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Local businesses enjoy benefits of A&M football

By Sherri Roberts
 Staff Writer

Football season at Texas A&M is held near and dear to the hearts of many fans for the escape it provides from a routine schedule of classes and work. Local merchants, however, welcome the season for the economic boost it provides to business.

"We live for football weekend," Donnie Anz, La Taqueria and Deluxe Burgerbar restaura-

spent by the typical shopper, Mewis said an increase of 4,500 people to the mall can generate as much as \$202,000 in mall sales.

Food and Aggie memorabilia shops do particularly well during the season, she said.

To keep sales constant on away-game weekends, Mewis said mall administrators try to schedule a special event at the mall. This strategy has proven to be effective, she said, with some of the mall's greatest profits being brought in on these weekends.

Mewis said the mall's profit-increases benefit the entire community by increasing the city's tax base. This leads to better parks, better streets and a better police department, she said.

Charles Gentry, assistant manager of the Texas A&M Bookstore, said the store's gift department has a 25 percent sales increase during football season.

The top-selling items, he said, are traditional Aggie souvenirs, such as T-shirts, sweatshirts and baseball caps.

Gentry said the A&M Cotton Bowl victories had a tremendous impact on the store's sales, referring to them as a shot in the arm for business.

Recent NCAA penalties had not affected business negatively, he said, as recent sales have been comparable to those of last year.

"If anything, it may stimulate our sales because Aggies are loyal to their school," he said.

Roy Gilbert, associate professor of economics, said the Uni-

"If anything, it may stimulate our sales because Aggies are loyal to their school."

— Charles Gentry, assistant manager of A&M bookstore

rant owner and manager, said. "It makes or breaks the semester."

Anz said sales at the two popular eating establishments increase 25 percent on football weekends. People are usually freer in their spending habits, he said, with beer, fajitas, and Deluxe burgerbaskets being a few of the favorite items consumed by customers.

Breakfast, a meal that many students prefer to exchange for an extra hour of sleep, is also a busier time at the restaurants on game weekends, he said. The increased number of parents and former students who visit the area account for the influx of breakfast customers, he said.

Those who have experienced the frustration of locating an unoccupied hotel room within 35 miles of College Station on game weekends will attest to the economic impact of football season.

Hilton General Manager Mark Arnold said a majority of area hotels have a 100 percent occupancy level on game weekends. The playing of less popular teams, however, may account for more vacancies, he said.

Because the Hilton is a group-oriented hotel, Arnold said occupancy fluctuated, depending on the number of conferences, business functions or other group events in the area. Football weekends, however, guarantee a sold-out situation, he said.

The influx of visitors in town pumps up business for local shops, as well.

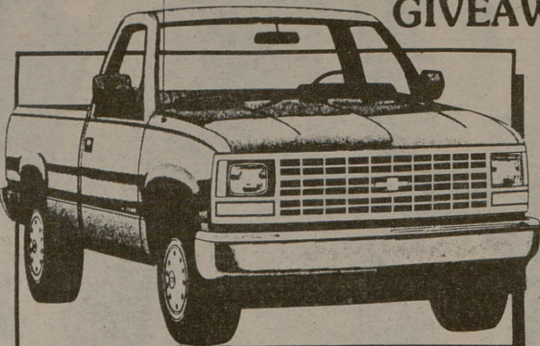
Martha Mewis, marketing director at Post Oak Mall, said traffic in the mall increases by 3,000 to 5,000 people on game weekends.

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"Jackie Sherrill is horribly underpaid in terms of what he's done."

— Roy Gilbert, associate professor of economics

versity receives economic benefits from football season, as well.

"A football program advertises the University," he said.

Telecasts of football games create a greater exposure for the University, he said, which stimulates the memories and generosity of former students.

When a university's athletic program improves, he said, there is a greater number of applicants to the school, which allows it to select the highest-quality students. This in turn attracts high-quality faculty, he said, which benefits the school economically.

"Jackie Sherrill is horribly underpaid in terms of what he's done," Gilbert said.

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