

Madam President

Leslie looks to improve student life

By Traci Travis
The Battalion

It's not the position you hold or the title you possess, it's the difference you make that counts.

This is the code newly-elected Student Body President Brooke Leslie said she lives by.

"I want people to remember me as a very dedicated student body president who did everything in my power to improve student life and to represent students in every aspect," Leslie said.

As the first woman to be elected to the position at A&M, Leslie said she hopes she has opened some doors for females behind her. But her gender was never a consideration in her campaign.

"For me, being a female was never an issue," she said. "But I really don't think it's created any kind of lull or obstruction to any path that I would like to take."

Leslie said her campaign started last September with about 20 people. These advisors, mentors and friends are the reason for her success, she said.

"They believed in me and my ability," Leslie said. "The reason I sit in this office today is because of them and their hard work."

But Leslie's reaction to her new title is one of mixed feelings, she said.

"I am definitely excited about the opportunity, and I am grateful to the students of Texas A&M," she said. "And to be honest, I'm sometimes a little overwhelmed at all the responsibility."

She said it will be difficult to combine all of the duties of student body president with her original responsibility of being a student.



Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

"It is a tough, tough job," Leslie said. "But I'm going to do the best I can, if I have to work 22 hours a day."

Leslie said because she has always been very involved, being student body president is not going to require too many sacrifices.

"A part of me has always had to have every hour of the day full," she said. "I might have to sacrifice some of my time with friends, but they understand."

In order to implement her platform of 39 items, Leslie said she plans to appoint special advisors who will have projects to work on.

Specifically, Leslie said she plans to spend at least one hour a day, every day, on an issue in her platform; whether this includes interviewing or talking to administrators. "I've seen student body presidents in the past get caught up in the ceremonial things," Leslie said. "For the past

few days it has been very evident to me how easy putting the platform aside can be. But my priority is to put time aside every day for my platform."

Above all, Leslie said she hopes to improve A&M's public image.

Being an Aggie is something that is different for every single student and former student, she said. But being an Aggie is not about negative issues such as NCAA sanctions or the controversy surrounding the

Board of Regents.

Leslie said after traveling to at least 30 states as a motivational speaker, the only aspects of A&M people mention are the controversies, she said.

"Getting stories out there like Muster, the code of honor, the Corps of Cadets — these are what will change our image so we can let the rest of the world know what being an Aggie really is about," Leslie said.

Leslie said despite her love for

public speaking and government involvement, her family is not interested in politics at all.

"My mother hates to mix and mingle," she said. "And my dad is a little better than that. But, despite this, public service has always been a part of me ever since I can remember."

At this time last year, Leslie said, she had no plans of running for the office of student body president because she wanted to focus on motivational speaking.

"That lasted for about two weeks," she said. "I had found my niche in government and I knew this was where I was needed."

But of all the accomplishments in Leslie's past, she boasts most proudly of the friends she has made at A&M.

"My greatest accomplishment would not be anything like a title such as student body president," she said. "To be blessed with people who touch my life — that is truly an accomplishment. And for those friendships, I am really grateful."

The role model behind the new student body president is not a great political figure, but Leslie's own mother.

When her parents divorced, her mother had to take care of everything on her own, Leslie said. Despite her obvious time constraints, her mother always had time to be there for Leslie.

"She taught me to make a difference," she said. "And if you have the right motives and ethics behind it, no matter what your decision is or the outcome, it's the right thing to do."

As she travels to Austin this summer and fall to meet with the Texas legislature, Leslie said she plans to be completely prepared.

"In a year from now, a lot of people are going to disagree with some of my decisions," Leslie said. "But I want them to at least say that I was in it for the right reasons and I did make a difference, and I did improve student life."

One couple's struggle with infertility...

Longing for a child

By Margaret Claughton
The Battalion

Jerri has bright eyes, a pleasant face and a vibrant smile. At first glance, she seems to be a peaceful woman, happy with the world and her place in it. But the sight of a pregnant woman makes her very jealous, and talk of babies in general is enough to make her cry.

Jerri has a large bone to pick with Old Man Fate and a few choice words for parents of unwanted children.

Jerri and her husband Jim are among the 2.4 million couples in America unable to have a child of their own.

"People don't understand what it is like if you can't have a child," she said. "It feels like when you die, everything about you will die, too, because there will be no one left."

After discovering they had a fertility problem in 1989, the couple has endured an emotional roller coaster over the last five years.

"We have had some tough times because of this," Jerri said. "It is equally as hard on both of us."

It is also hard, she said, for her to understand why so many women keep or abort their unwanted children.

After hearing about the Texas A&M student who recently disposed of a baby in a residence hall trash chute, Jerri was outraged. Her bright eyes turned to slants and the vibrant smile became gnashed teeth.

Trying to remain poised, she explained her disbelief.

"I can't understand how something that is so precious to me and something I've worked so hard trying to get could be thrown out. It makes my whole life absurd that what I want so much, everyone else has and doesn't want."

"The mothers who beat their children in the grocery store or the ones who have six or seven



Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

Jim and Jerri want to maintain a degree of privacy in their fight against infertility, but feel it is important to inform women of the need for adoptable babies.

and can't even afford to feed them; those are the ones I think don't deserve them because they don't appreciate what they've got."

Since 1989, Jerri has immersed herself in research and become an expert on all types of adoption as well as every method of fertility treatment.

During her studies, she has discovered there is a shortage of healthy adoptable babies. In fact, couples wanting to adopt may have to wait three to five years for a baby.

"Many women have the misconception that there is a surplus of babies out there," she said, "so they decide to abort the child or keep it. But they end up starving it because they are not financially ready."

Jerri said she hopes many women with unwanted pregnancies will realize there are many

couples who are willing to give an adopted child a good home.

Another misconception women have, she said, is that they think by giving their child up for adoption, they will not be involved in that child's life. But through processes like open adoption, birth mothers can remain involved in the child's life through the adoptive parents.

"There are so many different types of adoption. A birth mother can actually look through a list of letters and photos and pick and choose their child's adoptive parents," she said.

With programs such as this, Jerri said, there is no reason why mothers should keep children they do not want or are unable to care for.

"I hope women with unwanted pregnancies will strongly

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Student locator: answering some of life's tough questions

By Paul Neale
The Battalion

"Your call will be completed as soon as a line is available 409-845..."

"Student locator," says a voice from a probably dark room.

"Yeah, uh, what time does midnight yell practice start?"

Although it sounds like a localized version of Beavis and Butt-head, student locator, or directory assistance for Texas A&M, regularly receives calls like this one — and the callers are serious.

Kari Wise, a senior speech communications major, has worked at student locator for 2 1/2 years. She does more than give out phone numbers, though. Wise and other student locator operators tackle some of life's tougher questions.

"Is it easier to wash soap suds off with hard or soft water?"

Good question.

Calls pertaining to animals have been some of student locator's funniest inquiries, operators said.

"The ducks are hungry at the president's (then, Mobley's) house," a caller from the University Police said.

"The UPD called and wondered who would feed them," Wise said.

Surely the proper duck feeding department was alerted.

"A woman asked us what to do when her ostrich was having babies," Wise said.

Another concerned caller asked, "My fish are floating upside down. What do I do?"

Wise said operators directed both calls to the Wildlife and Fisheries Department.

She said some students believe the student locator can do more than it actually can.

"We have people call in and say they met a girl at a club, they know how she looks, her first name, and want to find her number," Wise said.

It doesn't quite work like that, she said.



One caller asked, "If we get a new president, will the name of George Bush Drive be changed?"

And if that wasn't silly enough, Clinton had already been elected.

But no matter how absurd the request or how dense the caller, student locator operators say they have their customers' best interests in mind.

"We try to help them to the best of our ability," Wise said.

She said students' parents also provide their share of unusual moments.

"The parents are some of the funniest because they don't have a clue," Wise said.

Parents visiting from out of town call about hotel and restaurant suggestions.

"Moms call looking for their kids and want us to tell them exactly where they are," Wise said.

For some callers, student locator is a misnomer. Contrary to the title, operators at student locator can only provide directory assistance. Missing persons is a different number all together.

Andrew Gault, a senior kinesiology major, said one of the most peculiar calls he received

was to determine the winner of a \$500 bet.

"During football season, a guy from New York City called and asked what 'A&M' stands for," Gault said.

The question is frequently asked, believe it or not.

"A lot of people ask for Mark Paul Gosselar's number," Gault said. Gosselar plays the TV character Zack on "Saved by the Bell."

But Gault insists that last semester's rumor — that Gosselar attends A&M — is purely rumor.

With the exception of faculty/staff holidays, student locator answers calls all day, every day. Thirteen full-time operators and seven part-time student operators assist 600 to 700 callers each hour. Three eight-hour shifts are manned with an average of four operators each shift.

Geneva Johnston, a physical plant administrative assistant, said no matter how unusual some calls are, student locator receives very few calls that aren't legitimate.

"We get a few calls from the

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