

Tracking a Silent Killer

Test secrecy results in few HIV statistics for Texas A&M students

By KRISTINA BUFFIN
THE BATTALION

AIDS is the leading killer of people ages 24 to 44. But what Texas A&M students may not realize is that they are not immune to the deadly disease.

It is difficult to estimate the number of HIV and AIDS cases among the A&M population. As with nationwide statistics, reporting HIV and AIDS cases is difficult because testing is confidential. But, as in most towns with a high population of college students, statistics are even more difficult to ascertain in B-CS.

Charles Triplett, director of AIDS Services of the Brazos Valley, said the difficulty arises because college students with HIV and AIDS are treated by family doctors.

"AIDS reporting is done by the county in which they are a resident," Triplett said. "Their doctor diagnoses them in Dallas, Longview, or whatever town they are from."

Triplett said another problem with HIV reporting is that people can test positive for HIV eight to 10 years before they develop AIDS.

Margaret Griffith, assistant health education coordinator for HIV and sex health at the A.P. Beutel Health Center, said the problem with estimating the number of HIV and AIDS cases on the A&M campus lies in confidentiality.

"When we test people, we don't ask if they are college students," Griffith said. "Also, reporting HIV cases is not mandatory."

However, Griffith, who was an HIV counselor for four years before coming to A&M, said there are students who deal with HIV and AIDS but do not talk about it.

"The chances are that you don't know someone in college with AIDS, because it sometimes takes 10 years to develop," Griffith said. "But there are people on campus who have HIV. I know students who have HIV."

This week marks HIV/AIDS Awareness Week at A&M. The organizers of the event say they want to stress even though one is young, he or

she can still be at risk.

"It is a hard message to sell because a majority of people on campus do not perceive that they are at risk," Griffith said. "It is the leading killer of people in this age group."

Rick Mendiola, an HIV educator at AIDS Services of Brazos Valley, said he has spoken to classes at A&M and tries to emphasize if one engages in high-risk behaviors, he or she is at risk.

"Every semester, I do a presentation for an early development class," Mendiola said. "I just try to make them aware that it is out there, and that people do not always abstain. I am a college student as well, so I think that helps me."

Another part of the mentality is the "small-town attitude," Triplett said this type of attitude perpetuates the problem.

"The chances are that you don't know someone in college with AIDS, because it sometimes takes 10 years to develop."

Margaret Griffith
Asst. health education coordinator for HIV

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Dietitian seeks out healthy eats

By MELISSA PRICE
THE BATTALION



Derek Demere, THE BATTALION
Linda Kapusniak and her low-fat dining guide.

Jill Aggie has been invited to a girlfriend's 21st birthday party. On the agenda: Going out to eat, pigging out on fried foods and bar-hopping. Jill Aggie, whose "freshman 15" is slowly turning into a "freshman 50," is faced with a common dilemma: eat out and blow her diet, or eat a healthy meal at home.

Linda Kapusniak, staff dietitian at The Brazos Valley Women's Center, said a person does not have to abandon the pleasure of dining out to eat healthfully.

In her book, *A Restaurant Guide to Low-Fat Dining in the Brazos Valley*, Kapusniak provides readers with "best bets," — the healthiest items to order when eating at restaurants in the Brazos Valley. The wallet-sized book, which has been the No. 1 seller at Hastings for the past six weeks, lists the healthiest en-

tries, side orders, desserts and drinks at 115 restaurants.

Kapusniak, who earned a master's degree in nutrition science from Texas A&M in 1987, said the idea for her book came about by accident. As a dietitian, she began to realize many of her patients were concerned about dining out and eating meals that were in accordance with their diet. Kapusniak said her patients continuously asked which dishes were lowest in fat at certain restaurants. After months of jotting down the information for numerous patients, Kapusniak realized the information could benefit the citizens of the Brazos Valley.

Kapusniak said the book emphasizes the importance of making wise decisions while ordering out.

"We wanted to go one step beyond the common sense of knowing chicken is better than beef," she said. "A lot of times people don't know how to order healthy from restaurants be-

cause they are embarrassed or don't want to bother the waiter.

"The idea is, you no longer open up the menu — the book becomes your menu."

She said the book has been successful because it does not ask a person to stop eating out, but rather offers tips on what to order at specific restaurants.

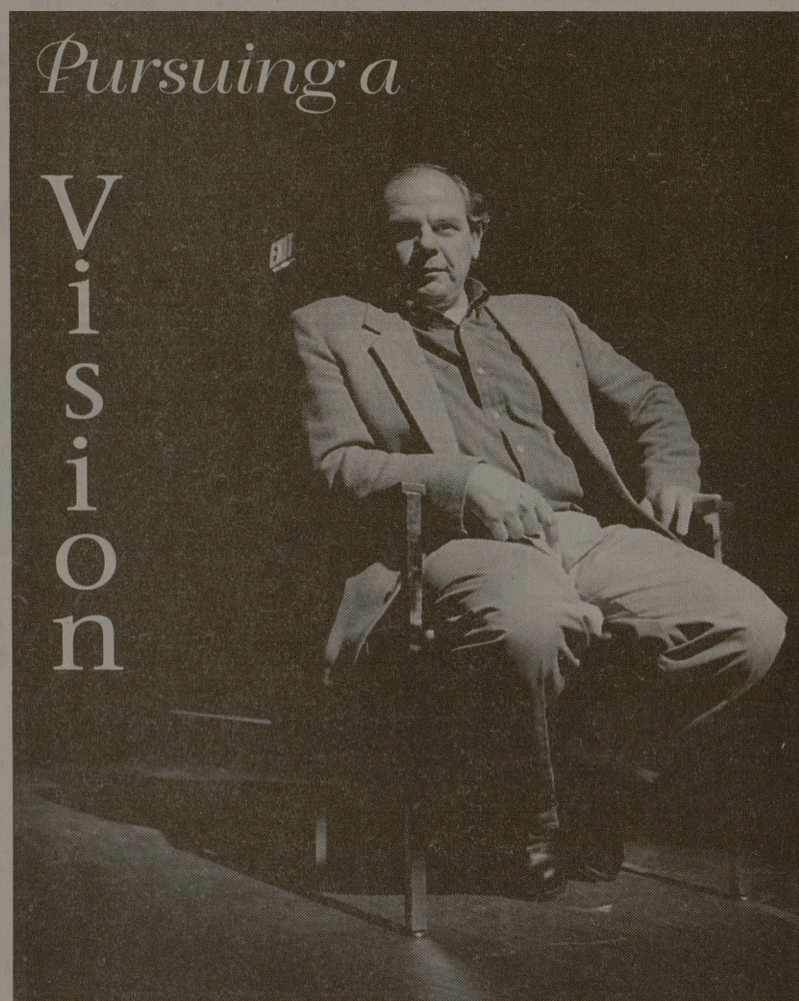
Kapusniak said people need to learn how to ask for low-fat dressing or for high-fat items to be put on the side or omitted. She said many restaurants are flexible and will, for instance, bake or grill chicken at a customer's request.

Holly Ripa, Kapusniak's intern in the fall of '94 and summer of '95, said a common misconception people have is the idea dieting is restricted to "rabbit food" and fat-free foods. She said the book has shown this is not necessarily true.

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Pursuing a

Vision



Alex Walters, THE BATTALION

Texas A&M theater professor offers last hurrah with *Cherry Orchard*

By ALEX WALTERS
THE BATTALION

to sing my song."

Six years ago, Dr. Oscar Giner, an associate professor of speech communications and theater arts, spent his days dancing a fine line between a vague, mystic reality and the push and pull of day-to-day affairs.

He spent nights under ancient stars in the New Mexico desert, drifting between past and future and writing chapters in the saga of his ancestors.

This is the work Giner believed he was called to do.

The Virgin of Guadalupe, however, had something else in mind.

She appeared to him in a dream, and Giner promised he would do as she asked. He did not know she would ask him to leave his work behind and tell his story at Texas A&M University.

Now, as he comes to the close of a six-year career at A&M, Giner said he realizes why the Virgin called him here.

"I couldn't have dreamed of a more inhospitable place," Giner said. "[And here], that has been precisely my work — to make a statement in so far as I have been able —

The details of Giner's vision are sacred, private agreements between the Virgin and himself. But when the curtains close, Giner's presence will change the theater from a place of personal expression to one of service for a greater good.

Chris Blake, a 1996 graduate of A&M and a veteran of Giner's production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, said Giner opened his eyes to the sanctity of the theater.

"Giner helped develop my respect for the theater because I saw the sacrifice that he was giving it — and that sacrifice demands total respect," he said. "It's not about 'Put me on the stage,' but, 'How can I serve the theater?'"

Giner has completed his obligation to the Virgin and is ending his directing career at A&M with the completion of his last two plays, Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.

As to why he chose *The Cherry Orchard*: the story it tells of a family leaving behind their most sacred place is parallel to Giner's situation of saying goodbye to an institution that did not always understand his vision.

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"Giner helped develop my respect for the theater because I saw the sacrifice that he was giving it."

Chris Blake
Class of '96

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