

State and Local

Hotline

24 volunteers offer aid to people in crisis

By RICHARD PEARCE
Reporter

Little John has a broken brain set, Andy is worried to death about finals and Carol is afraid to tell her parents she's pregnant.

These three hypothetical characters have something in common: They are all experiencing a crisis and need someone to talk to. And that is where Crisis Hotline comes in, says Stewart Gallas, one of the 24 all-volunteer phone operators for the hotline.

"At the Hotline we know that there isn't such a thing as a small crisis," says Gallas, a senior psychology student at Texas A&M. "To little John it is just as much the end of the world as it is to Carol and Andy. It's all relative."

The Crisis Hotline is a telephone number people can call when they feel they have no one to turn to. Sponsored by the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency and run by trained volunteers, the hotline has provided service to the Bryan-College Station area for nearly seven years.

"Because so many of our volunteers are psychology students at A&M, people assume we are a program sponsored by the University, and we aren't," says Tom Vitro, the hotline coordinator. "In fact, many of our volunteers have no connection with the University."

All volunteers must be at least 18 years old and must complete a

19-hour training program. No previous experience is required.

Once the training is completed, the volunteers are put to work immediately.

"After the training program is over, we like to feel that the new volunteers are confident," Vitro says. "But because it is a new experience, that first call can be a little scary."

Once the call gets under way, most of the new volunteers find they have no problem handling that first call, Vitro says.

Operators do not give advice, instead they try to help the caller find a solution to his problem, Vitro says.

When an operator thinks a caller needs further help or the caller requests it himself, the operator can refer the caller to more than 100 other telephone numbers.

"But we try not to overwhelm a caller with referrals," Vitro says. "Our first objective is to get the caller to use the resources already available to him, such as family, school teachers and clergy."

One important rule operators find hard to follow is remaining objective at all times.

"Sometimes a call hits below the belt and you wish there was more you could do, but we are all limited in what we can do," Gallas says. "Besides, the reason they call us is because they can remain anonymous and we are removed from the problem. If we become personal with the caller, we fail at our purpose. You have to remind

yourself that you are at the hotline now and the person on the line is not you."

All operators must abide by a strict code of ethics. Failure to do so can result in dismissal.

Perhaps the most important rule an operator must remember is to respect the integrity of the caller, Vitro says.

"It is not ethical to be at a party and talk about some terrific call you got at the hotline," Vitro says. "Anonymity is very important."

Anonymity also is important to the operator, Vitro says.

"We get callers who feel so good after talking with an operator that they suggest meeting personally," Vitro says. "That, of course, is against the rules."

The reason the program works is because the caller can expose himself to a stranger without having to reveal his identity, Vitro says.

The biggest frustration encountered by workers of the hotline is that they seldom get any feedback, Vitro says.

"There is always that call where you wish you knew what happened after the call hung up, and you wonder if you said the right things," he says. "We are only human."

And there are the inevitable criticisms.

"Some have criticized us because we aren't always available," Vitro says. "To that I say: Volunteer."

Symphonic band will perform in Rudder

By TAMARA BELL
Staff Writer

The Texas A&M Symphonic Band will present its annual fall concert Thursday at 8:15 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

The 85-piece band will play the music of John Philip Sousa, J.S. Bach, Alfred Reed and Leroy Anderson, says Bill J. Dean, director of the band.

A retired trumpet teacher from North Texas State University will be featured with the band, Dean says. John J. Haynie will play two solos, "Carnival of Venice" and "Concert Etude."

Dean says the Symphonic Band is composed of students who enjoyed playing an instrument in high school and want to continue to play at A&M.

"It fills a need on campus for students," Dean says. "It first started as a concert band for the Aggie band, but about 13 years ago we decided we needed more complete instrumentation, so we opened it up to the whole campus."

"This is the only formal performance the band gives all year," Dean adds. "Next semester the band will perform for the Dallas and Houston mothers' clubs. The fall concert is an annual event that gives the students something to shoot for. This gives them a set goal for the entire semester."

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Attorney in landmark abortion trial to speak

By SONDR A PICKARD
Reporter

On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court delivered its landmark decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade, making it illegal for states to prohibit abortions, and thereby leaving the choice of abortion up to the individual rather than the government.

Tonight at 8 p.m. in Rudder Thea-

ter, Sarah Weddington, the Texas attorney who argued in favor of legalized abortion in the United States, will discuss "Abortion in the 1980s."

As a result of the court's ruling, most state laws concerning obtaining and performing an abortion were struck down, including the 100-year-old Texas statute which prohibited abortions in all cases except to save the mother's life.

Weddington, 40, was the first

woman to address the Supreme Court and is now one of the country's leading spokespersons on the abortion issue.

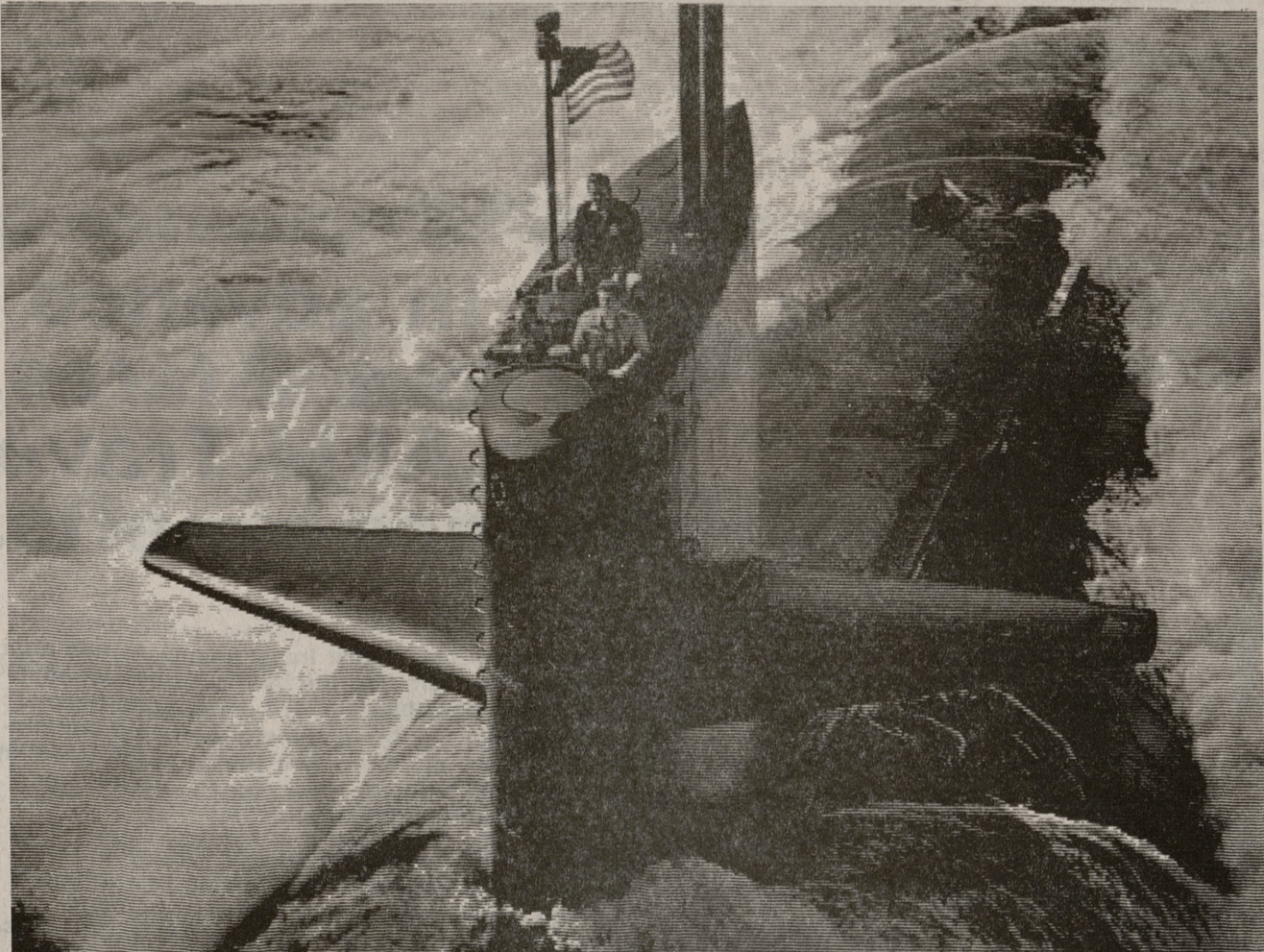
She worked for four years as a member of former President Carter's White House senior staff and will discuss her inside views and experiences of happenings in the White House.

Weddington also will discuss the impact of Roe vs. Wade, what the decision actually says, and today's argu-

ments on whether or not the decision will stand.

Before setting up private practice in Austin, Weddington was a consultant for a New York foundation for two years and wrote a monthly column, "Washington Report," for Glamour magazine. She also was a lobbyist for Texas for two years.

Weddington teaches a class on leadership at Texas Women's University.



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