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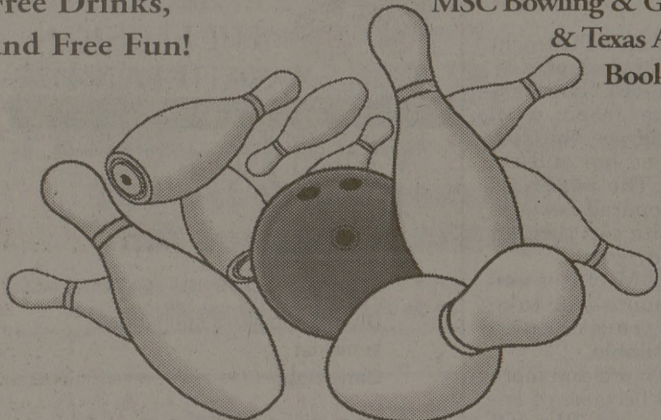
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College Station aims to increase tourism

By Heather R. Rosenfeld
THE BATTALION

With the opening of the George Bush Presidential Library and Texas A&M's entrance into the Big 12 Conference, the city of College Station anticipates an influx of tourists.

However, College Station officials worry that many potential visitors may not even know what the city has to offer. Officials hope the city's biggest asset — its residents — can be combined with local efforts to overcome the misconception.

Stephen Beachy, director of Parks and Recreation, said students have a role to play in promoting College Station to potential visitors.

"If you go to a typical tourist town like some of those found in Colorado, the front-line employees at the resorts are very informed about the sights to see, but in College Station many things here are taken for granted," Beachy said. "The asset is that College Station has a very highly educated and energetic group of students working in front-line positions, like our restaurants. But the liability is that most aren't involved or familiar with the community other than student life."

City officials, realizing the problem, recently installed four tourist information centers around College Station.

The centers were designed to assist visitors and residents in keeping up with what the city has to offer.

Beachy said the idea was long overdue.

"The centers are a small but significant step," Beachy said. "My thought was, why didn't we think of this sooner? The different sites have brochures, city maps (and) a map of A&M. ... It's very

simple, very straightforward and also fairly effective."

Local businesses hope the efforts will pay off with increased money into the community.

Peggy Calliham, public relations and marketing manager for the city of College Station, said the plans will benefit business, but it might be at the community's expense.

"Tourism is just another way to expand College Station's economy," Calliham said. "There might be a domino effect, and other things, like restaurants, will come to our town as fringe benefits due to our community becoming more attractive to visit. But it is a balancing act, because the more efforts made to increase tourism, the more effort it takes to keep a clean and safe hometown atmosphere."

Some residents share Calliham's concern.

Stephanie Withers, a junior business marketing major, said she likes the current situation in College Station.

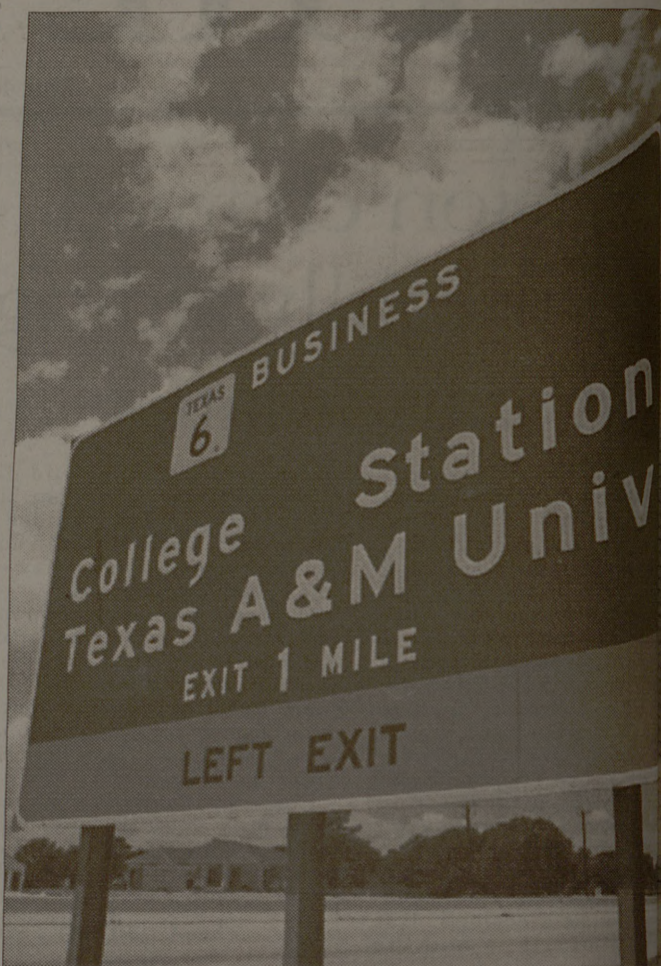
"I like the size and I would hate for it to become a tourist attraction," Withers said. "Although it would be good for the economy, I don't want it to change the current atmosphere, which is real safe and real friendly."

Hamilton McRae, a junior civil engineering major, disagreed with Withers and sees only advantages in promoting the city.

"It would help to rid A&M of our hick reputation, and make us look more like a bigger, better and more modern school," McRae said. "There is stuff that you can do here, and they (the city) should try and make it easier for people to find that out."

McRae said tourists looking for interesting sites can visit downtown Bryan, the University or Messina Hof, to name a few.

Local officials hope these



Pat James, T&M

The city of College Station wants to inform visitors of various points of interest will help to make College Station of interest to outsiders.

Pattie Sears, manager of tourism sales and service for the Bryan-College Station Convention and Visitor's Bureau, said the city has a good tourist value.

"We have everything the large cities have to offer, but we don't have the big city problems," Sears said. "Basically, people can get more for

their money here."

Beachy said the city will build on what it has started.

"I think the future is bright," Beachy said. "Right now we are only reaching the tip of the iceberg, and there are many areas that haven't been tapped into."

The tourist information centers can be found at the College Station Police Department Conference Center, City Park and Central Park.



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