



THE BATTALION

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Drive In for Diversity

Conference confronts campus issues

BY LAURA OLIVEIRA
THE BATTALION

Students, staff and administrators from Texas A&M will join those from surrounding universities for the eighth annual Drive In for Diversity Conference on campus today.

Becky Pettit, chair of the event and coordinator of diversity education and residence life, said the conference focuses on keeping administrators and higher education professionals abreast of current issues concerning diversity. It also offers an opportunity to share ideas about creating more welcoming campuses.

"It is primary for the staff and administrators to have an opportunity to stay motivated and become rejuvenated about working with diversity," she said. "It is an opportunity to talk with our colleagues and exchange ideas on how we can make the climate better for the students."

The conference is in Rudder Tower

from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Department of Student Affairs and the Department of Residence Life and Housing are sponsoring the event.

Issues such as affirmative action, administrative involvement in diversity initiatives, and the inclusion of gays and lesbians in campus community efforts will be addressed.

Pettit said the organizers of the event wanted to address a broad range of topics dealing with diversity.

"We are not trying to focus on specific individual cultures or groups," she said. "We are trying to include everyone."

Sunny Nash, award-winning writer and author of *Big Mama Didn't Shop at Woolworth's*, will be the keynote speaker at the event.

Nash said diversity, the theme of the conference, is an integral part in today's society.

"I think it is a well-planned event and it is timely," she said. "Diversity is an important issue right now."

Nash received a journalism degree

from A&M in 1977. She said the University has changed since she attended.

"The school in general has changed tremendously," she said. "When I was at A&M, the overall enrollment [of women] was in the late teens. Women enrollment was incredibly low."

Women first attended A&M in 1968, but Nash said the University was sluggish in adjusting to the change.

"There were a few buildings that did not even have women's restrooms," she said. "This campus was just not designed for women."

Nash said A&M has culturally evolved in recent years.

"Visiting other campuses and then coming back to A&M, I believe there has been an effort to become more inclusive," she said. "And I think it has been a good effort."

Chris Christensen, co-chair of the event and a graduate student of education, said if students would become involved in diverse activities, then stereotypical barriers would be broken down.

"I would encourage people to try and step out of their comfort zone and try and experience something new to further their own education," he said. "A lot of times you put down someone, not purposely, but because you're ignorant."

"This can alleviate some of that ignorance that goes on around campus."

Emeli Santiago, assistant director for multicultural services, said she encourages minority students to get involved in groups with which they relate.

"It is important for students to connect with people of their own culture and find a comfortable niche on campus," she said. "But once they feel comfortable, it is important to branch out and experience other groups."

Nash said the conference's focus on creating a strategic plan to include diverse groups will benefit society.

"We've got to stop excluding segments of society because when we do, we are excluding talent," she said. "If we push them away, then we will never know what they had to offer."

Conference Schedule

- 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Registration and Refreshments
- 9:45 a.m. to 10 a.m. Welcome
- 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Keynote Address
- 11:10 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. Concurrent Sessions
 - Leadership and Change
 - Diversity: With or Without Affirmative Action
 - Administrative Involvement in a Diversity Initiative
- 12:20 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Luncheon and Entertainment
- 1:45 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions
 - The Link Between Diversity and Strategic Planning
 - Including Gays and Lesbians in Campus Community Efforts
 - Finding Joy in the Struggle
- 2:45 p.m. to 3 p.m. Break
- 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Afternoon Address
- 4:10 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closing Reception



Preachin' Tom Short, a national campus preacher whose visit is sponsored by the A&M Christian Fellowship, lectures in front of the Academic Building Thursday. He preaches about controversial issues such as evolution versus creation.

Departments receive Exxon U.S.A. grants

BY MELISSA NUNNERY
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M is one of 90 colleges and universities to receive a portion of \$1.6 million in unrestricted departmental grants from Exxon U.S.A.

The University will receive \$103,000. Eleven departments will receive grants to be used for educational purposes. Six of the departments are in the College of Engineering, four are in the College of Business Administration and one is in the College of Sciences.

of communications for the A&M Development Foundation, said Exxon's \$103,000 gift is unrestricted, meaning the company does not dictate how the money is spent.

Thomas said department heads of each department that received a grant will decide how to use the grant money it received.

Patrick Williams, media communications specialist for University Relations, said money Exxon

has granted to A&M in the past has been used for various improvements.

"It (grant money) has been used for research and to purchase equipment in the past," he said. "It doesn't go to fund any research faculty members are doing."

Truman Bell, Exxon college relations coordinator, said in a press release that the grants are targeted at universities with departments Exxon looks to for recruiting future employees.

"In addition to our general support of education, these grants are specifically directed to University departments which are producing the type of well-qualified graduates which Exxon needs."

Truman Bell
Exxon college relations coordinator

"It is used in different ways in different years," he said. "(Grant money will) enhance our programs in ways we can't use state money. This department has been a beneficiary in Exxon generosity for years."

A&M has received more than \$4.4 million in the past five years from Exxon Corp. through its affiliates, employees, retirees and the Exxon education fund.

Rose Ann Thomas, manager

"In addition to our general support of education, these grants are specifically directed to University departments which are producing the type of well-qualified graduates which Exxon needs," he said.

Songfest benefit hits stage tonight

BY KIMBER HUFF
THE BATTALION

Songfest, the Chi Omega sorority's fund-raiser, will be held in Rudder Auditorium today at 7:30 p.m.

Traditionally, all proceeds from Songfest go to the Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center. Last year about \$9,000 was raised and donated to the Center.

Natalie Devenish, Songfest

publicity chair and a senior accounting major, said the donation benefits the Center.

"We're one of their biggest contributors because they run purely on donations," Devenish said.

This will be the 19th year that Songfest has been held at Texas A&M.

"The first time they did it, it was really small," Devenish said. "And then it just got bigger."

Jennifer Cantwell, Songfest

chair in charge of acts and a junior community health major, said Chi Omega members spend an extensive amount of time working on Songfest.

"We started getting information and setting dates last semester," Cantwell said. "At the beginning of the year, we started working on it hard-core."

This year's theme is "Solid Gold."

Songfest will consist of eight

acts where several hundred people will perform.

Devenish said Songfest is like a variety show and participation is open to all organizations. But mostly fraternities and sororities choose to participate, she said.

"The groups that are in it have been working on it for months," Devenish said.

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THE BATTALION TODAY

- DOA**
Student Rebecca Ewing Peterson releases her quilting book, *Dreams of Aggieworld*. Aggieworld, Page 3
- Do or Die**
The A&M Football Team and Oklahoma face the same fate — win or have a long winter. Sports, Page 7
- Just Say No**
Boldt: Women should be honest when turning down men for dates. Opinion, Page 11

Groups encourage recycling in Texas

BY JOANNE WHITTEMORE
THE BATTALION

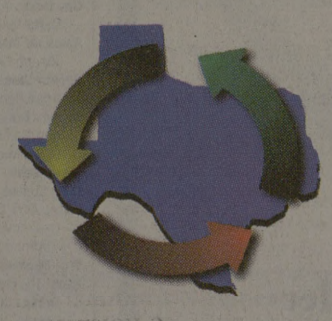
Stacks of old telephone books will bury the Target parking lot in College Station today at the third annual Texas Recycles Day.

Katie Gibson, recycling coordinator for the city of College Station, said the city has taken full advantage of this event.

"In our local community, we've used this opportunity to raise awareness about recycling as well as to collect phone books on campus," she said. "This is one of those community events where we get everyone working together."

Texas Recycles Day was declared in 1994 by the governor of Texas and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission

(TNRCC) as a challenge and commitment to recycling and waste reduction across the state.



Gibson said the cities of Bryan and College Station and Clean Cities 2000 members are working together this year with the University, Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency, Brazos Beautiful and Texas Commercial

Waste to collect old phone books.

From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., two drive-through areas will be set up — one for people to drop off their old phone books and one where people can pick up new ones. A tent with backyard composting and recycled content products displays will also be set up.

Nicole Patschke, recycling assistant chair for the University's Environmental Issues Committee and a senior agribusiness major, said people will be able to ask city officials about various recycling aspects.

"An information booth will be set up with local experts there to answer any questions about recycling people may have," she said.

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Texas Tomorrow Fund New rates set for tuition

BY MELISSA NUNNERY
THE BATTALION

The Texas Tomorrow Fund board set new college tuition contract rates for its next enrollment period, which begins Monday.

The cost for the next enrollment period, Nov. 18 to Feb. 18, 1997, will be more than the cost for the previous period. The increased cost covers more credit hours than before. However, the cost of tuition and fees when a family enrolls in the fund is locked and does not increase.

their children's future college education.

Children of any age may be enrolled in the program. The fund helps them avoid future tuition and fee increases. Books, lab fees and room and board costs are not covered in the fund. Freeman said parents can cancel the contract at any time if their child decides not to attend college.

Christi Freeman, a receptionist in the Texas Tomorrow Fund office, said the price increased for this enrollment period because of changes in college tuition and fees.

"Once you enroll, you pay the same price until your child uses the funds," Freeman said.

The fund, approved by the Texas State Legislature during the 1995 legislative session, allows parents to lock in the cost of

Nicole Rich, a freshman biomedical science major, is one of the first people to attend college on the Texas Tomorrow Fund.

"I'm really glad my parents did it," she said. "I know there's going to be tuition and fee increases. Since my parents have already paid, I don't have to worry about it."

Rich said the Texas Tomorrow Fund allows families to pay for credit hours totaling four years.

"It really motivates me to determine my major so I don't waste my credit hours," Rich said.

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"Once you enroll, you pay the same price until your child uses the funds."

Christi Freeman
Texas Tomorrow Fund