

## Donating for dollars

*"Plasma selling is a really interesting concept. It's a very good cause because it helps save people. My grandfather used to have plasma transplants everyday, and I thought of him when I started donating."*

— Brian Kircher  
plasma donor

By Amy Protas  
THE BATTALION

Some students short on cash have a unique solution to their financial problems — selling plasma.

The Westgate Plasma Center pays \$140 a month to donors willing to have a needle stuck in their arm twice a week.

But not everybody can sell plasma. In order to qualify, prospective donors must weigh between 110 and 350 pounds and be at least 18 years old.

Julie Tillery, a Plasma Center employee and a senior interdisciplinary studies major, said the requirements are necessary for the donor's and the recipient's safety.

"The first time donors come to the center, the visit lasts about two and a half hours," Julie said. "We do a physical and ask screening questions. Visits after that only last about an hour."

Most students find out about the center through word of mouth and from friends who donate.

Alicia Anderson, a graduate English student, learned about the center from her roommate. She has been donating plasma for four years.

"The first time I went to the center was the night before Bonfire," Anderson said. "I wanted to buy alcohol and I didn't have any money. My roommate had always gone, so I decided to donate."

The first visit is usually the scariest. Donors don't know what to expect because donating plasma is not the same as donating blood.

The blood is taken, and then the plasma is removed from the blood through a centrifuge. The blood is then put back into the donor.

Selling plasma is not for the faint of heart.

Zia Islam, a plasma donor and a junior mechanical engineering major, said the needle is the worst aspect.

"If you are scared of needles, don't go," Islam said. "The diameter is rather large and scary."

To make the experience

less frightening, the atmosphere is relaxed and not one of a typical doctor's office. Most of the workers at the center are students, and donors can read while the blood is being taken.

Tillery said it's a quick \$15 an hour because all the donor has to do is lie down.

Occasionally, however, a mishap occurs. Islam said he witnessed spurting blood and people fainting.

"One time, I was giving plasma and the tube snapped," Islam said. "Blood went everywhere. I wasn't mad, though. Sometimes the pressure is just too much on the tubes."

Money is the main motivation for many people to sell their plasma, but it is also a good cause because antibodies in the plasma can be used to make certain types of medicine. The center will pay extra if the antibodies are found in the donor's plasma.

Brian Kircher, a plasma donor and senior business administration major, said when he came to A&M, it was the first time he had heard of plasma donation.

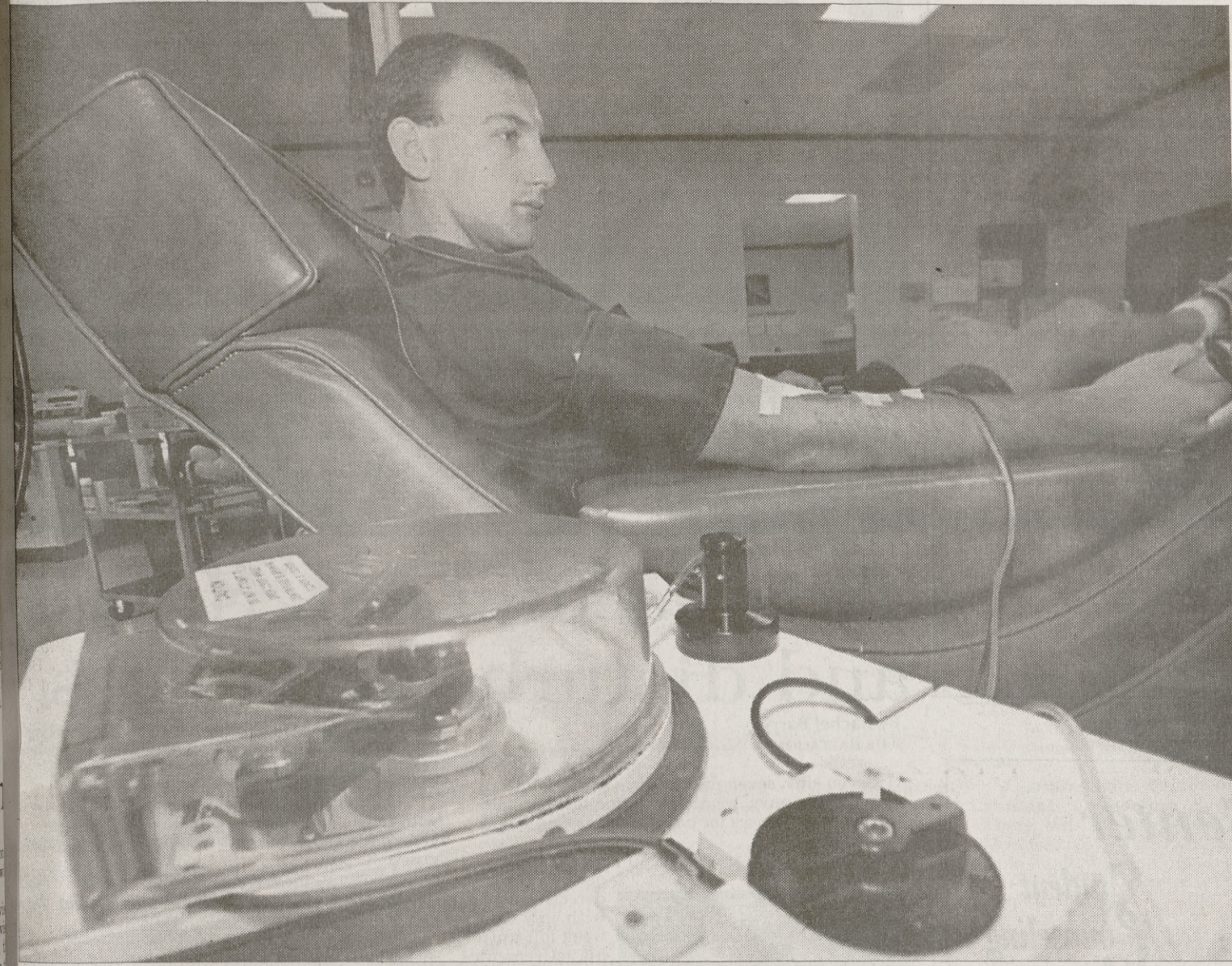
"Plasma selling is a really interesting concept," Kircher said. "It's a very good cause because it helps save people. My grandfather used to have plasma transplants everyday, and I thought of him when I started donating."

Plasma selling has both its supporters and dissenters. Islam said he quit going to the Plasma Center after two months because he was concerned about the effects on his health.

"I stopped going to the center because I didn't think it was worth the money," Islam said. "I didn't have time to eat right, and you can't be 100 percent sure the plasma will completely regenerate."

Anderson said selling plasma to the center has been the best job she's had in college.

"This is really the only place where you can be in control of your employment," Anderson said. "You get to set your own hours. Besides having to have a big needle in your arm, it's great."



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Dave Thompson, a graduate physics student, donates plasma every Wednesday morning at the Westgate Plasma Center.

## Students get education and practical experience as co-ops

By Amy Protas  
THE BATTALION

The best of the professional and educational worlds are available to students before they even graduate from college. The cooperative education program offers students the chance to work at a company and alternate semesters taking classes — all before they finish college.

Students see co-oping as an opportunity to secure a job after they graduate.

Pat White, an assistant director in the co-op program, said it is beneficial because companies are scaling down their number of employees.

"In the past few years, big corporations have been limiting hires," White said. "Co-oping has become a major method for companies to figure out who to hire based on experience."

White said companies like the program because each time the student returns after a semester of classes, they have gained more knowledge to use on the job.

For many co-ops, the motivation to complete the program is money and experience. The average co-op makes \$1400 a month, and 80 percent get offers to work at the company after graduation.

Companies set different standards for what will constitute a good employee. White said the most prevalent attributes employers want are a relatively high GPR, a good attitude and good communication and leadership skills.

Diane Havalda, a senior chemical engineering major, said co-oping for Champion International in Lufkin has

helped ease the financial burden on her family.

"We have a lot of kids in my family, and it gets expensive," Havalda said. "I can pay for miscellaneous expenses without having to ask my parents for money."

One of the main benefits of co-oping is gaining professional knowledge that can't be obtained in the classroom. Havalda said she was never treated like a student at work.

"They treated me like I was an engineer, not just some kid," Havalda said. "I went in there expecting to be treated like some dumb college student but that's not what happened at all."

**"This gives students the chance to find out what they want to do and what they don't want to do."**

— Pat White  
assistant director of co-op program

The lure of earning a lot of money for the first time is not always as tempting as it may seem. While some students use the money for school expenses, others see it as an incentive to party.

Brian Lasher, a senior electrical engineering major, said he learned a lesson the hard way after co-oping for Texas Instruments.

"After my first term in Dallas, I had lots of money," Lasher said. "I had all this fun because I could buy what I wanted."

Switching between school and the professional world can take its toll on a student's schedule.

Havalda said it was hard to adjust after coming back from her job in Lufkin.

"In engineering, students do most of their work in groups," Havalda said. "When I came back, all the groups were already set, and I felt like I was upsetting everything."

Co-oping delays a student's graduation date by at least a year. This is one of the main reasons engineering students typically don't graduate on time.

Charles Kulkarni, a senior chemical engineering major, said he did not mind the postponement.

"I figure I will be working 40 years of my life," Kulkarni said. "I really don't think one year will matter in the grand scheme of things."

Engineering colleges and departments started the co-oping program at A&M in the late 1960s. Although most of the co-ops are engineering students, White said liberal arts students are more apt to do internships, which do not alternate with academic semesters.

"There is a difference between liberal arts and engineering job searching," White said.

"Liberal arts students want to know what different types of jobs are out there, while engineering students want to know what different companies are hiring. Internships provide this difference."

One of the biggest decisions students have to make may be where and for whom to work. White said co-oping helps make this decision easier.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity," White said. "This gives students the chance to find out what they want to do and what they don't want to do. This becomes very important especially after graduation."

## Rosh Hashanah

### Members of the Hillel Foundation celebrate the Jewish New Year

By Rachel Barry  
THE BATTALION

New Year's resolutions could be as simple as losing weight or making better grades in school.

The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, began last night at sundown and is a time for Jewish students to start their new year with a clean record.

Rosh Hashanah is a time for looking back on the previous year and thinking about mistakes that were made and things that could be changed, Rabbi Peter Tarlow of the Hillel Foundation said.

It is a time of contemplation and thought, he said, and it is also a time of a total examination of a person's life.

"You can face yourself and not carry any guilt from one year to another," Tarlow said.

Ivan Goldwasser, president of Hillel and a senior chemical engineering major, said Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the High Holy Days and are the most important days in the Jewish year.

"You can start off the new year with a clean slate and ask forgiveness for things done in the past year," Goldwasser said.

Tarlow said the Hillel Foundation, A&M's Jewish student organization, provides a home away from home for Jewish students.

He said Hillel provides the opportunity for

Jewish students to learn how to organize a Jewish community.

"It is a way of taking education that they receive on campus and putting it into applied action," Tarlow said. "It is often the most valuable educational experience many of the students have."

Tarlow said Hillel provides a way to apply what is learned on campus to a person's everyday life.

"In school, kids get a lot of theory," Tarlow said. "Our job is to make that theory move into practice."

Stacy Zaner, a junior ocean engineering major and vice president of Hillel, said that it is a place for spiritual guidance and a way to stay in touch with her culture.

"Judaism isn't just a religion, it is a way of life," she said. "When you lose touch with that, you lose touch with who you are."

Zaner said she did not know anyone when she came to Texas from New York but that Hillel has provided a second home for her.

"It's comforting when your family is not around," she said. "Hillel is a family."

Hillel sometimes mixes Aggie and Jewish traditions by having a social activity such as a movie or dinner after services on Friday nights and then going to Midnight Yell Practice.

The Hillel Foundation also offers classes in Hebrew for any one interested in learning the classic language.

