Officials say student groups not part of act

AUSTIN (AP) - Student governent groups do not fall under the 0 Rudder. exas Open Meetings Act, the state orney general's office has deterat 8:30 m ned

State Rep. Juan Hinojosa, D-cAllen, had sought an opinion on at noon. (chalf of the student newspaper at n American University at Edin-

> The weekly newspaper, the Pan merican, has been at odds with the udent Government Association er closed "executive sessions" and e advance posting of agendas.

The Open Meetings Act requires overnmental bodies to post ad-ance notice of meetings, list topics g at 8:30 pt be discussed and limits the cirmstances under which closed sesns may be held.

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Hinojosa said the attorney genereed McD Ve only p 0. What's 's office did not address the queson of student government. He said is considering sponsoring legistion to bring student governments will run. Ity nder the state law.

The Pan American editor Cindie owell said the paper will lobby for he legislation.

Votes sway in election for betting

LUBBOCK (AP) Few are laying bets on whether self-styled proponents of economic development or local church leaders will sway voters their way in Saturday's hotly contested local-option election for pari-mutuel bet-

One group promises horse rac-ing will be a boon to the city's economy, while the other says legalized gambling will corrupt residents' morals

Two counties, Lubbock and Dallas, will hold local-option elections Saturday. Those two proba-bly will be the last two counties in Texas to decide whether to allow pari-mutuel wagering in their areas, Ricky Knox, executive director of the Texas Horse Racing Association, said.

Since Nov. 3, when voters statewide decided in favor of pari-mutuel betting, 51 counties have decided the local-option uestion, with all but six voting in

favor of horse racing. In this city of 190,000, the parimutuel issue has been hotter than a illegal tip sheet, and the outcome is likely to be a photo finish.

"It's anybody's guess as to how it will go Saturday," said Steven Lemley, president of Lubbock Christian University and a pari-

mutuel opponent. Lubbock County clerk Ann Davidson said high absentee voting totals indicate heavy interest in he issue, although for approximately 40,000 voters outside Lubbock the racing question is the only item on the ballot.

Ćity residents also will elect city

Wednesday, May 4, 1988/The Battalion/Page 5

RIF program encourages reading for local children

By Ashley A. Bailey

Reporter Ejsy om yjr eptlf od jsoorbubh ub yhid dyotir. E esny yo knor ehsy id giubh bb, nut U fiby jbie.

The previous paragraph is noth-ing but a jumble of letters that make no sense. To a person who is illiter-ate, the following paragraphs will make no sense either. Reading is Fundamental Inc. is trying to reduce the illiteracy that prevents people from reading even the simplest sentences. The group aims its efforts at children, teaching them the love of reading that RIF hopes they will keep for life.

Children who read grow up to become adults who can read.

So asserts the slogan of Reading is Fundamental Inc. RIF is a nonprofit, nationwide organization that inspires children to read and to aspire to learn through reading. Founded in 1966 by Margaret S.

McNamara and affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, RIF serves more than 2 million children each year through a far-reaching network of local programs.

The Bryan-College Station RIF program was established in 1985 by Wendy Costa to distribute books to children who would not have books of their own or be able to experience

reading for pleasure. Costa, who taught English at Blinn College in Bryan for 12 years and who now works on Texas A&M's Project 30, a project for improving teacher education, said she was horrified at the literacy problems her Blinn students had.

"In 12 years, I rarely had a student who could read well," she said.

"Almost everyone I taught could read a little because they weren't totally illiterate, but most of them never read anything for enjoyment and very few could remember the last unrequired book they'd read.

"It was unique if I had three people in a class that'd read a book in the last year, and that was what inspired my involvement with RIF." Nearly 100,000 volunteers work

with RIF across the country. "Parents, educators, librarians, business and civic leaders - people from all walks of life - give their time and talents to run local pro-

grams. "We make books available to children and create a climate in which children want to read.'

There are about 3,000 RIF projects in the United States, most of them administered through school organizations such as parent-teacher organizations and libraries.

But not enough people in the Bryan-College Station school districts wanted RIF, Costa said, so she decided to take another route.

"I decided to go through local churches because churches are especially frequented and important in the minority community here, which is where illiteracy is concentrated,' she said. "When I first started RIF it was only in Lee Chapel, a small black church, but now we distribute books to Shiloh Baptist Church, Santa Theresa Catholic Church, the Girl's Club and various other locations."

ria in choosing books. "I recommend local RIF project will conduct a 15some books by interviewing children for their favorites, but I also try to choose some really good multi-cultural books since most of the children

involved with RIF are in minorities. "It's important for them to learn about their heritages, and if they think the books are about them, they might be more interested and inclined to read them.

Costa said that the goal of the RIF program is to make reading a habit with young children.

"We're trying to make reading fun for these kids," she said. "It's not a real teaching organization. We're just trying to get these children interested in learning so they'll stick with it.'

When young people are given the opportunity to choose — and keep the books they want, they will read, she said. They will then continue to read and acquire literacy skills that will carry them through their school years and into adulthood, she said.

Norton said that RIF helps emphasize the importance of bcoks.

"It gives a child a book and allows him to value the book as his own," she said. "It also helps to improve the child's reading skills and his atti-tude toward reading and books in general.

Debbie Hodnett, a first-grade teacher at Travis Elementary School in Bryan and the treasurer of RIF in

"A kid who's never been read to has little chance of competing with kids who've had books placed in their cribs since birth. There's no reason why all children shouldn't be read to; it doesn't cost anything. It's just sheer laziness on the part of the parents."

- Wendy Costa, founder of B-CS RIF

Bryan-College Station, said that RIF gives children access to books that

they may never have had before. 'Many of the children that RIF serves have no opportunity to ever get to the library," she said. "Either there's no parental structure that will take them to the library, or they just don't know how to use the facilities once they're there. For this reason it's important that these kids be allowed to pick out their own books and know that it's really theirs." Norton, a RIF volunteer for five

years, also has helped A&M students o experience the joy of giving to the RIF children.

"In my language arts course, my students are required to work with children in some aspect," she said. "The RIF program has turned out to . age 1 will never be bridged by chilbe the one they like participating in dren who haven't been read to. In the best because they are perform- fact, kindergarten and first-grade ing a very worthwhile and appre-ciated service for needy children. They go to a place, such as the Girls' Club, one day a week and read aloud which haven't.' for the children.

month multi-media campaign to encourage parents to share the plea-

sures of reading with children. Costa, who helped develop the theme, "Reading Together," said that the primary goal of the new project is to reach parents before their children enter school. Funding for the campaign, is pro-vided by a \$26,000 grant awarded to

the national RIF organization by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The grant enables RIF and its local partners to develop pilot programs to assist families whose children are at risk of growing up without necessary literacy skills, she said.

One of the new programs pro-vides book boxes filled with used books and magazines for children to read, she said. The boxes will be placed in hospitals, laundromats, welfare agencies and various other locations.

Another program will provide a book for each newborn at Saint Joseph's and Humana hospitals.

"We have to get parents to read and talk to their children in the preschool years," she said. "Only children who have been read to and are familiar with the language will be able to take advantage of all that is eventually offered to them in school.

Costa said that reading leads to future success.

"Reading is the key to all success in school, and school is the key to getting out of poverty and to most opportunities in life," she said. An awful lot of children just aren't able to use these opportunities because they're not reading and some of them are coming to school with handicaps in reading. A kid who's never been read to has little chance of competing with kids who've had books placed in their cribs since birth. There's no reason why all children shouldn't be read to; it doesn't cost anything. It's just sheer laziness on the part of the parents." Costa said that RIF encourages ac-

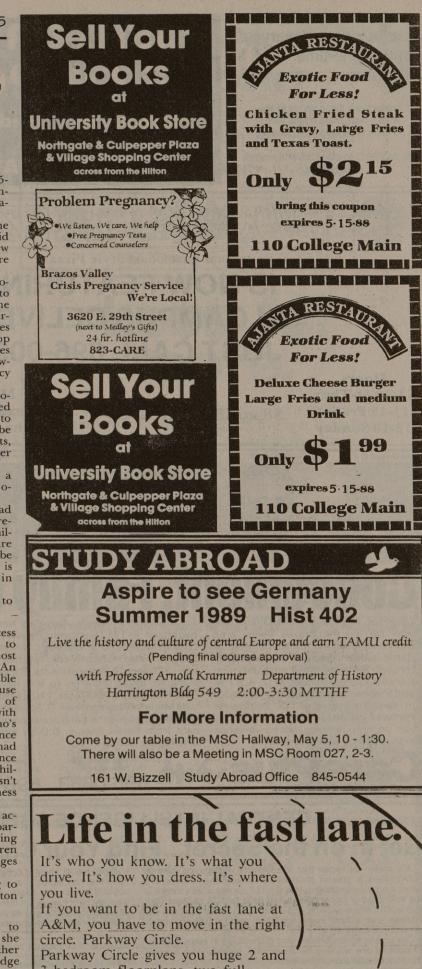
tivities that are free, so that all par-ents, regardless of their own reading ability, can ensure that their children read and enjoy all the advantages and pleasures of reading.

Parents should begin reading to children as early as possible, Norton said.

"Reading to children helps to teach them the value of stories," she said. "It also exposes them to other thoughts, cultures and knowledge that prepares them to read books on their own when they get into school. In fact, research shows that reading to children at an early age increases their own reading comprehension." Costa said that parents can en-courage literacy before their chil-

dren start school.

Children become verbal when they are talked to, and when adults use a wide variety of words, the children develop a better vocabulary," she said. "The advantage of reading to a child for 15 minutes a day from



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ncil, municipal judges and school board trustees.

As the battle lines have been drawn, preachers have urged their congregations to vote against pari-mutuel and racing supporters have raised \$31,000 to aid their effort.

The local newspaper hesitantly endorsed the measure, while school Superintendent E.C. Les-lie, Mayor Peck McMinn and county Judge Rod Shaw all came out against pari-mutuel wagering.

A group calling itself Citizens Against Pari-Mutuel Gambling has run quarter-page newspaper ads citing statistics that gambling causes failed marriages and fosers organized crime. Television ads are to run later in the week, said the Rev. Gene Glaeser, pastor of Broadway Church of Christ.

Racing opponents worry that having a racetrack will soil Lubbock's image.

The Bryan-College Station RIF program now gives three books a year to the children of low-income families, she said. RIF gives books only to underprivileged children, she said, because they are the ones who cannot afford to buy their own.

"We just can't have RIF distribution centers at the mall and have 20,000 kids show up wanting free books," she said.

'We don't have the books or the funds with which to do that. If we did (have enough books or money) we would (have more distribution centers) because our job is to pro-mote children's reading. It's really too bad that we can't give our services to everyone.

Because selection of the books can be complicated, Costa sought outside help.

Dorothy VanRiper, A&M lecturer in English, and Dr. Donna Norton, A&M professor of reading and children's literature, give insight and ad-vice on appropriate children's books. Norton said she uses several crite-

'Even though they are required to do this all semester I haven't ever really received any complaints."

VanRiper said that the students to would stand out. ho participate in RIF provide a "However," Hodnett said, "after who participate in RIF provide a great service.

"They might not realize it, but they are not only helping children in children who've been read to are the RIF program here, but they more interested in reading. They might also put their knowledge to use in their hometown communities rectly and that they're supposed to someday," she said. "I know of seve- read left to right." ral former students who have been instrumental in beginning RIF programs in their hometowns.

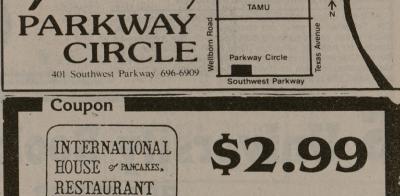
Bryan-College Station RIF program difficult to tell. Over the long run, if has been chosen as one of seven or-ganizations across the nation to de-maybe teachers will be able to tell velop innovative pilot programs for that children are coming to school their communities. In partnership better prepared, but it'll be years bewith the national organization, the fore we know.

teachers have told me that they can tell on the first day of school which children have been read to and

Hodnett said that until she started teaching first grade she did not be-lieve that a child who had been read

teaching first grade in Bryan for three years, I have noticed that the also know how to open books cor-

"How do we know if the standard boxes, billboards and posters (that ams in their hometowns." are used to advertise the program) As a result of Costa's initiative, the are effective?" she asked. "It's very



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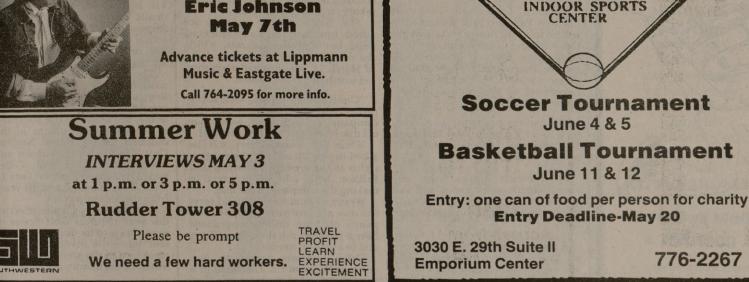
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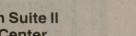
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