

Reckless abandonment

College students plagued by often ignored sexually transmitted diseases

The short term and superficial HIV/AIDS awareness week has come to a close after beckoning all irresponsible young adults to ponder the dangers of unsafe sex. Though it is dubious that this temporary time span of events has aroused an iota of consciousness in college students. Their immortal effrontery abounds effortlessly as students remain oblivious to the severe illusion of such an atrocity as safe sex.

The free HIV testing and HIV/AIDS education for the week is a thoughtful expression of concern to avoid contraction of a societal taboo. Yet the mindful mission is misplaced. Surely society realizes that the dangers of such a deadly disease needs more coverage than a week.

It is too easy to ignore such a far-away concept as AIDS when an invinc-

Columnist



Kate Shrophshire
 Freshman biomedical science major

ble student is faced with it for only one week.

There is too much statistical evidence indicating that the AIDS virus is hitting youth for such neglect to be running rampant. One of every 92 American men between the ages of 27 and 39 may be battling the AIDS virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention broadcast that in a 1993 study, AIDS was the No. 1 killer of people ages 25 to 44.

With such devastating evidence, many issues become questionable. Considering the virus may lay dormant for 10 years, it becomes a concern as to how young these people were when they caught it. Also, as these young American men battle the AIDS virus, the potential for the spreading of the disease is magnified in its uncertainty. It is known that about three-fourths of those infected with AIDS

have not yet been diagnosed.

The presentation of these facts severely questions the actuality of safe sex. Along with AIDS, there are other sexually transmitted diseases which are equally disregarded. If the contraction of STDs is becoming more probable with time, it is incredulous that the practice of safe sex is upheld as the key to prevention. Safe sex is now a figment of students' imaginations and they fail to realize this.

Many students say certain kinds of sex are safer than others. But just because there is no actual sexual intercourse, the probability of an STD does not fade away. Although many students treat oral sex as no biggie, it can have serious repercussions since usually, no protection is used.

Reagan Brown, nurse practitioner for the Women's Clinic at A.P. Beutal Health Center, said students have misconceptions about safe sex.

"The biggest myth about safe sex is

that oral sex is safe," she said. "The truth is that they are all equally dangerous — oral, vaginal and anal sex."

Brown also says young adults carry an indestructible mentality to the prospect of STDs.

"This has always been typical of young people," she said. "The idea that 'it won't happen to me'."

To add to the delusions of youth, it is widely accepted that once an STD is contracted, the probability of contracting more stops there. Brown emphasizes the false facade of this belief.

"If you can get one STD, you could have gotten any of them," she said. "If you're exposed to one, you're exposed to all of them and should get tested for all of them. There are seven major STDs and only

good tests for five of them."

Often the theory of "if you have sex with someone you have sex with" everyone that they have had sex with" is trashed.

Brown stresses the amount of credit in this truthful statement.

"That theory is very true," she said. "Even if you are a virgin and have sex with a guy who has had sex only once, the possibilities are limitless. Anything that anyone got is transferred."

Despite any type of cajoled training for young adults, a mindless mentality persists. The prevalence of

STDs cannot be wished away, even by the comfort zone associated with safe sex.

"The truth is that they [all kinds of sex] are equally dangerous — oral, vaginal and anal sex."

Reagan Brown,
 Nurse Practitioner, A.P.
 Beutal Health Center

Ineffective enforcement argues for a lowered drinking age

Underage drinking — it is not a problem, it is a fact of life, especially on a college campus like Texas A&M University.

Yes, one must be 21 years old to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages.

However, the drinking age law is like the speed limit — it's the law, but no one cares and most do not adhere to it.

The drinking age, mandated by the federal government so that states can receive federal funding for highways, should be repealed, and regulation of the drinking age should be left to the states.

This is how it worked when our parents grew up. Most states had a drinking age of 18 and only changed to 21 when the federal government threatened to withhold federal funding.

No one pays attention to the drinking age anyway. Underage teens simply tell their friend (whichever one happens to be of legal age) what they want for the weekend and fork over some cash. The police have no ability to enforce the drinking age. Probably less than 5 percent of those who drink illegally will ever receive a Minor In Possession citation.

In fact, the police in College Station routinely ignore the fact that one must be 21 to drink. When parties are busted, the police do not check everyone's identification. Instead, they warn the partygoers to keep it down and to stop bothering the neighbors. At worst, they will tell every one to go home.

Even the local bars are fairly lax in their enforcement of the law. A hint to the bartenders: most of the people drinking in front of you are not 21.

The current drinking age brings up some interesting questions as well.

Why is it that a person can drive when they are 16, vote and die for their country when they are

18, and yet cannot legally sip a beer until they are halfway through college?

Most would agree that driving a car requires an excessive amount of responsibility and is far more dangerous than splitting a six-pack with a friend.

However, the government thinks that if something is illegal, people won't do it.

Another argument in favor of the drinking age is that underage drinking results in more drunk drivers and alcohol abuse.

Yes, underage drinking does contribute to more drunk drivers and many underage drinkers are clearly alcoholics.

The flaw in the argument is that these problems exist now, and the drinking age does nothing to stop it. It will never stop underage teens from drinking.

If the government repealed the drinking age and set it at 18, college students would drink just as much (maybe even less once the novelty of buying beer wore off). Perhaps more people would learn to drink responsibly instead of feeling the need to rebel against "The Man."

Most European countries have liberal drinking laws. Children learn to drink in moderation at a young age,

and as a result, the abuse of alcohol is much lower for teens.

In the United States, however, the picture is different. A study done at Harvard University in 1995 revealed that over one-half of all underage college students drink five or more alcoholic beverages each week. The other one-half drink less than five per week.

Underage binge drinking is a bigger problem in the United States than anywhere else in the world.

The drinking law is a mere formality nowadays. Most underage students forget there is a law at all, while boozing it up at parties on the weekend.

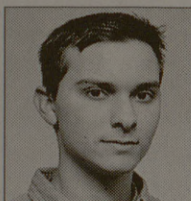
These drinking habits are not going to end with a drinking age of 21. Individuals are responsible enough at 18 years of age to decide whether or not they want to

have that shot of Jack Daniels or not. The government should not decide for them.

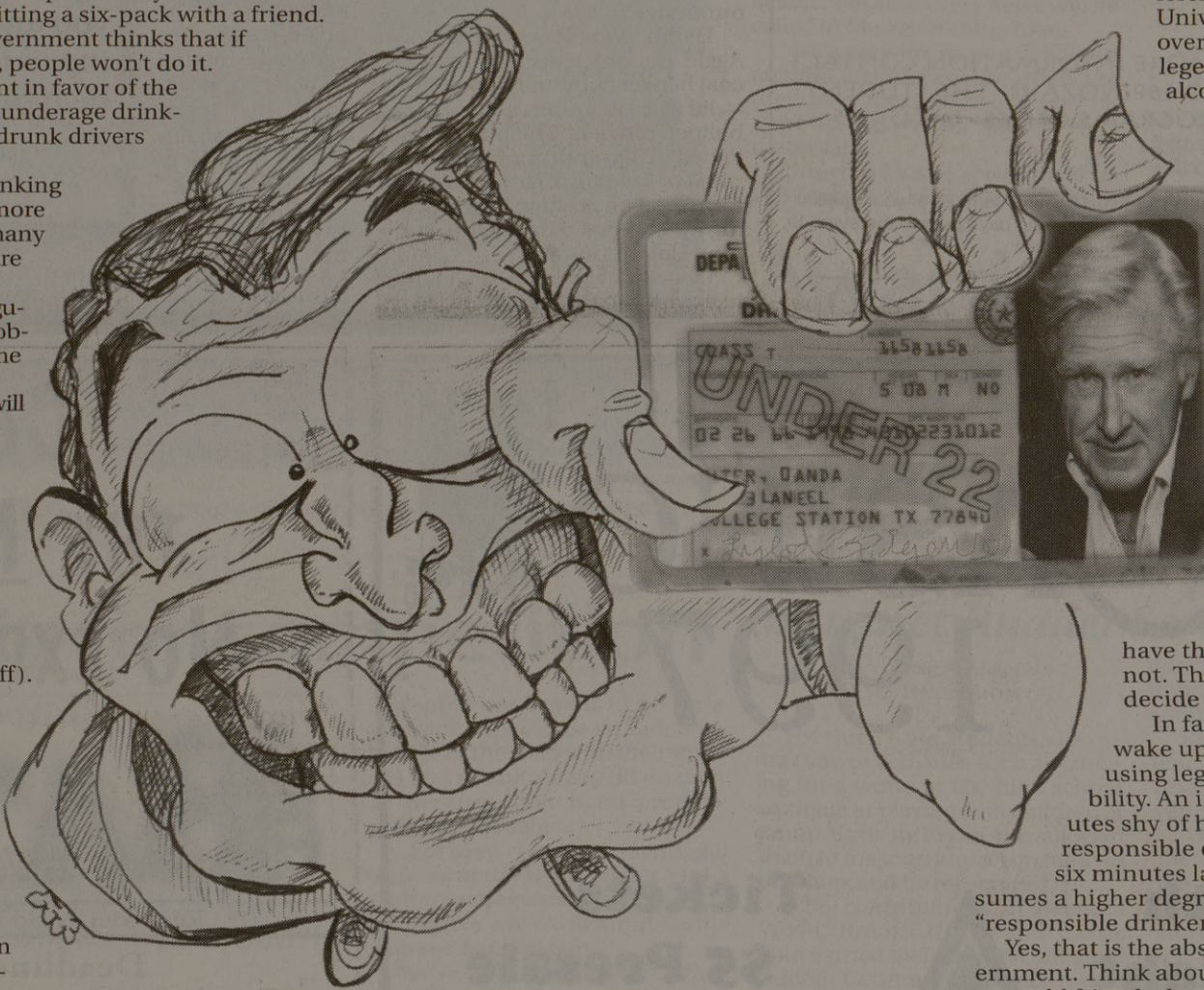
In fact, the government needs to wake up and smell the coffee. It is using legislation to define responsibility. An individual who is five minutes shy of his or her 21st birthday is not responsible enough to have a beer, but six minutes later, he or she magically assumes a higher degree of responsibility and is a "responsible drinker."

Yes, that is the absurd logic of the federal government. Think about that while telling your 21-year-old friend what type of beer to get tonight.

Columnist



Jon Appgar
 Junior Journalism major



MAIL CALL

Cartoon offends, disturbs student

In response to Mike Luckovich's April 16 editorial cartoon.

After seeing the cartoon, I instantly became outraged over the lack of respect The Battalion shows many of its readers.

It is true enough that some may see the so-called humor in the cartoon, but many individuals like myself fail to see past the racial slandering.

The cartoon was very insensitive, and I hate to play the role of informant, but affirmative action was not the reason the door opened for Jackie Robinson, nor for the many African American individuals who attend this institution.

Jackie Robinson, my peers and myself have had to work hard to overcome racial barriers

and slurs like the one printed in The Battalion.

Affirmative action does not give us energy to complete our jobs, nor does it give us the money to pay our bills.

Affirmative action does promote the equal division of the jobs and power held by our counterparts.

Recian Haywood
 Class of '98

Aggie spirit reveals itself in Rumor's

As I stood at the cashiers in Rumors Deli, my mouth hung on my chest.

I had just ordered a regular sandwich and drink, but when I went to pay, my wallet was completely empty.

I was a bit embarrassed and imagined how dumb I looked to the other people in line.

Much to my surprise, the young lady behind me stepped up and offered to pay for my food. I want to thank her for her incredible generosity.

I have heard many people say that the Aggie spirit is dying. I learned from that woman the Aggie spirit is just as bright as the day I first stepped foot on this campus.

She is the perfect embodiment of Aggie spirit, and a reminder to myself, and I hope to other people as well, of why we came to be students at this world-class University.

Thank you so much for the food and the reminder.

Josh Duncan
 Class of '99

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
 013 Reed McDonald
 Texas A&M University
 College Station, TX
 77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
 Fax: (409) 845-2647
 E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.

A&M lacks personal attention

The purpose of a university is twofold in today's society. A university exists to cultivate the mind and character, encouraging thoughtful pursuit of truth. It also serves a more utilitarian purpose of preparing one for a job. In the past, universities were a bit more free to

Columnist



Courtney Phillips
 Junior psychology major

seek truth and knowledge because the job market was less specialized; universities were made up of a more genteel, leisure class which was not concerned about the future as much as today's students.

However, there are still some ideas from the past that have crossed over to present day. One of these is the interaction between a student and a professor in informal, discussion-oriented environments. Many other universities still have this valuable interaction among students and their mentors. Professors invite smaller classes to their

homes for dinner or agree to meet groups of students at coffee shops or other locale for a discussion of lecture topics from that day.

This informal environment is ideal because people only attend if they want to and are truly interested in the subject matter. This way, students benefit from the interaction they always anticipated in college before they actually got here and started snoozing through lectures.

In this setting, the important truths behind what is going on in class become fodder for discussion, and the emphasis shifts from frantic note taking to active listening and sharing. Professors are free to share humorous stories and personal anecdotes that they'd like to discuss in class but don't because they have a certain amount of information they must cover in a limited amount of time.

Here the relationship be-

comes less stiff and formal, and though there is still authority of teacher over student, the relationship is more about friendship and less about fear.

When John Newman wrote on *The Idea of a University* in England in 1852, he expressed some of these same ideas. "It is more correct ... to speak of a university as a place of education [verses a place] of instruction," Newman said.

Instruction that takes place in the classroom is necessary, but alone is not sufficient for an education. Education takes place through life experiences and other intellectual interactions. Students have a great deal of life experiences outside of the classroom but not many of them are of the intellectually stimulating sort.

Students and professors who are open to these ideas of interaction stand to gain a lot from one another. Debate and discussion are hobbies for many students and faculty and if the right people hook up, the university experience will be enriched to its fullest degree.