

A&M computer center provides something for almost everyone

By Melissa Naumann
Reporter

If computers seem like a far-off entity or if they're second nature, computer users on campus can find something to suit them, Kay Claybourn of the Electronic Media Group of the Computing Services Center said Tuesday in a meeting of the Computer Users Group.

"We may not have the most sophisticated system, but you'd be hard-pressed not to find some machine that can suit your needs," Claybourn said in a lecture titled

"Intro to Campus Computing."

Through the computer access fee paid by students at enrollment, each student has the opportunity to establish an account on the mainframes, Claybourn said. Students can claim their accounts at the Teague Computing Center, the Remote Computing Center or the Academic Computing Center.

"To find out which account to open, you need to look at your goal," Claybourn said. "What kind of document do you need to produce?"

Claybourn's advice to beginning

computer users was to ask questions and keep pursuing.

"There's just not a big handbook that says how to do everything, but don't give up," she said.

Claybourn urged all students to get involved with computing on campus and take advantage of the tools available to them.

"Initially it is a lot of trouble," she said. "Anytime you learn a new thing, it is difficult, but the benefits down the road are incalculable. It's ultimately a great timesaver."

Everything from Macintosh computers to a number of supercomputer systems are available to students and faculty, Claybourn said.

Claybourn also invited faculty, staff, students and visitors to use

INFO, an electronic bulletin board service that is for distribution of general information.

"Almost any department you can name will be putting information on this system," she said. For example, the Placement Center has input information for graduating seniors on companies conducting on-campus interviews and the Student Programs Office and the Student Activities Office will be adding information on their activities.

INFO can be reached from any terminal on campus and users do not need to have accounts.

Other services that computer users should use are the introductory computer courses offered by the Computing Services Center, Claybourn said.

Classroom needed for gifted students

DALLAS (AP) — When teacher Sharon Arnold tells one of her sixth-grade students to go to the head of the class, all the pupil has to do is walk up the stairs.

For the past two weeks, her 21 gifted and talented students have been meeting under a stairwell at Lakewood Elementary School as they await a portable classroom.

The students are still getting their lessons away from the traditional classroom setting. But they have had to put up with noisy hallways between classes, no air conditioning and poor lighting.

Penumbra, which means "a space of partial illumination," was one of the vocabulary words during a morning reading lesson, made more difficult by burned-out light bulbs.

"Now when your parents ask you about your classroom at school, you can tell them it's a penumbra," Arnold told the students.

"At least you'll have a good vocabulary, no matter where we're having class."

The teacher doesn't have far to look to show her students the steps to higher education.

Her pupils call their classroom "the townhouse."

Colorful pictures showing steps for higher-order thinking and illustrating the importance of reading line one wall.

Other signs explain pertinent voting terms, and still others encourage students to "be risk takers."

The stairs' first landing acts as a library, the second as a study area. It has a couch, rug and 10 small pillows for students to use as they recline on every other step to read a Jack London story.

"I never tried to approach this place as a traditional classroom, and I think that's why it works," Arnold said.

"The only thing that really bothered me was not being able to do bulletin boards."

"All the decorations are held up with duct tape, and I spend the weekends worrying about how much is going to be on the floor when I get back."

Arnold returned to teaching this year after six years of retirement when increased enrollment left the Dallas Independent School District short of teachers and space. She was first told her class would meet in the orchestra pit in the auditorium.

"I just couldn't visualize that because there essentially is no orchestra pit," she said. "So I went hunting around the school for spaces. I got to this stairwell, which was full of tables and books, and thought, 'It just might work.'"

County commissioners approve pay increases

ANGLETON (AP) — Despite protests from several residents, Brazoria County commissioners voted to boost their salaries 16.5 percent to \$50,000, while most of the other county employees will be getting only a 5 percent raise.

The court voted 3-1 Monday for the pay increase, which was part of the 1989 budget. Commissioners unanimously approved an unchanged tax rate of 27.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

Commissioner Ronnie Broadus voted against increasing salaries from \$42,888 to \$50,000, saying it would be unfair to most other county employees, who will receive a 5 percent pay increase.

Broadus, the only commissioner facing opposition in November elections, voted last month for the special raises but said he since has changed his mind.

County commissioners now are the fifth-highest-paid in the state, according to a study by the Texas Association of Counties. They are the second-highest-paid in the Houston area, exceeded only by Harris County commissioners,

according to data compiled by the Taxpayers Research Council, a non-profit civic group.

About 100 people turned out for the budget hearing, and 20 people who addressed commissioners opposed the raises.

"The proposed increase in your own salaries is totally out of line with the reality of these present economic times in Brazoria County," said Bill Fletcher of Surfside, spokesman for the Brazoria County Taxpayers' Association, another citizen watchdog group.

Commissioners have commented that they deserve the raises because they put in 80-hour work weeks.

Instead of giving themselves raises, commissioners ought to engage the services of an efficiency expert to show them how to get more work done in less time, said Tom Mays of Sweeny.

Commissioners Billy Joe Plaster of Alvin, John P. Gayle Jr. of West Columbia and G.L. "Bubba" Rouse of Angleton approved the special raises. County Judge John Damon was opposed to the raises but did not vote.

Mosquito control districts forgotten by county citizens until biting starts

ORANGE (AP) — Most of the year, their phones ring as often as those of the lonely Maytag repairman of television commercials past.

People tend to forget that county mosquito control districts even exist until this time of year, when mosquitoes start tearing at their legs like rabid dogs.

"People don't think about us until they have a problem," said Lee Chastant, director of the Orange County Mosquito Control District. "And when they do call us, they're usually not in a very good mood."

What usually is the worst time of the year for mosquitoes occurred about two weeks early this year, in late August, Bob Selton, director of the Jefferson County Mosquito Control District, said.

Chastant said, "It's the worst we've had over the last three, four, five years." He said he blames a good part of this year's influx of mosquitoes in Southeast Texas on the remnants of Tropical Storm Beryl, which didn't exactly come barreling through but dumped enough rain on the area to render ideal mosquito hatching conditions, he said.

Moreover, the mosquitoes that are hatching floodwater mosquitoes are more aggressive, more mobile and more vicious biters than most of the 35 other species that plague Southeast Texas, Chastant said.

They don't necessarily have to hatch in the immediate area — they can fly up to 200 miles, which means the rains Beryl brought to Louisiana brought mosquitoes to Southeast Texas. "If you listen closely to them humming, you might notice a slight Cajun accent," Chastant said.

Shelton says an increase in rice farming also contributes to an increase in the mosquito population,

since flooded lands are needed to cultivate rice. "Back when rice production was at its heaviest, from 1974 to 1980, our office received from 200 to 300 calls a day," he said. But, he says, mosquitoes aren't dependent on rains or flooded land.

"There's not a yard or house or street that's not within the flight range of rice lands or other flooded areas," Shelton said.

Retired technical sergeant teaches new airmen his craft

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Panels of sheet metal are crafted into tough aircraft skin at Randolph Air Force Base under the capable tutelage of Juan M. Lopez.

Lopez has spent the past eight years teaching young airmen to sculpt the thin sheets into the wings and fuselage of T-37 Tweet aircraft.

"Mostly what I teach the airmen is pride in getting the job done," he said.

Lopez learned his trade in the Air Force, from which he retired a technical sergeant.

He has worked with the 12th Field Maintenance Squadron at Randolph — which has 368 military personnel and 125 civilians — the past 15 years.

"It's a hard job, a dirty job," the 54-year-old said of the work. "But the kids are really sincere about learning."

"Kids today need a little more motivation, a pat on the back, but they like adults. Let them do their

own thinking and they do a better job."

Lopez said nine of 10 times the young airmen make the right decision.

"But you have to let them do it for themselves," he said. "You can't train a man by doing the work for them."

The airmen not only do structural repair work on the aircraft, but inspect them thoroughly looking for

items such as fuel leaks that are outside their field but could adversely affect the pilot.

"They might see something that others miss," Lopez said. "Repairing it might save a crash."

It takes about six months of on-the-job training before the student finishes the course.

"We get them motivated," Lopez said. "I really take pride in my work and want them to, also. The pilot is putting his life in our hands."

Lopez totally has rebuilt three aircraft that crash-landed with their wheels up.

"It gives you a lot of pride to do that," he said.

Lopez and wife Sara have three daughters — Vannessa, 21; Laura, 20; and Veronica, 17; and son Johnny, 26, all of whom attended Clark High School.

"I like to bowl and fish and like all sports, but I guess you'd have to say I spend most of my spare time supporting the Clark Cougars," he said.

"I never miss a game."

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