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International students get help with English

By ANDY KEHOE
Of The Battalion Staff

Living in a foreign country can be exciting, but if you're unable to speak the country's native language, it can be a frightening situation.

Through the Conversation Partners program, Rita Marsh-Birch of the Texas A&M English Language Institute is trying to make the English language a little easier for international students.

With the annual program, Marsh-Birch will match up one international student from her oral skills classes with one American student who volunteers to spend time talking to the newcomer.

She said this pairing of students will encourage learning the English language outside the classroom and serve as a cultural interaction for the foreign students.

"It's very important for these students to have English contacts away from the class," Marsh-Birch said. "Conversation Partners gives them an opportunity to sit down face-to-face with an American to practice speaking and also learn more about the American culture."

Student volunteers are recruited from several organizations. Among them are the U.S. Students Association, Student Y Association, and the local Pi Kappa Phi chapter. Also, volunteers are required by professors of certain Linguistics and Honors History courses.

The volunteer campaign began during the third week of the semester.

Currently, 107 student volunteers work with 112 international students.

"This year's volunteer turnout has been about average," Marsh-Birch said. "I'm still looking for a few more to make the numbers even."

Foreign students participating in Conversation Partners hail from 27 different countries, including China, India, Japan, Peru and Turkey.

Marsh-Birch said all international students will benefit from working with a partner.

"Many of these students have studied the English language in books for years," she said. "But now they will actually be able to practice speaking it, which is extremely important in the overall learning process."

As part of its year-round Cultural Activities Program ELI is planning its spring trip to San Antonio. Activities such as these are reserved for full-time ELI students, those international students taking 25 hours of English a week.

Other annual activities include a summer trip to Austin, country-western dancing at the Texas Hall of Fame and a visit to the Blue Bell Creamery in Brenham.

Deanna Wormuth, ELI coordinator, said the trips encourage a complete immersion into the English language.

"They let the international students have a chance to learn about American culture in a more relaxed setting," Wormuth said. "They can have a fun time while learning."

Williams continues with campaign

Mourning gubernatorial candidate reaffirms plans

STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

Republican Clayton Williams, who stopped making campaign appearances last week after a plane crash killed five business associates, confirmed Monday he will continue his race for governor.

"I'm going to keep it going," Williams told the Associated Press after attending the funeral of one of the victims of the Wednesday plane crash near Putnam, which is located near Abilene.

Williams suspended his campaign and withdrew TV advertising after the plane crash that killed four of his longtime friends, two of which were Texas A&M graduates, and the pilot.

The crash is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration and Mitsubishi, the manufacturer of the plane.

The cancellations fueled speculation that he would drop out of the race despite leading in the polls over GOP opponents Texas Railroad Commission Chairman Kent Hance, former Secretary of State Jack Rains and Dallas attorney Tom Luce.

Mona Palmer, deputy press secretary for Williams' gubernatorial campaign, told The Battalion Wednesday that it was not a time to campaign.

Monday, in Austin, however, his campaign manager Buddy Barfield read a statement by Williams that said the Midland businessman considered dropping out of the race but decided to continue.

"I realize there may be some rough roads ahead, but I'm sure that — God willing — this campaign and I will gain the necessary strength to plow ahead," Williams said in the statement.

"So, starting tomorrow, the Clayton Williams campaign will be back in the saddle," he said.

On Monday, Williams attended



Clayton Williams

Battalion File Photo

the funeral for Randy Kidwell, the last funeral for the plane crash victims.

Barfield quoted Williams as saying, "I've just been through the roughest time of my life, and believe me the pain of the last few

days will take a long time to absorb."

"In the first couple of days after the crash, the heartache and the grief were so overwhelming that I did consider dropping out of the governor's race."

But Williams said the widows of the plane crash victims encouraged him to continue his campaign.

He will make his first campaign appearance Tuesday in Dallas after visiting his newborn grandson. Then he will go to Bryan-College Station to meet with A&M students at 5 p.m. in the Grove.

Williams' television commercials began again Monday and a new round of campaign ads are scheduled to start Tuesday, Barfield said.

Barfield said Williams' private plane will not be used for a while to allow Williams' company pilots more time to mourn.

"They've got some grieving to do," Barfield said. "It would be pretty tough to put one of his pilots back up in the air." He said Williams will depend on his supporters to provide air travel for the next few days.

Barfield said Williams appreciated the moral support provided by other candidates, both Republican and Democratic, since the plane crash.

But he said he doesn't expect any of them to pull any punches for the remainder of the campaign in the March 13 primary.

"Everybody has got to get out there and start executing their game plan," he said. "As of tomorrow (Tuesday), we're back on the campaign trail."

Barfield said he didn't know whether the past few days helped the campaign.

"We have not evaluated this or looked at this as an opportunity to further the campaign," he said. "This has been a very grieving time for us."

Campaign staffers have planned rallies in which Williams will lead voters to absentee polling places after Wednesday, when the absentee voting period begins. Absentee voting ends March 9.

Luby's Cafeteria manager, Class of '87, dies of heart attack, buried in San Antonio

Armando Cigarroa, 26, Class of '87, died Jan. 13 of a heart attack in San Antonio. He was a biomedical science major.

Services were Jan. 14 at Saint Anthony's Catholic Church in Harlingen with Father Adrian Correa, Class of '78, and Father Samuel Arizpe officiating.

Cigarroa was employed by Luby's Cafeterias as a restaurant manager.

Survivors include his wife, Anna Cigarroa; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Roberto Cigarroa; a sister, Alejandra Cigarroa; and five brothers, Joe, Robert, Valentine, Ernest and David Cigarroa.

ON CAMPUS



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