

Outreach program begins fourth term

Prof works to improve writing skills

By DAWN BUTZ
Reporter

When Dr. Gwendolyn Gong took over as director of Freshman English Studies in the fall of 1984, she set the goal of helping Texas A&M students and faculty and local community members improve their writing skills.

"I felt there was a need in the community," Gong says. "I had heard people ask where they could find help, and it was one way to reach out to the people. It was something I really felt was important."

In October of the same semester she was granted an Incentive Grant from the Center for Teaching Excellence, allowing her to implement a series of free, non-credit mini-courses, designed to help those people who were interested in improving their writing. The grant — \$1,000 per year — pays for supplies and publicity.

Writing Outreach is now beginning its fourth semester, offering 29 one-hour and two-hour courses in subjects ranging from punctuation to essay writing.

The courses are taught by English department faculty and staff.

Rick Evans, assistant to Gong, says all the teaching is done on a voluntary basis.

"All the instructors have to be dedicated to teaching excellence, and to helping people achieve a confidence in their writing," he says.

The one-hour courses, referred to as special help sessions, focus on specific problems. They

are designed to offer practical advice in developing certain writing skills.

The two-hour workshops are aimed at a more intensive look at writing problems. These courses include presentations, discussions and "hands-on" practice, for which students are asked to bring their own materials.

While offering the local community an opportunity to strengthen their writing abilities, the courses also serve many purposes within the English department.

The courses provide the department with a growing file of teaching materials, and at the same time allow the faculty and staff to experiment with new approaches to presenting the materials.

Evans says the courses give instructors a chance to reach out to groups other than their university students. The Writing Outreach students are different from those found in basic English classes, he says.

Writing Outreach offers classes in writing coherently, logically, creatively, descriptively, persuasively and technically, as well as classes in editing, in using the library and in reading critically.

Noel Sandlin, a sophomore history major, says the course he attended on writing essays definitely helped.

"I had taken an essay test prior to that (the writing course) and made a low C," he says. "I came back and took another exam and made a B."

Sandlin says the course showed him how to organize his writing.

"They showed me a step-by-step procedure on how to attack the problem without wasting time," he says.

Sandlin also attended the course on punctuation.

"The class was okay," he says. "What helped me the most was the handout they gave me. It (the instructor) breezed over it in the class but brought it home and going over it was what helped."

Sandlin says he wished the classes were repeated more each semester.

"There were others I wanted to go to but had class or prior commitments," he says.

Tedi Zalesky, the scholastic supervisor for Women's Athletics, attended the course on resume writing.

"I thought it was excellent — really good and informative," she says. "I got a lot of good handouts and was able to come back and share the information with our seniors."

Courses this semester are being offered on in the evenings in hopes of minimizing conflict, Gong says.

Spring classes run through April 30. Classes start at 6:30 p.m. and no pre-registration is necessary.

Cat's exploits get permit revoked

Associated Press

EL PASO — An elusive stray cat tripped off the burglar alarm at a tire store so often that the City Council revoked the company's permit to have police answer the calls.

"He had one yellow eye, one blue eye and was all white — the ugliest thing you ever saw," company manager Noel Wheeler said of the cat, which set off the motion-sensitive

alarm at The Tire Co. 45-60 times a month.

Wheeler told the City Council Tuesday that he and his workers tried everything they could think of to catch the cat — without results.

On the advice of Police Chief Bill Rodriguez and his deputy, Joe Messer, the City Council told Wheeler that he will have to purchase a new permit at the penalty price of \$100.

The city code calls for the revocation of a burglar alarm permit after seven false alarms. When police had received 14 false alarms from The Tire Co. in December, the company's permit was revoked, Messer said.

On New Year's Eve, Wheeler finally found the lure that got the cat — anchovy pizza. The cat was caught and released by the Rio Grande.

Arsonist's conviction upheld

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The 3rd Court of Appeals on Wednesday affirmed the arson conviction of a man charged with starting fires at three churches in Milam County.

According to the appeals court, Norris Moss admitted setting one of the fires but said he was acting under God's will and that he is the reincarnation of the Holy Roman emperor and that his reason for burning the church was to call attention to that fact.

He pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, but was found guilty with starting three church fires in July 1983. Punishment in each case is confinement in state prison for seven years, with the sentences to run concurrently.

Texas' high court rules against Ford firm

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The Texas Supreme Court, in a split decision, ruled Wednesday a lower appeals court misapplied the law in a \$5.48 million product liability case against Ford Motor Co.

Further review was ordered. A Rusk County jury awarded damages to Ronnie and Nita Pool af-

Pool's pickup truck was defective, causing the truck to run off the road. The truck collided with a tree, and Pool sustained serious head injuries.

The Texarkana Court of Appeals reversed the trial judgment and sent the case back for a new trial, but the Pools appealed to the Supreme Court.

A majority of the nine-member court said the appeals court misapplied Texas' drunken driving statute and also erred in "treating the statutory violation of the speed limit as negligence per se."

The high court also ruled against Ford on other points, but sent the case back to the Texarkana appeals court.

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