

State and Local

Religious school's 'sin play' being investigated by state

Associated Press

EL PASO — State officials are investigating a religious school that presented a play depicting "sin" being removed from a person in a surgical operation in which a hypodermic syringe, a knife and ketchup-covered cotton balls were used.

Pat Ayala, public information officer for the local office of the Texas Department of Human Services, said Monday that the drama was performed Sept. 20 at the Community of Faith Christian School.

The drama was put on by members of the Jesus Chapel West, a non-denominational church attended by some families with children at the school.

The play, which focused on a person who "would not praise the Lord," was attended by children as young as 2½ years old, Ayala said.

The oldest children were third-graders, she said.

"There were people dressed as doctors and a person lying down," Ayala said. "The doctors pretended to inject him with a syringe, minus the needle, and they rubbed a knife on the table, symbolizing cutting his neck."

She said cotton balls covered with ketchup were held up, labeled with reasons why the person would not praise the Lord. "Then the person got up and said he could now praise the Lord," Ayala said.

Ayala said her agency, which investigates alleged child abuse and licensing violations at child-care institutions, was looking into the presentation to determine if it involved questionable content for children.

The investigation was prompted by a complaint from a parent who said the play upset his child, she said.

Ayala would not release the name of the parent.

Although she referred to the person in the drama as a man, officials later said the performer was a woman.

School Director Anthony Mixer said that the drama was performed, but said it was done in an upbeat, happy style.

"The program was one of instruction," he said, adding that the children were shown the play's props before the performance and that they knew it was pretend.

Mixer said that during the drama, children were laughing, singing and clapping.

"I don't perceive any negative effects on the children, though some may not have known what was going on," he said.

One parent who agreed with Mixer, Amy Reynolds, said she feels the incident has been misrepresented.

Reynolds said her son, Kirk, 4, has attended the school for a year. She said he came home after the play and told her his teacher "wouldn't praise the Lord and they knocked her in the throat."

"I checked at the school about what had happened, then talked about it with Kirk," she said. "He said he knew it was just pretend."

Reynolds also defended the school, praising its strong discipline and good academics. She said the school includes prayer, praise and Bible study in its curriculum.

Ayala said the Department of Human Services has sent letters to parents of the children who saw the play, describing the complaint and asking permission to interview the children.

She said that the agency's investigation probably would be completed by the end of the week. If found guilty of violating state licensing regulations, the school probably would be given a citation and asked to comply with standards, Ayala said.

Mixer said that regardless of the investigation's outcome, the play was a one-time thing — we've never done it before and we're not going to do it again.

Student Senate to discuss lost ticket replacement

By FRANK SMITH
Staff Writer

The Texas A&M Student Senate will discuss a bill tonight recommending the Athletic Department allow free replacement of lost or stolen student sports ticket books.

The bill, sponsored by Mark Browning, was assigned by Speaker Laurie Johnson to the Student Services Committee at the last Senate meeting.

Carol Ellison, vice president of that committee, will report the status of the bill tonight and make the committee's recommendations to the senators.

The Senate also will discuss two other bills:

• One calls for increased security in Sbis Dining Hall for students' backpacks and other belongings. Sponsored by Greg Gorman, the bill recommends

that security be increased through the installment of video monitors or the addition of more locker spaces.

It also was assigned to the Student Services Committee at the last Senate meeting.

• The other bill on tonight's agenda calls for the non-cadet constituency of Gainer Hall (Dorm 5) to be added to the constituency of Krueger, Briggs and Spence halls until the Senate reapportions in the spring. The bill's sponsor, Beverly Roznovsky, currently represents Krueger, Briggs and Spence.

She said at the last Senate meeting Gainer was converted this semester from a Corps dormitory to one which houses both cadets and non-cadets.

About 120 non-cadet residents are living in Gainer without area representation in the Senate, Roznovsky said.

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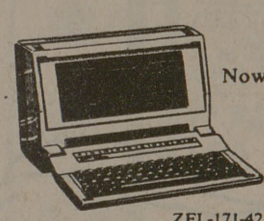


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