

Latchkey kid' problem spurs Project Home Safe programs

By Sandy Hastings
Reporter

Latchkey children — children who care for themselves while their parents work — are not a new phenomenon. Millions of American children return to empty homes after school. These children, ranging in age from 6 to 13, may be alone or may have the responsibility of caring for younger brothers and sisters.

Dr. Sarah Anderson of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service said that many of these children will take responsibility for their own care, sometimes cooking, cleaning and operating major appliances on their own.

"We don't have any real solid data on the situation in Bryan-College Station yet, but there are significant numbers and they're still growing," Anderson said. "A survey was taken in schools in the area, and 75 percent said they were latchkey children."

The difficulty in obtaining accurate statistics is directly related to the emotionally sensitive nature of the situation. For many families, leaving the children at home alone while the parents are working is a secretive arrangement, she said.

"Parents don't reveal their children are latchkey for two reasons," she said. "One, fear of child abuse and neglect charges and two, fear for the child — possibly setting the child up in a dangerous situation."

"Because of parental feelings of guilt and fear, the children are taught to maintain a low profile, and their presence may not even be noticed by friends and neighbors."

"Because of these factors, communities are frequently unaware of the extent and impact of the latchkey situation in their population, she said.

While children in self-care are not solely products of the 1980s, the magnitude of the situation is, Anderson said. Unsupervised children must be considered at risk, she said.

For example, 6,000 children die each year as a result of in-home accidents and fires, and in nearly every case no adult had been present.

Recognizing the challenges faced by latchkey children, the American Home Economics Association, with funding from the Whirlpool Foundation, established Project Home Safe in an effort to find both immediate and long-term solutions to the latchkey situation.

The three-year project includes research, training, materials development and start-up or strengthening of community school-age child care programs throughout the United States.

In addition to training home economists and providing material for use by trainers, parents and children, Project Home Safe offers a nationwide toll-free hotline and a national Resource Center that makes available research, books and other resources on child care.

"I will be going to Washington, D.C. for Home Safe Trainer's training," Anderson said. "The four-day, 28-hour training program will train us to teach volunteers at our training sessions to provide a life-skills training for children in self-care where the community offers no alternative to the latchkey arrangement."

"For example, we will pretend there is a fire and practice for emergency. We don't advocate leaving children alone, but the program is to help parents be sure the child is ready to care for himself if there is no other option available."

Texas has been chosen as one of the six training sites for the program. Several criteria were used in the selection process: a large population of school-age children with working parents, a strong state home economics association supporting the project, and a pool of qualified home economists working in the child development or education fields, Anderson said.

"Our training will target about 33 counties this side of San Antonio, from Austin to Houston," Anderson said. "We won't target the entire state but the program is open to others in the state."

Crime awareness key to prevention of illegal activities

By Laurie Tomasini
Reporter

Awareness is a key to preventing crime.

But particularly on the Texas A&M campus, there is a lack of awareness that anyone is a potential victim of criminal acts, including sexual assault, said Bob Wiatt, director of security and University Police.

"A&M is a part of the planet Earth," Wiatt said. "This is the real world. Students should quit acting like Alice in Wonderland and believing in the tooth fairy."

"People think once they enter the college environment they are protected by a cocoon of academics where everyone recites poetry and runs around with roses between their teeth," he said.

"This is a congested area with about 50,000 residents plus thousands of visitors on campus every week. With that many people in a society there are going to be offenders who will victimize students," Wiatt said.

Linda Castoria, director of the Brazos County Rape Crisis Center, said that students often seem not to realize that a society exists outside the A&M campus.

"The majority of students do not read the local newspaper," she said. "So they have no sense of what is going on in Bryan-College Station beyond the campus. Therefore, students relate the occurrence of crime in the whole area to what they know is happening on campus."

"Students hear about the theft of backpacks or bikes and think that is the extent of crime in the area," she said.

As a result, she said, many students have a false sense of security.

Incidents such as the sexual assault and attempted murder of an A&M student on Oct. 20 may make students more cautious — but often only until the offender is caught or a length of time elapses, she said.

National statistics show that only one in 10 rapists is apprehended.

"It is probably more like one in 15," Castoria said. "So for every one

who is caught, there are nine or 14 who are still committing the crime."

"Who's to say those criminals who are still out there won't walk onto campus or into a citizen's home?" Castoria said. "Students must be aware that a crime may occur anytime, anywhere, to anyone."

"No one should walk around absolutely paranoid that they could become a victim any minute," she said. "But they should realize that as often as sexual assault occurs on the national level, it has to affect our local community."

Wiatt, also president of the rape crisis center, said he wants students to be aware that they are part of the real world.

"Awareness is the best prevention," he said. "Be aware that you could be victimized."

Students have complained that they cannot be aware of something that officials and administrators are trying to hide.

"It seems the police and the administrators try to keep incidents of rape hush-hush," Wendy Layer, a senior elementary education major, said.

Wiatt said the University Police Department writes daily, monthly and annual records of all the crimes reported. The reports are available for anyone to read.

"That is where the information for the police beat comes from," he said. "If anything serious occurs it usually gets headlines in the paper."

However, not all sexual assaults are reported, so the police reports and newspaper stories are not actual representations of how often they occur.

Wiatt said sexual assault is one of the least reported offenses to a law enforcement agency. People are more likely to report a robbery, burglary or vandalism, he said.

Four sexual assaults were reported to the University Police between September 1987 and August 1988.

Texas dieters taken by health plan frauds

FORT WORTH (AP) — More and more dieters are telling Texas consumer fraud investigators that they are being bilked by quick-weight-loss plans that seem too good to be true — and are.

Robert Kaman, director of programs for Preventive Health-Preventive Medicine at the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine, said dieters often want a quick fix to lose weight.

"But there ain't no free lunch," he said. "You don't eat, you don't gain. The trick is to keep the weight off. Statistics suggest that within a year, 80 percent of all dieters gain their weight back. If the diet does not provide an education program to help you change your lifestyle, then you face a lifetime of what we call the yo-yo diet."

Kaman suggests dieters be leery of any weight-loss plans involving food supplements or diets devised by laymen without a doctor's approval.

Consumers should be sure they are not buying a marketing scheme, but a legitimate program, he said.

Kaman said would-be dieters should avoid substances that suppos-

edly increase metabolism, amphetamines, and hormones that many claim will lead to weight loss.

Another recent weight-loss fad is a patch soaked with chemicals and placed on the skin to allow slow absorption.

"The so-called patch technology has been recognized as safe and effective utilizing some drugs," said Jim McDonald, compliance officer for the Federal Drug Administration district office in Dallas.

But for weight loss, the technique has not been proven, and the Texas Attorney General's Office is battling advertisements and sale of the products in the state.

Some plans are fraudulent, one state official said.

"We are just covered up with health frauds right now," said Dennis Baker, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Health's Food and Drug Division. "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

The Dallas-Fort Worth Council Against Health Fraud received 160 calls between July 14, 1987, and July 14, 1988. Of those calls, 46 percent were on weight-loss programs.



Eat In or Take Out
Free Delivery
846-0379
Best Pizza in Town
Northgate

\$5⁹⁹ + Tax

M-F 11am-12am Sat 1pm-2am Sun 1pm-12am expires 11-30-88



Lowest Price in Town

4.77/10 MHz XT	360K Disk Drive
512K Memory	150 Watt UL Power Supply
Hercules/Color Adaptor	Parallel Printer Port
Monochrome Monitor	Fully IBM Compatible
AT Style Keyboard	1 Year Parts & Labor Warranty

ONLY \$699

w/640K Add \$40 15MHz Version Add \$39

ICS INNOVATIVE COMPUTER SYSTEMS
404 University Center #GG Ph. 693-7115
*Registered trademarks of their respective companies

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, ENJOY

FINE ART AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

ORIGINAL RETAIL PRICES:
\$14.95 to \$100.00
OUR PRICE:
½ of ORIGINAL RETAIL PRICE



Fine Art is as close as your nearest Half Price Books! We have a huge selection of ancient to contemporary art books from major American art publishers, plus — special British and European imports. These books, complete with color plates, make the ultimate gifts. Hurry for the best selection.

2828 TEXAS AVE. S./BRYAN/846-2738
Open 10am-9pm Mon.-Sat. • 12noon-9pm Sun.
28 Stores in 6 States • All Stores Open 7 Days A Week



HALF PRICE BOOKS RECORDS MAGAZINES
We Buy And Sell Anything Printed or Recorded.



don't let your business bomb.

call 845-2611 to advertise at ease

MSC University **PLUS**

presents. . .


1988


Christmas Craft Festival

November 29 & 30

9:00am - 5:00pm
Rudder Fountain Mall

Quality handcrafted items at affordable prices!

Jewelry	Stained Glass
Pottery	Photography
Woodwork	Artworks
T-Shirts	...and more