

Wednesday, October 10, 1990

Grad student's work focuses on elderly

By KATHERINE COFFEY
Of The Battalion Staff

The most important natural resource of the United States isn't oil or land, but the talent and minds of older people, a Texas A&M health education graduate student says.

Graduate student Dan Hoover is doing research for his dissertation to see if increasing retired people's mental activity will lead to longer lives and better health.

Hoover is doing his research with 20 retired A&M faculty and staff members. His research will test if challenging and stimulating minds of the elderly can help this age group become less dependent on government aid.

"The purpose is to try to set up a model for older adults so they can get together in small groups and challenge their minds," Hoover says. "The 20 people are able to do this by talking about interesting topics."

The study-seminar is titled "The Effect of Mental Exercise on the Fluid Intelligence and Self Responsibility for the Wellness and Affecting Function of Retired People."

The group, called the "Eureka Rebels," began meeting in late August and will continue until Monday. The group met every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for two hours.

Hoover says his intention is to stimulate the adults' minds and to keep them thinking by listening to others' ideas and discussing interesting subjects.

The seminars also help keep group members updated on various subjects such as nutrition, safety, heart research and even astronomy, he says.

"We had all types of speakers including a heart specialist, an economist, a lawyer and a dance specialist come in and talk," he says.

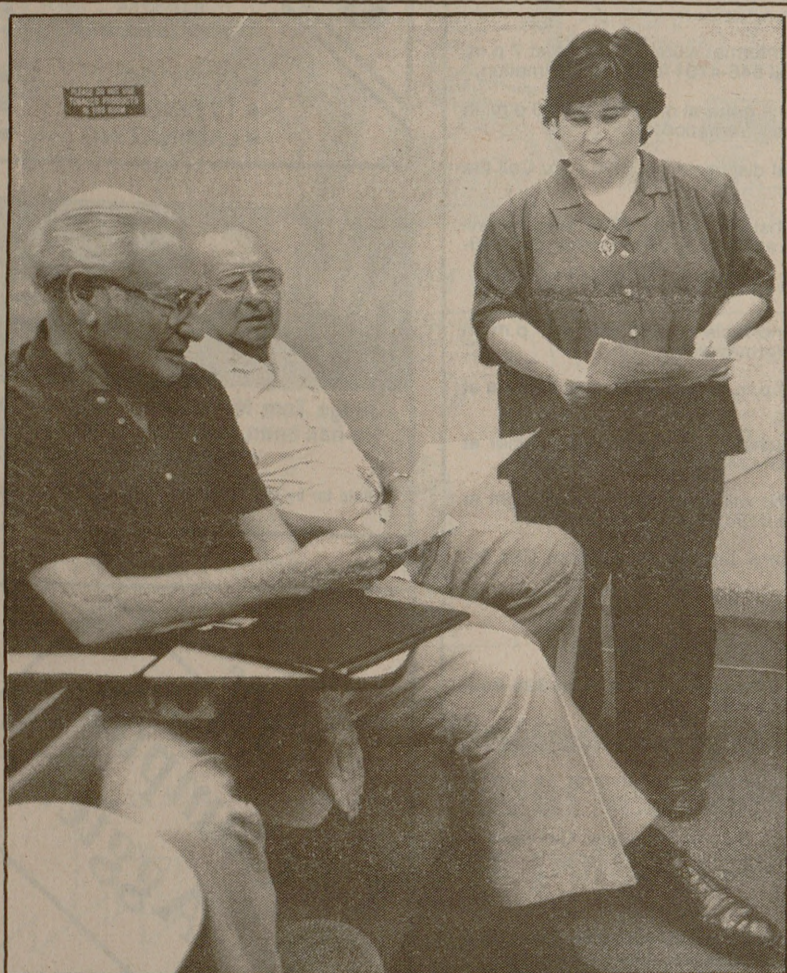


Photo by Sondra Robbins

Dr. Beverly A. Clement, of the Toxicology Department, talks to retired professors Auston Kerley and Spencer Baen.

Group member Dr. "Dean" Fred Bensen, A&M's dean of engineering from 1957 to 1978, says the seminars have been fun as well as interesting.

"We've had good sessions," Bensen says. "My favorite sessions have been on health, nutrition and art."

Hoover says one way to slow the mental effects of aging is by learning new things. Retired people tend to do habitual things such as watching TV and sitting all day, he says.

The graduate student says communities should implement similar programs because in the

long run this could help decrease medical bills.

"We are looking for a way to become self-responsible rather than relying on restorative medicine all the time," Hoover says.

The United States will spend up to \$2 trillion on medical expenses by the year 2000, and the country needs to find a way to pay for it, he says.

"The retired faculty and staff are a great group of people," he says. "Since they (group members) are used to being challenged, the seminars are also interesting for them."

Catalysts for change

TEAC president calls for diverse participation

By JAMES M. LOVE
Of The Battalion Staff

Thirty Texas A&M students traveled to the University of Illinois and joined over 7,500 other students from all over the United States for the Catalyst environmental conference this weekend.

Speakers at the three-day conference included Robert Redford, Jesse Jackson and Ralph Nader, as well as speakers from Germany, China, Japan and England.

The conference, which was sponsored by the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC), focused on two major issues. One issue concerned the impact major corporations have on the environment and the need for responsibility and accountability for their actions. The second issue addressed was the need for incorporating more racial diversity among the environmental interest groups.

The A&M students, members of the Texas Environmental Action Coalition (TEAC), attended the conference in hopes of gaining new approaches and insight on attacking the environmental problems in Texas.

Charles Albert, A&M Graduate student of Physics and president of TEAC, said the conference was very educational and gave the group some new perspectives on what the real problems are about.

"It was helpful to meet and discuss the issues with people from different regions," he says. "In the future, if we can better understand each other, we'll be able to work together in concert."

"If the planet is going to survive another century, we need to stop quivering about how things should be done, and just start doing something," Albert said.

Albert said Jesse Jackson's address at the convention explained some of the demographic diversities involved with the problem.

"The focus of many of the speakers there was that the rich don't care since they are simply able to buy their way out of seeing the damage, and the poor can't afford to change," Albert said.

He said environmentalism is a luxury that not everyone has the time for.

"Environmentalism is a necessity," he says, "and it should be made more accessible to those who don't always have the time to participate."

Albert said there was much discussion at the conference that the economy and the ecology could go hand-

in-hand with each other.

"It shouldn't be a sacrifice to be an environmentalist," he says. "My approach is that we should include all middleclass non-liberals."

Albert says the middle class is able to get involved, and both liberals and conservatives must work together for the environmental movement to succeed.

"We won't be successful as long as viewpoints (between the left and right wings) are split," he says.

Albert said the number and diversity of people that turned out at the conference showed much about people's interest in environmentalism.

"There were twice as many people there than they expected," he says. "It says a lot to me that so many took four days out of their schedules to be there with tremendous desire to do something about the environment. This shows how serious everyone is."

Albert said that the hopeful difference between this environmental movement and the movements in the sixties and seventies is that this is the first time that a large diversity of people are pulling together.

"We saw everyone there from flaming liberals to die-hard conservatives," he says. "In the past, opinions were always divided. For a movement to be successful, it has to be big enough to encompass all of these views."

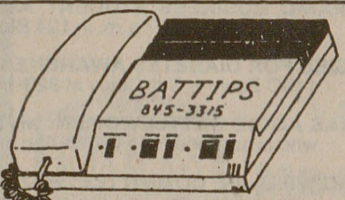
Albert says the prognosis for the movement is hopeful. "I see it moving toward some real cooperation. Everyone is agreeing on the gravity of the issue."

"A successful drive can be done," Albert says. "Fifty years ago, during World War II, a successful recycling campaign was conducted, and they had a lot less to spare then, too."

"If we could appeal to peoples patriotism, recycling would not be viewed as a sacrifice," he says. "Recycling and being environmentally concerned is something that should be made easy to do. It should not be a choice, either. Paying taxes is something that we have to do, and so should being concerned about the environment."

TEAC organized the Earth Day Festival last April and currently is working with the Student Senate on the campus recycling proposal. An environmental conference also is planned at Texas A&M in February.

Founded in February 1990, TEAC is a recognized student group and membership is open to all students and community members. For more information concerning TEAC and its functions, call Lara Mears, Vice President of TEAC at 823-6316.



BATTIPS

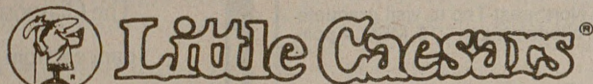
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