

# Disadvantaged get counseling, training at A&M

By Susan Erb  
Reporter

Disadvantaged youths who contemplate dropping out of high school are getting counseling and training as part of a summer program at Texas A&M aimed at getting students back on the diploma-earning track.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), a statewide work/study program, provides a combination of academic training, hands-on work experience and counseling to 14- and 15-year olds who have either low ability or motivation or who have unsupportive home environments.

Dr. Dempsey Seastrunk, head of the A&M chapter of the program, said the selection of participants is made through the combined effort of local school district teachers and counselors, as well as YOU representatives from five Texas areas: Houston, San Antonio, Austin, Gonzales and Beeville.

About 180 program participants arrived at A&M Wednesday and will remain here until Aug. 6.

"The students have not dropped out," Seastrunk said. "They are not special ed. They may not necessarily be the gifted or the talented. They are students who come from family backgrounds that lack the capacity, because of financial or other factors, to lend support to the student."

YOU's objectives, Seastrunk said, are to expand the students' perceptions of career opportunities, to give them the motivation to complete high school and to

help them realize it is feasible to achieve their career objectives if they try.

Seastrunk said the program's basic concept was designed in 1972 for the entering freshman class at St. Edward's University in Austin. It was expanded in 1975 to include migrant and seasonal farm workers' children. The program now is exclusively for high school freshmen and sophomores.

"We try to help the students get a feel for what some of their interests might be that they haven't been able to verbalize," Seastrunk said.

The high school freshmen and sophomores indicate their career interests on job survey forms filled out as part of the initial application process. These interests, Seastrunk said, are matched with jobs available in the community by the host university and local program directors. After the students receive interview-skills training, they apply for three different jobs, from which they may or may not receive offers.

"We are trying to create a real-world work experience," Seastrunk said. "Just because you interview for a job doesn't mean you'll necessarily get it."

The youths are paid minimum wage for 170 hours of work experience and also are paid for 42½ hours of career counseling.

The academic component of the program consists of 200 hours of courses in math, English, reading, computer literacy, study skills and tutoring.

Eighteen Texas universities will participate in the two-month program this year.

# Fired worker takes hostages, kills self

RICHARDSON (AP) — A fired computer company employee returned to his offices Monday and fatally shot himself after earlier holding two hostages at gunpoint for much of the day, authorities said.

Police spokesman Jim Wheatley said Mervin D. Gilliam, 28, entered Zeus Components of Dallas shortly after 8 a.m. looking for his boss and attempted to take four hostages, but two escaped.

One man and one woman were held for much of the day. Donna Dippel, a company secretary in her 20s, was released early afternoon and Roman Gonzales, a Dallas resident in his early 30s, was released at about 4 p.m., Wheatley said.

Friends said they were shocked by the incident.

"He was a very nice guy," said Greg Foster, pastor of Hamilton Park First Baptist Church where Gilliam attended.

"Sometimes something in a person's life comes up that you can't explain," Foster said. "Mervin wasn't capable of this."

A man who identified himself as a former co-worker of the suspect said the man got along well with other employees.

"I'm surprised to see him do something like this," said Brad Davis, 36. "I'm really shocked."

The gunman's brother, Charles Gilliam, and his mother arrived at the offices late Monday morning to help police negotiate, Wheatley said.

Another friend, Dwain Thompson, who described Gilliam as "a very talented young man," said Gilliam had recently been through a period of depression after losing his girlfriend and his job.

Hanna called the suspect "a short-time employee" of the company.

Police were on a direct telephone line with the man when they heard a muffled gunshot and the phone went dead at about 5:20 p.m., said Capt. Joe Hanna. Police entered the building immediately after hearing the shot and found Gilliam dead, Hanna said.

Richardson is a suburb on Dallas' north side.

Earlier, Wheatley said police maintained telephone contact with the suspect and that "the man appeared calm."

The other two hostages, Andy Byles and Bill Pendergrass, escaped shortly after the suspect entered the office, Hanna said.

# Ex-aide believed book for Wright 'part of my job'

FORT WORTH (AP) — Working on a book for House Speaker Jim Wright was "part of my job," said a former aide who added he was not told the project was to be accomplished on personal time.

Publication arrangements for the book are being examined in an investigation of Wright by the House Ethics Committee.

"I did think it was part of my congressional job," Matthew Cossolotto told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram

in a telephone interview published Monday.

"That was my understanding at the time, and I still think that," he said.

The House panel last week decided to conduct the inquiry to determine if Wright has violated rules on ethics and conflicts of interest.

Wright, in two network interview programs Sunday, said Cossolotto performed the job voluntarily and on personal time included with his congressional duties.

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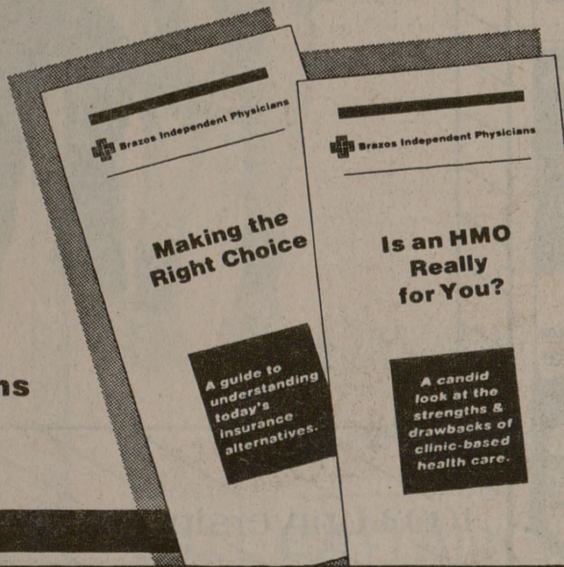
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