

# Programs aimed at AIDS awareness year-round

### Free HIV testing during AIDS Awareness Month in addition to pre- and post-testing counseling is being offered by the Planned Parenthood clinic.

By Leslie New  
THE BATTALION

Planned Parenthood, AIDS Services and Aggie REACH are sponsoring educational programs, testing and special activities for AIDS Awareness Month in October.

Margaret Griffith, an HIV counselor and outreach educator with Planned Parenthood and health education graduate student, said the main purpose of the month is to get people to think about HIV and AIDS.

"People need to find out about AIDS, and if they know someone with HIV, do something special for them," Griffith said. "Share in-

formation with friends; bring it [AIDS] to the forefront instead of the back of people's minds."

AIDS Awareness Month began with Fitness Fest Oct. 1, an aerobics-a-thon. A part of "A Step Toward Awareness," the fest was sponsored by AIDS Services and Alpha Phi Omega, a service organization.

AIDS Services sponsored a meeting where persons with HIV and family members of those with HIV spoke. The meeting included a performance from Voices of Praise, an African-American vocal group.

Gloria McGowen, AIDS Services volunteer coordinator, said the turnout was small, but the audience reacted positively to the speakers.

"It was a rejuvenating experience because it touched those already involved and motivated others to take a step by volunteering," McGowen said.

AIDS Services offers free HIV testing, counseling, outreach education programs and case management for those who are HIV.

"Case management is for those

who are HIV positive, and it begins the day they receive a positive test result," McGowen said. "It focuses on the needs of the individual, medical needs or any needs that may surface as a result of the test results."



**"Many believe that it is not at our front door — but it could be right around the corner and coming through the back door."**

— Gloria McGowen  
HIV counselor and outreach educator

McGowen said other activities include area-special worship services at local churches, a food drive and a walk-a-thon fund-raiser to expand AIDS Services.

"We want to let one person actually hear and take heed that they have a personal obligation to be tested and to take precautions to stop the spread of the disease," she said. "Many believe that it is not at our front door — but it could be right around the corner and

The Planned Parenthood clinic is offering free HIV testing for the month, in addition to pre- and post-testing counseling.

Griffith said there is a growing trend of couples coming in for AIDS testing, who have had protected sex, but want to stop using condoms. However, she said, most people don't want to know if they have HIV.

"If you don't know, it doesn't mean you're not HIV positive," she said. "It just means you don't know."

Erin Foley, assistant health education coordinator for the A.P. Beutel Health Center, said the health center offers confidential testing and has a group that comes into the center offering anonymous testing.

She also said there has been an increase in organizational requests for AIDS educational programs from Aggie REACH, a peer education organization.

Tania Whitten, sexual health executive for Aggie REACH and a junior biology major, said the increase is partially a result of AIDS Awareness Month.

"People are becoming more aware of HIV, and it is on all the new television shows," Whitten said. "People have questions and misconceptions about HIV. We try to clear those up."

Planned Parenthood, AIDS Services and A.P. Beutel will have tables at the Health Fair tomorrow in the MSC relating to AIDS and other health issues.



Sterling Hayman, THE BATTALION

Planned Parenthood, a community health center in Bryan, is offering free AIDS testing this month. In addition, the center offers counseling, contraception and advice on family planning.

Anthony Falzarano  
Husband, father, former homosexual

## "I know what it's like to be rejected by the men I should have been able to trust the most."



"I was lonely and isolated as a child...My father was psychologically absent, and my older brother would taunt me for being intelligent and not very athletic. I wanted so much to be like him and his rejection was hard to take. I was so desperate for male affirmation and touch that when a school teacher showed me attention, I was easy prey. I was sexually abused by at least four others by the time I hit 18... and while I seemed happy on the outside, I was a hurting puppy on the inside. I felt dirty and unattractive...and had no self-esteem. So when I went to college, there were those who were ready to help this broken kid accept a gay identity. And I bought it hook, line and sinker...I spent 9 years going from guy to guy looking for my "ideal" lover...until a Christian man helped me see that I would never be satisfied in any life outside of God's purpose for me. I got help from people who saw the hurt on the inside, not the identity on the outside. So, don't buy the lie. You don't have to be gay."

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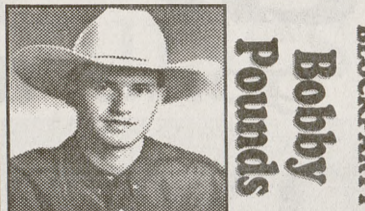
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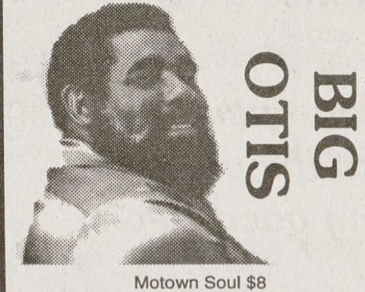
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