

Mom and son tackle school together to continue family tradition at A&M

By Jamie Russell
Reporter

One way for a college student to save his allowance is to pack a parent to take to school.

Junior Michael Fernandez has done just that, and is accompanied at Texas A&M by his mother, Sylvia Fernandez.

"His allowance goes a lot further because, if I'm here, I get to pick up his miscellaneous expenses," Mrs. Fernandez says.

Her son, an English major, entered Texas A&M in August 1984. In January 1986, Mrs. Fernandez followed in his footsteps.

"You have to have a special relationship in order for a situation like this to be able to happen," says Mrs. Fernandez, the mother of three Aggies. "If I had thought it was going to interfere or make him uncomfortable, I would not have done it."

Mrs. Fernandez is working on her doctorate in education administration and works as an administrative assistant for the College of Education.

"My aim is to graduate when Michael does," she says. "Hopefully that will be in August 1988."

Fernandez lives in a condominium while his mother resides in a house in College Station.

He is the last of a generation of 19 Fernandezes to attend A&M. Raul Fernandez, his father, Class of '59, is on the Development Council to the Corps of Cadets and was president of the Association of Former Students in 1980.

"We have had ties with A&M for a long time," Mrs. Fernandez says.

Fernandez and his mother find it



Photo by Doug La...

Sylvia Fernandez and her son Michael, both A&M students, take a break from classes together.

hard to compete for grades when their levels of education are so widespread.

"My curriculum is so much different from hers," Fernandez says, defending his grades. "She has a 4.0 grade-point ratio. I've got about a 2.0 GPR."

Fernandez is a member of the social fraternity Beta Theta Pi and makes room for social activities that he feels are important to a student's growth.

"There is more to college than studying, and I probably do more of the other," he says.

Fernandez says that although he comes from a family of Aggies, he did not join the Corps.

"It was hard not to join the Corps," he says, "but I knew it was not for me. I knew if I joined I would not quit."

Outside of studying, Mrs. Fernandez's activities include belonging to

the College of Education Development Council, where she spends most of her time organizing a community education newsletter.

She also is involved in Student Education Administration.

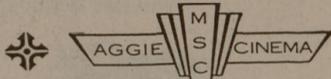
Mrs. Fernandez believes that every hour of class two hours of studying is required, and juggles her time among family, job and classes.

"We're having fun so far," she says. "And my husband is completely supportive."



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El Paso gay bar offers AIDS testing, gives patrons access to screening

EL PASO (AP) — A West Texas gay bar soon will offer AIDS antibody tests in an effort to give high-risk groups easier access to screening for the fatal disease, a health official said Thursday.

"The idea is to have it at a place where people feel more comfortable than going to a government health center," said Tony Bengert, a disease-intervention specialist with the El Paso City-County Health District.

Last year, tests were offered at a predominantly gay church to provide easier access.

The screening tests will be offered within the next six weeks in private rooms at the Old Plantation bar during operating hours, Bengert said.

AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, is believed to be

caused by a virus that attacks the body's ability to fight disease.

A person who has been exposed to the incurable and deadly AIDS virus may not develop the disease but could still transmit it to others. Doctors have said the virus is transmitted only through the introduction of blood or other bodily fluids from an infected person to another.

Bob Bonaventure, manager of Old Plantation, said, "There are closed areas in the building and dressing rooms, because we offer a professional show, and there's another bar apart from the main one" where the test and counseling will be offered.

The bar, now in its 10th year, is the largest of about seven gay establishments in El Paso, with about 500

customers on a busy night, Bonaventure said.

Bengert is a former chairman and Bonaventure a member of the board of the Southwest AIDS Committee Inc., a 3-year-old El Paso-based volunteer group that offers information and patient support services. The idea of offering the tests at the bar was first brought up at a committee meeting, Bonaventure said.

"We have discussed it with other customers and there seems to be enthusiasm for the idea," he said.

Last November, screenings and counseling were offered at a church whose members are mainly homosexual, Bengert said. That was the first time such services were offered outside the health district's offices, he said.

School dropout rates disputed

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Superintendents of area school districts Thursday argued with the results of a dropout-attrition study that showed San Antonio had the highest attrition rate in the state.

The data was compiled by San Antonio-based Intercultural Development Research Association through a \$180,000 contract with the Texas Education Agency.

Researchers used reports submitted to TEA by the school districts and analyzed the number of students entering the ninth grade in 1982-83 and followed them to the 12th grade in 1985-86.

The study, conducted between May and October 1986, showed that the San Antonio Independent School District's 1982 freshman class had a 47 percent attrition rate, the highest in the state.

Bexar County superintendents Thursday met with three representatives of IDRA and discussed their displeasure with the study. Other administrators in other parts of the state also blasted the study.

SAISD Superintendent Victor Rodriguez said the school district has a dropout rate of 20.7 percent.

"It's not something that we're

proud of," Rodriguez said. "I really feel the drop-out rate is a very serious problem. I believe whether it's 10 percent, 20 percent or 40 percent, we've got to do something about it."

Researchers said the attrition rates had been adjusted to account for students transferring to other school districts and nearly all of the numbers represent dropouts.

But the superintendents said many students could be retained in the ninth grade, throwing off the final percentage.

Diabetic gets \$26,000 for jail slipup

HOUSTON (AP) — A man who was arrested for public intoxication after slipping into a diabetic coma won a \$26,000 judgment in a lawsuit he filed against the city.

A federal jury also ordered Houston Police Chief Lee Brown to pay Mario Colin McConney \$100 for holding him in the jail without probable cause.

McConney, 49, testified he was held for nine hours in wet, muddy clothing in a cell with no bed even though he had \$234 in cash to bond himself out Jan. 11, 1983.

Brown testified that officers are trained to distinguish a diabetic coma from a drunken stupor, but the two officers who arrested McConney testified they had not received such training.

It was the second time McConney had been arrested on charges of public intoxication.

On the date of the second arrest, McConney slipped into a diabetic coma about 7 p.m. after getting off a city bus en route to a tennis match. Police arrested McConney about 9:30 p.m. after finding him lying in a rain-soaked ditch.

Houston physician Eric Orzech, a diabetes expert, testified McConney's slurred speech and inability to walk were consistent with insulin shock and could have been mistaken for intoxication.

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