

Monday, December 4, 1989

Medicine Tribe gathers \$176 for needy at bonfire

By Pam Mooman
Of The Battalion Staff

Bonfire '89 warmed thousands of hearts, but some Texas A&M students also want it to warm one home. Members of the Medicine Tribe, a student organization started in Fall 1988, raised \$176 by asking those at bonfire to contribute loose change to pay heating bills for needy families.

Brian Skipworth, a senior technical education major from Conroe, is the member of the Medicine Tribe who came up with the idea of using bonfire to raise money. "We were discussing the sense of community and heat generated by bonfire," Skipworth said. This spawned the idea for the project, he said. "(We thought) maybe we can channel that to the community so

other members can get some heat," he said. Skipworth said the Medicine Tribe plans to take the money raised during bonfire to local utility companies and ask them the best way to use it. He said the money raised could be added to funds to help needy families, or used to help a specific family. "It will go to help a needy family pay their bills for the winter," he said. "We're going to let the utility company do what they feel is the best thing."

The Medicine Tribe already has a candidate for their funds. An A&M employee, who is on sick leave, cannot pay her heating bill, Irwin Tang, president of the group, said. "With this much money, we'll at least be able to heat one house this winter," he said. Skipworth said he appreciated the attitude of the people asked for money. "People were extremely cooperative," he said. "I couldn't believe how nice people were. There were very few rude comments, and those people probably weren't even from A&M."

Students get trapped in elevator

Fourteen Texas A&M students, a custodian and stereo equipment were trapped in between the first and second floor in a Rudder elevator Sunday night for approximately one hour. The students, who are all members of Young Life, said they jumped while in the elevator and accidentally hit the emergency stop button. When the students used the elevator phone to call for help, the operator agreed to call and order

pizza for the trapped students. After prying the elevator doors partially open, the students managed to reach for the pizza. The Dover Manufacturing Company, who provides 24-hour service, was called to repair the elevator. The Dover Manufacturing Company employee said he brought the elevator down manually after the elevator doors were properly closed. The students and the custodian said that nobody was hurt or felt ill.

Everyone loves a parade



A group of cheerleaders from A&M Consolidated High School ride through College Station on a reindeer and sleigh float Sunday afternoon at the annual Christmas parade.

Photo by Sondra Robbins

Home schooling on rise in U.S., Brazos Valley

By David Hood
Special to The Battalion

Home schooling once was perceived as an option only for parents who couldn't route their children through the public or private school systems.

Farmers, missionaries, movie stars and "extremists" — those who educated or tutored their children at home — were accepted as special cases to a society in which the educate-at-home concept was a lingering memory of America's country schoolhouse days. Today, though, for reasons ranging from disgust with the public school system, to religion, to the special needs of the "problem child," home schooling has edged its way into middle-class America.

Although still below one percent of the total public school population, experts guess that between 200,000 and 1 million children are being educated at home in the United States today.

In the Brazos Valley, the national trend in this grassroots education approach is evident.

"It's really mushrooming right now," Jane Crouse, a College Station resident, who, with her husband Robert, teaches their three elementary school-aged children at home, said. "Three years ago there were only about 32 families that home schooled in this area."

Crouse said she knows of about 80 families in the Brazos Valley that home school. Other estimates put the number as high as 150 families.

Bryan couple keeps children home during school to educate in 'spiritually protected' environment

By David Hood
Special to The Battalion

When Linda and Gary Linder decided to educate their children at home rather than follow what many people would call the "normal" public school route, even their parents called them radical.

Eight years later, this Bryan couple continues to do what they set out to do, and they are succeeding. Their five children, from 2 to 12 years old, are home schooled.

"We've made up our minds," Linda said. "We've made a commitment to our children."

She said they chose the home education approach because of their belief in the need for a strong religious and family environment.

"We felt like we could both protect and provide for them spiritually, emotionally, psychologically and academically better in a home situation," Linda said. "We just pray about it and take it one year at a time."

Linda and Gary said their approach to the home classroom situation is unregimented.

For residents in Texas, home schooling has not only become a workable reality for many parents, it has also become, legally, a parental decision.

"People call here and say, 'Who's in charge of home schooling?' and I love to answer that question," Patrick

Whelan, a legal counselor for the Texas Education Agency, said. "I say, 'You are.'"

In Texas, children between the ages of 8 and 17 are required by the Texas Education Code to attend school. But what many home schoolers had wondered was whether or

not a home school could be included in the state's definition of an acceptable educational establishment.

The answer came in *Leeper et al. v. Arlington Independent School District*, a 1987 district court case that established the right for parents to teach their children at home in

and they use curriculum testing to map out academic progress and improve lesson plans.

"There's a whole ocean stocked full of curriculum materials that are prepared by educators," she said. Her children have been tested by Texas A&M graduate and doctoral students doing educational research.

As the Linders' children enter the high school levels and become interested in more difficult subjects, like advanced math and science, Linda and Gary might hire tutors for the children.

"We feel like we can hand pick their teachers, even in their high school years," Linda said.

As they get older, the kids can choose to participate in a type of apprentice situation, she said, where they can spend part of their day with an expert in their field of interest.

"In home schooling, you basically have to teach yourself how to teach your children to teach themselves," she said. "We're teaching our children not just to grow up and get a job. We're teaching them to be entrepreneurs, to work smarter, not harder."

Whelan says parents must use an organized curriculum that includes basic educational needs, such as math, science and spelling, as well as a study of good citizenship. Parents who teach their children at home do not have to be certified teachers, he said.

Home schooling provisions vary with each state. In North Dakota, Iowa and Michigan, only certified teachers can be home schoolers. Other states require children to pass standardized achievement tests.

Anne McDow, a College Station resident, teaches her three elementary and two preschool-aged children at home with her husband. She says that they would like to continue teaching through their children's high school years but her son, who will be in junior high next year, may move into the public school system.

"Right now, my son really wants to play football and it will depend on that," she said. "He thinks he'd really like to be in the school system, so we're considering it."

The lack of a structured socialization process is what some experts, although supportive of home schooling in some situations, fear about the movement.

Katherine McFarland, an A&M doctoral student in educational curriculum and instruction, has taught in many different educational forums, including public and private schools, experimental and open space schools and overseas. From a teacher's standpoint, she has seen both sides of the home-schooling issue.

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