

# THE BATTALION

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## Campus receives energy overhauls

Three buildings are targeted for improvements to the air conditioning and chilled water systems.

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

Langford Architecture Center, Reed McDonald Building and Sterling C. Evans Library will get energy overhauls to increase efficiency that could save the University almost \$3 million annually.

The energy overhauls are funded by a \$3.26 million loan from LoanSTAR, a state agency that gives low-interest

loans to state institutions for energy conservation and efficiency programs.

Charles Darnell, energy manager for the Physical Plant, said the current air conditioning systems are not economical because they were installed over 20 years ago.

"These buildings have antiquated air conditioning systems," Darnell said. "Some of these systems that were designed in the '50s through the '70s were basically energy hogs. The energy costs were so low in the '70s that it was not a big consideration to make really efficient systems. And the electronic technology was not very reliable."

Darnell explained that the current

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## Local coalition works to increase immunizations

A state-wide study showed only 55 percent of 2-year-old children surveyed are properly immunized.

By Michael Simmons  
THE BATTALION

Increasing the immunization rates of children in the Brazos Valley is the goal this summer of a joint project between the Texas A&M College of Medicine and the Brazos Valley Healthsmart Coalition.

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Roderick McCallum, head of administration for the College of Medicine,

said the project will research the state of childhood immunizations, improve community education and provide immunizations for children.

A questionnaire will be circulated by the Healthsmart Coalition later this month to gain insight into the quality of childhood immunizations in the Brazos Valley, he said.

A state-wide survey of families of 2-year-old children revealed that only 55 percent of the families are properly immunized, McCallum said.

"The state of Texas has a

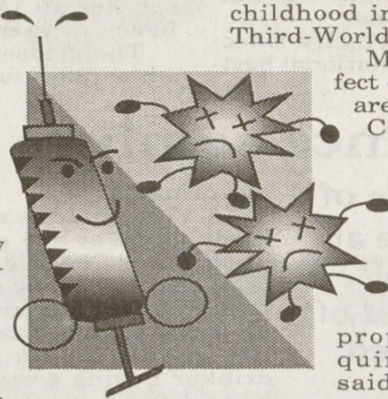
pretty sorry record of childhood immunizations," McCallum said. "There are areas of Texas that rank lower in childhood immunizations than some Third-World countries."

Most of the diseases that affect children under the age of 5 are vaccine preventable, McCallum said.

"Diseases like meningitis, diphtheria and whooping cough can be prevented if parents have their children properly immunized," he said.

Children over 5 years usually are immunized properly because it is required by law, McCallum said. The project will target

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# Aggie Hostel

## Welcoming back old Ags

Program reacquaints former students with college life.

By Amy Collier  
THE BATTALION

Some 65-year-old former A&M students are re-experiencing college life this week.

Aggie Hostel, a week-long program sponsored by The Association of Former Students, acquaints former students with changes that have taken place at Texas A&M and the surrounding community.

Letters were sent to about 15,000 "old Ags" who are at least 65. Eighty-one of them are here until Saturday remembering the old times and learning about how the University has changed.

The former students go to classes about current and historical topics and learn about the architecture of the commu-

nity and campus. Stephen Dunn, coordinator of student hosts for the program, said the guests are also entertained. They even have a ring dance.

"It's a week of learning and having a good time," Dunn said. "They seem to really enjoy it."

Aggie Hostel started in 1988 as a graduate research program. The program is now based more on the former students' needs rather than on research.

The program has been increasingly successful, and some people attending this year are here for their sixth conference, Dunn said.

Student hosts help make the program a success, Dunn said. Twenty hosts are selected through an application and interview process during the spring semester.

Nicole Miller, a student host who graduated in May, said she stayed in College Station for the summer because she enjoyed being a host so

much last year. "It's really been one of the most exciting things I've done," Miller said. "I just couldn't leave. By the end of the week, I won't want them to leave."

Miller said that instead of feeling like she's working hard at being a host, she feels like she is being entertained as much as the former students.

"The committee works so hard," Miller said. "Everything is planned so well, I feel like they cater to me too."

Although the week is full of programs, Miller said she enjoys eating meals with former students the most. "I love seeing their faces light up when they remember something about when they went to A&M," Miller said. "They always have stories to tell. There's never a quiet moment."

Dick Magers, class of '49, is participating in Aggie Hostel with his wife for the second year in a row.

"I enjoyed it so much that I



Vic Wegenhoft, Class of '40, and Jim Bilharts, Class of '53, talk about 'ol Army days Tuesday night at the Aggie Hostel barbecue. The two former students are re-experiencing college life this week.

came back this year and will probably come back next year," Magers said. "Everything last year was interesting and everything this year will be just as interesting. It's good bull."

Magers said he likes the way the program aims to educate and that he enjoys it even more because he is with his peers.

Besides looking forward to the classes and programs offered during the week, Magers

said he also looks forward to entertainment Bryan-College Station has to offer. He has already entered the 42 tournament, a dominoes game, at The Dixie Chicken for Thursday night.

Last year he beat the reigning champion, who happened to be former Student Body President Brooke Leslie.

Most of the changes made at A&M over the decades have been positive, and Magers said

he is impressed that more student organizations exist to express opinions on campus which are not always heard.

"Everybody has the opportunity to speak," he said. "I think that makes everything turn out for the best."

Magers foresees a continued tradition of Aggie excellence.

"The leaders of the 21st century are going to be those that applied themselves at A&M," he said.

Eddy Wylie, THE BATTALION

## Planters planning on perfect pines; propagating bluebonnets

A&M plant scientists have developed pine trees that can grow in the dry lands of western Texas and 18-inch bluebonnets.

By Tara Wilkinson  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M plant scientists are currently developing drought-tolerant pine trees and long-stemmed bluebonnets.

Kitty Sen, senior research associate in the forest science department, said the department is creating a drought-resistant species of pine tree from the Loblolly pine that grows in eastern Texas. She said the department will attempt to grow the drought-resistant version in the dry land of western Texas.

Sen said the department is currently studying the genes involved in drought resistance in order to identify and understand them.

"We are improving every day," Sen said. "We have a drought-tolerant gene and its promoter. The promoter works very well on the cellular level, but it's very hard to regenerate a complete plant from the transformed cell."

Sen said the forest science depart-

ment recently completed a project of cloning Christmas trees with tall, straight trunks and full limbs.

The "perfect" Christmas tree, a clone of the Virginia pine, which grows in southeastern Texas, was successfully marketed and sold this Christmas, Sen said.

Sen said that the trees were developed from only a few seeds.

"We tried to get some improved seed which was straight and tall, and then tried to clone them," Sen said. "From one seed you get one plant. But with tissue culture, you can get many plants from one seed."

Sen said now that the research is complete, they are no longer interested in marketing the trees.

A&M scientists have also developed a larger bluebonnet.

Dr. Tim Davis, A&M research horticulturist, said the long-stemmed, "Texas-sized" bluebonnets that the department developed are constantly being improved.

Last spring, about 7,000 long-stemmed bluebonnets developed by Davis and his associates were sold in Dallas and El Paso.

The bluebonnets were developed

from the seeds of a naturally-occurring, long-stemmed variety of bluebonnet from the Big Bend area in western Texas. Davis said normal bluebonnets are 6 to 8 inches long, but the long-stemmed variety are 18 to 24 inches long.

The long-stemmed variety can be preserved longer in vases and have slightly

**"With any plant, you can continue to make genetic improvements. And we are always interested in improving vase life."**

— Dr. Tim Davis  
A&M research horticulturist

larger blooms, Davis said.

In nature, bluebonnets exist in shades of blue, pink and white. However, Davis said pink and white blooms are rare, one in several million. A&M researchers have made it possible to use pink or white seeds to ensure a crop of all pink or white flowers.

Davis said the bluebonnet project was worked on for about five years.

"With any plant, you can continue to make genetic improvements," he said. "We want to continue to come up with good colors and high yield. And

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## Southerland explains recent fee changes

A&M's vice president for student affairs addresses the student services fee and the health center fee.

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

Recent fee changes approved by the Board of Regents may be misleading, Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president for student affairs, said.

Southerland explained that the change in the student services fee, decreasing from \$8.25 to \$7.75 per semester credit hour with a cap dropping from \$99 to \$93 per semester, is really a reallocation of funds. The total charged per semester for the student services fee cannot exceed the cap.

Originally, the Student Fee Advisory Committee recommended that the cap be raised to \$108 per semester. The recommendation was based on the condition that a bill in the Texas Legislature allowing the health center fee to increase from \$25 to \$40 would not pass.

Southerland said that since the Legislature approved the bill, the cap was decreased to \$93, and the \$15 difference was shifted to the health center fee.

Southerland said the health cen-

ter fee may be raised by 10 percent each year without a student referendum, but not without the consent of the Student Fee Advisory Committee.

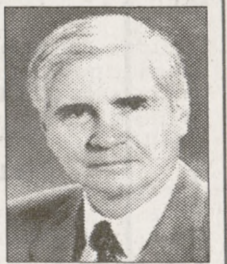
"Next year, the health center fee can go up to \$44," Southerland said.

The student services fee cap must be discussed by the committee under a similar provision, Southerland said. Texas law requires universities to consult representatives of the student body before increasing fees.

Texas A&M's Student Fee Advisory Committee, a panel of 20 students, has offered the administration input on fee changes for more than 30 years.

With currently approved increases, fees per 15-hour semester will increase \$119. The bulk of the increase comes from a \$2 increase in tuition per semester credit hour, the new \$50 per semester Recreational Sports Center fee and the new \$2 per semester credit hour library fee.

Regents will vote this summer on the proposal to raise the general use fee from \$12 to \$26 per semester credit hour.



Southerland