott says.

The department is trying to improve its image by modernizing its equipment and increasing its staff size, Buckley says.

Most students rarely look past the tickets to see how the department operates.

The department, which has 76 full-time employees and 18 student workers, is comparable in size to the College Station Police Department, Wiatt says.

The patrol division, which is chiefly responsible for traffic and speeding violations, is made up of 21 officers and six supervisors.

All patrol officers are commissioned officers, qualified to carry firearms.

"This is not the Enchanted Forest," Buckley says. "There is crime on campus and students need to realize that although A&M is below the national average for serious crimes, they do happen."

A common misconception students have of University patrolmen concerns police authority to issue university tickets or justice of the peace tickets, depending on the officer's discretion.

"We are no different from the police in College Station or Bryan, except the University gives us great latitude in where we can file cases," Buckley says. "We can file through the University system or the criminal justice system — whichever will be beneficial to the student and the University in a particular situation."

The special services division, which issues parking tickets, is the part of the force most students come into contact with.

Officers in this division are not commissioned and cannot carry firearms. Ten special officers, along with patrolmen, monitor the streets and parking lots.

To become a University police officer, applicants must have a high school diploma, pass a general aptitude test and a psychological test. Applicants do not need a college degree, but should have some college credits. Of the 27 patrol officers, 11 are A&M students.

A&M has the only accredited police academy in the Brazos Valley area. Graduates are commissioned police officers. The starting salary for commissioned officers working for the University Police is \$16,507.

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