

**LIGHTS AND SIRENS**

Tours with A&M EMS workers and UPD officers offer insight. Aggelifelife, Page 3

**CLUELESS COMMITTEE**

Brown: Student Service Fee Allocation Committee lacks insight into organizations' budgets. Opinion, Page 11

**DIVE BOMBERS**

Two A&M divers keep the pressure on the competition and themselves. Sports, Page 7



# THE BATTALION



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## Student retreat center to be built near campus

Plans for the student retreat center include a 500-person assembly hall and dormitories with barracks.

By Heather Pace  
THE BATTALION

From the site of a future student retreat center on Highway 60 near Easterwood Airport, Kyle Field and Albritton Tower can be seen in the horizon.

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The retreat center will give student organizations a place to escape, with the benefit of being only 10 minutes from campus. Dr. Carolyn Adair, director of student activities, said plans for the retreat center, which will be nestled on 100 heavily wooded acres, are still being developed. "It will provide a meeting place for students for retreats, meetings, conferences, parties and anything they want to do," Adair said. "We're planning to have some overnight facilities that will accommodate some of our orientation camps."

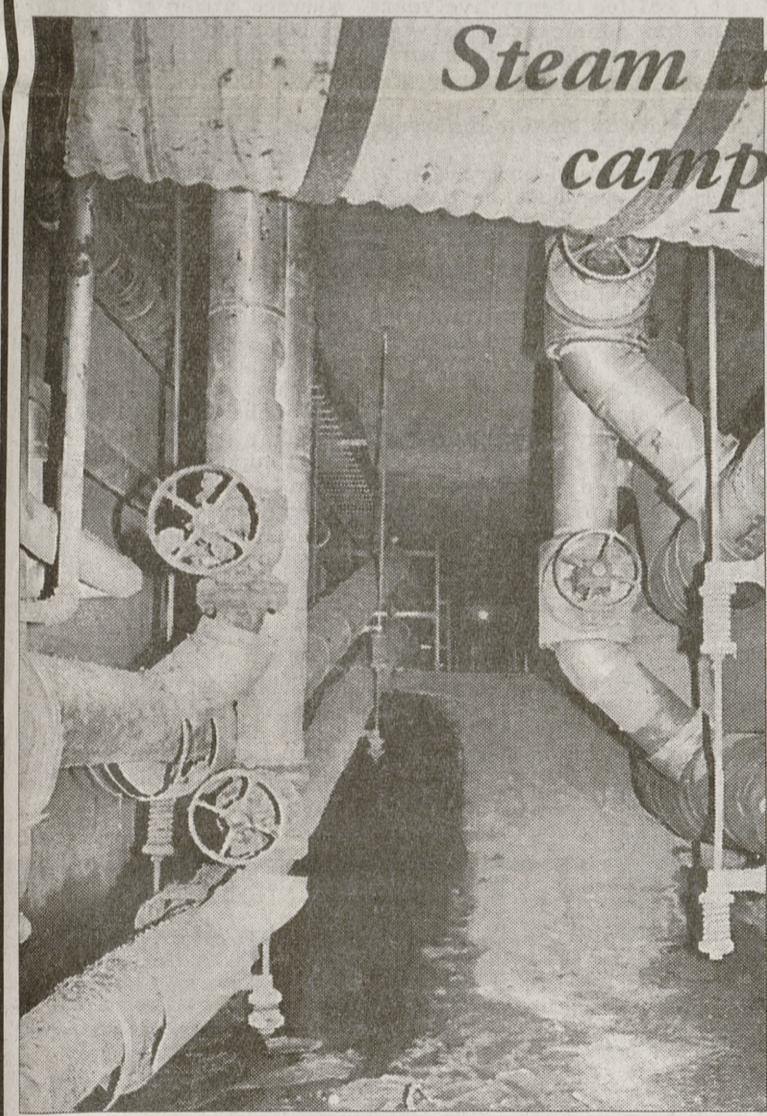
The center will accommodate events like T-Camp and Howdy Camp, but it will not be large enough to facilitate Fish Camp. Dr. William Kibler, associate vice president for student affairs, said making the center large enough for Fish Camp would not be economically viable. "The idea was never for the center to be large enough for Fish Camp," Kibler said, "because the rare demand doesn't make it cost effective."

Fund raising will provide the majority of revenue for the project, though some University money may be used to develop the site. "Some funding may be available through reserves for infrastructure, but it wouldn't be funded by state money," Kibler said. "The reality is probably that funding will come from a combination of fund raising, user fees and a student fee." Toby Boenig, student body president and a senior agricultural development major, said he supports the student retreat center as long as student fees are not increased to fund the project. "I think it would be a valuable asset, although I wouldn't support

fees being used for it," Boenig said. A target completion date for the retreat center has not been set. "We will start it when we can fund it," Adair said. "It is going to be done piece by piece as we get the money."

**"The reality is probably that funding will come from a combination of fund raising, user fees and a student fee."**  
— Dr. William Kibler  
associate vice president for student affairs

The initial plan focuses around a 500-person assembly hall with dormitories featuring retreat-style barracks. Kibler emphasized that students will be given complete control of their retreats, having access to features such as a large kitchen in which students can cook their own meals. Some students said they think other retreat centers, such as Lakeview, are a more cost-effective option than building a new one. Matt Nowak, a freshman business major, said the current retreat system is sufficient. "I think what they have right now is fine," Nowak said. "It's a waste of money to build a retreat center."



## Steam tunnels hold campus mystery

Students have heard legends of slaves hiding in the steam tunnels on their way to the North.

By Michelle Lyons  
THE BATTALION

Mysterious steam rises through grates on the Texas A&M campus, suggesting a secret realm most students have never seen. Steam tunnels, running intricate underground patterns, conceal a system of pipes covered with graffiti. Gene Ray, Physical Plant utilities manager, said the tunnels hold many types of pipelines. "Those things are just chock full of steam lines, waterlines and phone lines," Ray said. "And they're hot." Cecil Smith, senior utilities plumber, said the temperature in the tunnels ranges from 100 degrees to 180 degrees Fahrenheit, and are especially hot in areas with a concentration of steam pipes. Physical Plant personnel venture into the tunnels almost daily, mainly to adjust or repair pipe valves. Charles Kuder, Physical Plant utility distribution superintendent, said he goes into the tunnels to shut off water supplies.

See Tunnels, Page 6

Steam pipes run along the walls and ceiling of the steam tunnels under the A&M campus. The tunnels range from wide open spaces to cramped crawl spaces with very hot pipes. The tunnels are off limits to students.

## Proposed rent increase would provide cable, ethernet in dorms

The proposed increase for Fall 1996 will be presented to Texas A&M's Board of Regents in March.

By Greg Fahrenholt  
THE BATTALION

A proposed increase in Texas A&M residence hall rates that would go into effect next semester was discussed at a Residence Hall Association meeting Wednesday night. Most RHA members support a proposal by the Department of Residence Life

and Housing to increase hall rates by an average of 9.5 percent per student. The proposal will be brought before the Board of Regents some time in March. Five percent of the rate increase would be used to build a reserve to pay for new residence halls and to develop RHA programs, and the remaining amount would be used to install cable and ethernet connections into every residence hall room on campus. The proposal was first suggested last year, and RHA recommended installing cable and ethernet connections last semester. Suzanne Lyons, RHA president and a senior geophysics major, said she

does not expect much opposition to the proposed rent increases. "The general use fee and the student services fee increases got a lot of negative feedback because they were more of a surprise," Lyons said. "Unlike those fees, we can be sure of exactly where this money will be going. The room rent increases will go to services that directly benefit students." Lyons said the increase would not make residence hall rates unreasonable in comparison to other universities. "Even with the increases, we're still one of the cheapest universities in

terms of residence hall rates in Texas," Lyons said.

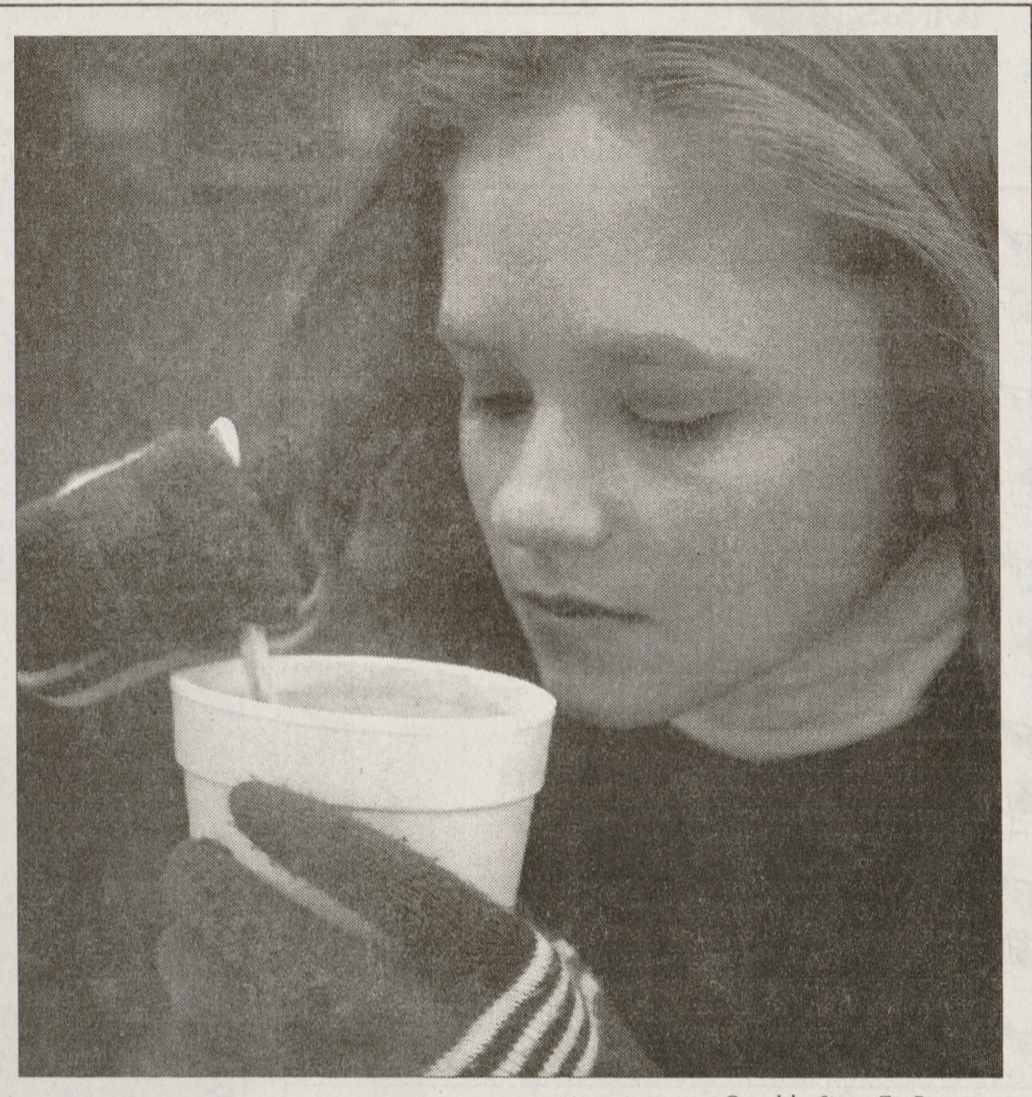
**"Even with the increases, we're still one of the cheapest universities in terms of residence hall rates in Texas."**

— Suzanne Lyons  
Residence Hall Association president

RHA is reviewing bids from cable companies to install cable in all residence hall rooms as cheaply as possible, at a maximum cost of \$28 per student per semester. All rooms on campus would be cable-

ready by the fall semester. Students would receive at least 32 channels and would have the option of subscribing to premium channels. Ethernet connections would be installed in rooms at an estimated rate of \$9 per student per semester. These connections would allow students to connect directly into the campus computer network through their own personal computers without having to use a modem. The ethernet project would take about four years to complete. Ethernet connections are presently available in a limited number of residence

See Rent, Page 5



Gwendolyn Struve, THE BATTALION

## SOME LIKE IT HOT

Stacy Long, a freshman general studies major, tries to keep warm in the cold weather by sipping hot chocolate while waiting for the shuttle bus outside the Underground Wednesday. The temperature reached 34 degrees.

## Utility rates decrease for College Station

College Station officials said the average residential utility bill will drop to \$67.43 per month.

By Kendra S. Rasmussen  
THE BATTALION

When College Station consumers receive their next utilities bills, they will notice a substantial decrease in electricity rates. Peggy Calliham, city of College Station public relations and marketing manager, said the expiration of the city's contract with the Texas Municipal Power Agency has allowed the city to decrease electricity rates. When the contract, which provided College Station power services through 1990, came up for renewal in 1995, city officials decided to accept a bid from a power supply company with a lower rate. The city negotiated a contract with Texas Utilities, a large, well-established wholesale electricity provider. "Texas Utilities was selected to provide wholesale electricity to College Station at an estimated savings of \$8 million annually for at least four years," she said. "That is a \$32 million savings over what College Station had been paying through the previous contract with TMPA." This translates into a 9-percent decrease for the average residential customer and a 13-percent decrease for commercial customers. February utility bills will contain stickers analyzing each household's electricity consumption and projecting what each household can expect to spend on electricity

in 1996. Tim Ham, a senior marketing major, said he welcomes the reductions because he has paid utility bills as high as \$150 per month in College Station during summer months. "As long as the service stays the same, it can't be a bad idea," he said. "It's very rare that they drop the rates like that. It will definitely help in the summer months." College Station residents are not the only ones anticipating the savings. "We feel the obligation to encourage students to call our energy office to let us help them as to why their energy bill is high." — Peggy Calliham  
city of College Station public relations and marketing manager

Bill Silvis, Post Oak Mall general manager, said business owners will get a needed break. "I am looking forward to a substantial decrease," Silvis said. "The businesses all pay for their own (electricity), so the (savings) will be passed on to them as well." Calliham said half of the savings from the new contract will be passed directly to utility consumers. "The city has chosen to give back 50 percent of the savings to the customers," she said. "The other 50 percent will be retained by the city." Some of the money must be retained for

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