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Giant sea turtles invade classroom

Programs for gifted, talented children try to draw out creativity

By Melissa Naumann

REPORTER

A high school student wades knee-deep in mud while a 3-year-old moves around the room imitating a giant sea turtle. Can this be educational?

Yes, it actually is. These are glimpses into two summer programs offered by Texas A&M's Institute for the Gifted and Talented.

The institute, in the educational psychology department, provides various programs for young people as well as valuable research sources for the department.

Dr. William Nash, director of the institute, said its goal is to encourage creativity in students and in teaching methods.

"Schools do a good job of teaching facts, but don't encourage thinking skills," he said. "When you get down to it, our success in the world has come from innovation and trying new ideas."

One program encouraging such innovation is the Galveston Island Adventure. Every summer, 240 high

school students go to Texas A&M University at Galveston.

They study various fields, including marine biology, space science and archaeology. For two weeks, a student explores a chosen field with trips and lab activities as well as classroom instruction.

The program allows students to use a hands-on approach to learning. Students studying marine biology will wade in the salt marshes of Galveston Bay and the space science students will build and test models of unusual aircraft.

Students participating in the Galveston Island Adventure have an opportunity to interact with professionals in their fields of expertise.

"We feel it's particularly important for talented kids to work closely with talented adults," Nash said. "Through the institute, we've been able to arrange for kids to have opportunities and connections with some unique adults."

The reaction to the Galveston program, which began in 1980, has been overwhelmingly positive.

"One parent called to tell me that

the Galveston Island Adventure was not only the best summer his child ever had, but probably the best experience of her life," Nash said.

Minds Alive is a program in Bryan-College Station sponsored by the institute. Twenty preschool children participate in the four-week program that encourages children to think creatively.

Starting early with gifted children is the most important aspect of Minds Alive, said Dr. Pat Alexander, associate director of research for the project.

"Gifted programs don't exist until a child's way of learning is solidified," Alexander said. "If we can start early with them, when they go to public schools, they will already have an idea of how enriching and exciting learning is."

All activities in the Minds Alive program are thematic and encourage creativity by representing what children are learning in multiple ways. From drawing to telling stories to creative movement, the children focus on one topic.

"If the topic is sea animals, the children do everything in relation to

sea animals," Alexander said. "Creative movement exercise will try to move like a whale or a turtle and try to learn what it is like to be that animal."

Alexander said Minds Alive is important to teachers as it is to students.

"Teachers with years of professional experience walk out with new understandings," she said. "What is important is that we are sharing it with our school districts."

The institute also sponsors Young Scholars Lecture Series which brings gifted high school seniors to A&M for five Friday sessions.

The series focuses on topics intended to spark interest in all students such as futurism and bioscience.

All of the institute's activities are on the primary goal of enriching children and their way of thinking.

A sign on Alexander's wall enforces this idea: "Children are things to be molded but people are things to be unfolded."

Professor: Industry needs skilled writers

By Juliette Rizzo

STAFF WRITER

The demand for technical writers parallels the increase in high technological industry in Texas, says Texas A&M's technical writing course chairman.

Dr. Elizabeth Tebeaux, associate professor of English responsible for the technical writing course, says that Texas is attempting to attract high-tech firms by offering a financial environment conducive to establishing innovative high-tech businesses.

Because Texas does not have a corporate income tax, more businesses are interested in locating within the state.

Tebeaux said this is good not only for the state but for the state's job market as well.

"The high-tech industry saved the east coast when the financial bottom fell out 12 years ago," she says. "Many jobs were created in technical

areas. There was a big demand for technical writers to support the industry."

In the same way, Texas can no longer depend on the oil industry the way it did years ago, she says.

To fill the gap created by the fall of the oil industry, Texas is trying to attract more high-tech businesses to provide more jobs.

"More high-tech corporations mean more technical writing jobs," Tebeaux says. "The demand for graduates in the field of technical writing and communication will increase, and if you are going to work around businessmen, you better know their language."

The A&M English department offers students the opportunity to pursue a career in technical communication by opting for a major in English with a minor in rhetoric. A bachelor of art's degree with a rhetoric option is under consideration.

"We require the students to take a technical

writing course and a technical editing course," Tebeaux says. "We do not offer students a major's degree in technical communication, but we do offer enough courses to get a student started in the field. We are more committed to the traditional study of literature."

Tebeaux says students choosing to pursue a field need to get a rich background in other than English.

"Writing courses are not enough," she says. "You've got to have a strong background in the traditional liberal arts but in computer science, statistics, science and math."

Many companies look for in-house technical specialists. A student with a wide variety of knowledge in different fields has a better chance of getting a good technical position.

For example, she says, a student at A&M with a degree in electrical engineering took two technical writing courses and received nine job offers.

Group holds contest to beautify freeways

By Ashley A. Bailey

STAFF WRITER

Few people consider freeways visually pleasing or artistic. But a group of Texas A&M landscape architects hopes to change that through their national design competition, which uses a high-volume section of Houston freeway as a canvas.

Dr. Harlow Landphair, an A&M landscape architecture professor, said that although most freeway interchanges in Houston are larger than the buildings, less time and money are spent on the roadways.

"No other place is seen by more people in a single day than the freeway," Landphair said. "The freeway and its attendant structures are a major part of the urban visual fabric, and they consume as much as 10 percent of the land in a metropolitan area."

The competition is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Since the announcement of the contest in the fall, more than 100 professionals have entered the competition, sponsored by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation and the NEA. The competition is for design and visual arts professionals working in collaborative teams, Landphair said.

"For all the impact of the freeway on our daily journeys in and about an urban area, we have done little to explore the visual character and quality of these spaces," he said. "Designs submitted also must consider safety and utility because the successful solution (the winner) will be implemented."

Landphair said that of all the structures in an urban setting, the freeway is probably the single most important structure in providing a sense of direction and orientation to the residents.

The freeway at the center of the competition is the interchange at Loop 610 and Interstate 45 (Gulf Freeway) in southeast Houston. This interchange is composed of ramps, bridges and open right-of-way spaces, and covers about 60 acres.

This size and composition is typical of about 25 such interchanges in the city's expanding freeway system, Landphair said.

The competition is an outgrowth of the highway department program

that sets aside one percent of construction funds for landscape development, he said. It is an attempt to do something unique, he added. Entries have been received from as far away as New York, Canada and Mexico. The winner will be announced March 16.

Cash prizes to the winners will be \$10,000 for first place, \$5,000 for second place and \$2,000 for third. In addition, \$15,000 will compensate the winners for the preparation of final construction documents.

Witness for prosecution testifies in third trial of San Diego rape case

EDINBURG (AP) — A prosecution witness testified Wednesday that the third man to go on trial in a reported gang rape struck the woman while sexually assaulting her on the hood of a car north of the South Texas city of San Diego.

The first day of testimony began Wednesday in the sexual assault trial of Roberto Perez, 26, who is among 10 men and a 14-year-old boy indicted in the case last April.

"He hit her on the side of the face," Jose Carlos Briones said of Perez.

Briones, the first prosecution witness, testified before a Hidalgo County jury of six men and six women that he saw Perez raping the woman while other men held her down, and that "she was complaining."

"I did see him there . . . on top of the hood" with her, said Briones, 29, who also faces a sexual assault charge in the case.

A 13-year-old boy testified later Wednesday that he never saw Perez strike the woman, but that Perez and others raped her on the car while men held her, and, "She was crying."

Briones and the boy testified in trials in September and January in which two of Perez' co-defendants were convicted. Prosecution testimony in Perez' trial will continue Thursday morning.

The woman has told authorities that she was abducted while walking

a short distance home from a relative's house in San Diego the night of last March 26 and taken to a ranch where men were gathered for a cockfight north of the Duval County city. She said she was raped and sodomized repeatedly there and at two other locations by as many as 20 men.

Briones admitted trying to assault the woman, but said he had drunk two cases of beer that day and was unable, then tried to stop the other men, one of whom sexually assaulted her with a beer bottle.

He said he later caught a ride home from the ranch in another car, and saw Perez, who also was in the car, force the woman to perform a sexual act before Briones was dropped off in San Diego.

Asked who put her into the car, Briones pointed at Perez and said, "That man right there."

Briones denied telling a Corpus Christi psychiatrist last summer during a court-ordered competency examination that "she liked it," as is written in the clinical report.

Perez also faces two aggravated kidnapping charges in connection with the incident, and is accused of sexually assaulting the woman at two other locations in addition to the ranch.

The first two men tried in the case were found guilty in the 229th District Court in San Diego.

What's Up

Thursday

- MSC OPAS:** will present the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-fields at 8 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.
- LATIN AMERICAN CATHOLIC STUDENTS:** will have a weekly meeting at 8:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Student Center.
- MID-COUNTRY HOMETOWN CLUB:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 111 Blocker.
- AGGIE BLOOD DRIVE COMMITTEE:** The Central Texas Red Cross blood drive will be from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Rudder and from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Commons.
- INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM:** Dr. Wesley Peterson will present "Environmental Destruction and Economic Development" at 7 p.m. in 103 Herman Heep.
- S.W.A.P.:** will reflect on Christianity and other cult religions at 8:30 p.m. in 502 Rudder.
- UPSILON PI EPSILON:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 127 Zachry.
- NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for details.
- ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS:** will have a general discussion at 6 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. for more details.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more details.
- CENTER FOR DRUG PREVENTION AND EDUCATION:** will present the game show "Drug Control" as part of drug awareness week at noon in the MSC flag room.
- RECREATIONAL SPORTS:** will have a swim meet information meeting at 8 p.m. in 167 Read and a wallyball team captain's meeting at 5 p.m. in 167 Read. There will also be registration in 159 Read for archery doubles, a backpacking trip, softball, preseason softball tournament, free throw shooting contest, a rock climbing clinic and a spring break rafting/kayaking trip.

Friday

- CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST:** will have Friday Night Alive in 108 Harrington.
- CATHOLIC STUDENT CENTER:** will present stations of the Cross at 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Church.
- MELTING POT:** will have an informal get-together for international students at 7 p.m. at St. Mary's Student Center.
- AGGIE BLOOD DRIVE:** The Central Texas Red Cross will have a blood drive from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Rudder and from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Commons.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for details.
- JUNGIAN SOCIETY OF THE BRAZOS VALLEY:** Dr. Jim Barnett will present "The Psychological Need for Initiation of Manhood" at 7:30 p.m. in 601 Rudder.
- PARENT'S WEEKEND COMMITTEE:** Parents of the Year applications are due Feb. 10 in 221 Pavilion.
- SCONA:** will present speeches and group discussions on "Japan: The Power of a Changing Economy," in Rudder through Saturday.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are not on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.