

Residents protest new clinic

Proposed abortion clinic draws strong reaction from both sides of the issue

By RACHEL DAWLEY
 Staff writer

More than 80 Texas A&M students gathered at the weekend protesting on property where Planned Parenthood scheduled to build a new abortion clinic this fall.

Organized by Bryan-College Station residents, the students were at the future of the clinic on E. 29th Street next to a Cable holding signs reading, "Thank for Life" and "Smile—Your Mom chose Life."

The clinic will be the first facility Bryan-College Station to offer abortion services.

Emily Lopata, a junior biology major, said the clinic would have a harmful effect on the community.

"I'm protesting because I believe for each person can make a profound difference in stopping the efforts of Planned Parenthood putting an abortion clinic in the area," Lopata said. "There has never been an abortion clinic here in the past. There are plenty of hospitals in the area that deal with women's issues."

Sarah Suniga, president of the A&M chapter of the National Organization

for Women, said the clinic will upset people in the community, but it will provide more access to women needing abortions.

"Abortion is not an easy choice," Suniga said. "While abortion is legal, it is not always available. This area is in need of a clinic. There have even been efforts for women to carpool to Houston to get abortions. This area has been needing this service for a while."

She said women seeking abortions now must travel to Houston, San Marcos or Waco.

Brian Eschbach, a senior history major, said the clinic would make abortions more convenient for people in the community.

"The college and teen population in the area would be affected the worst," Eschbach said. "It would be a lot easier to have a quick abortion. As it is now, women have to travel a long distance and that gives the time to think about their decision."

Other A&M students said they feel that the area would benefit from an abortion clinic.

Michael Schaub, president of Aggie Democrats and a junior English major, said the clinic would give

women other options in dealing with pregnancy issues.

"We need a clinic here," Schaub said. "It is ridiculous that women have to drive so far. It is terrible that people are protesting."

Schaub said the pro-life lobby is very active in the area and many people who support the clinic are not coming forward.

"The loudest voice is always heard and the pro-life lobby is loud," Schaub said. "People are afraid to speak up and women are afraid to get abortions. I think the majority of people in this county are pro-choice. Even if not, most people believe we need this service."

Protesters said they hope people will see their effort and voice their concerns about the clinic plans. Although a few people reacted negatively with obscene gestures and language, protesters said most of the community is responding positively to their efforts.

Jennifer Junker, a junior marketing major, said she joined the protest to show her feelings about the abortion issue.

"The number of abortions that

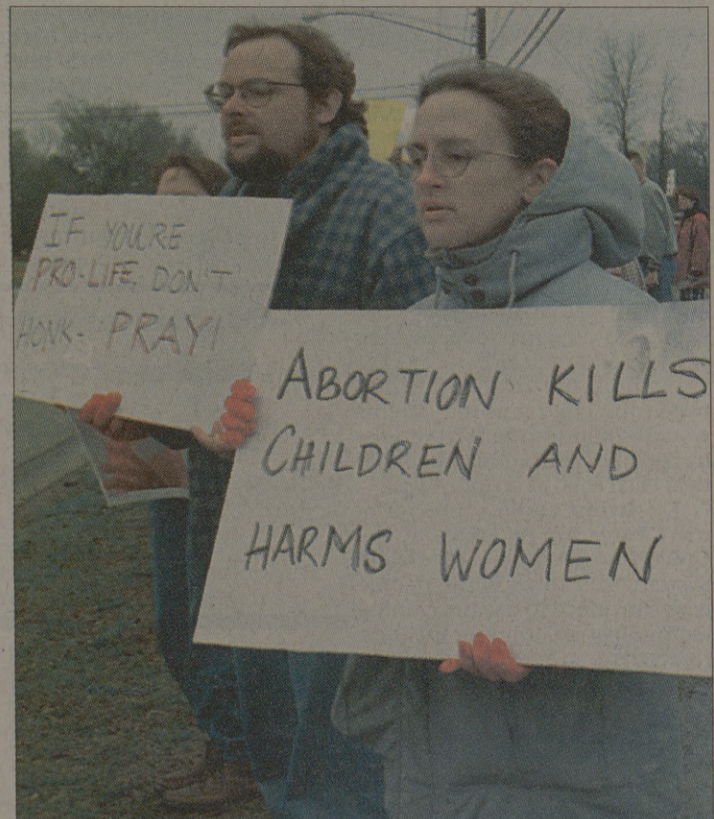
happen each year parallel the number of people waiting for adoptions," Junker said. "We don't want the clinic here. But if it does come, we want to help women who are dealing with the issue. We need to love both the child and mother. Many women come here scared and confused and we need to help them."

Drew Pilkington, Class of '97, came from his home in Houston to join the protest. Pilkington is a former president of Aggies for Life, a student group that aims to protect life from conception to natural death through talks, speakers and discussion groups.

"When a clinic opens up, the pregnancy rate rises because people feel it is an easy solution," Pilkington said. "By protesting, we are trying to educate the citizens that may not know the effects of Planned Parenthood on women and the community."

St. Mary's Catholic Church has planned a meeting Tuesday from 6 to 7 p.m. to discuss possible ways to express opinions on the plans.

Father David Konderla of St. Mary's joined the protesters this weekend.



JAMES FRANCIS/THE BATTALION
 Monique Reed and her husband David Reed stand with others in a Pro-Life demonstration. The demonstration was held in opposition to a proposed Planned Parenthood Clinic which would perform abortions. The clinic would be only facility in the Bryan-College Station area to offer the procedure.

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Rollin' Away



JAKE SCHRICKLING/THE BATTALION
 Brandi Castilla, an employee of The Marble Slab Creamery, rolls waffle cones at work Sunday. This is Castilla's first month as an employee.

Greek Week unifies through competition

By AMANDA SMITH
 Staff writer

Today marks the beginning of a week-long war between Greek organizations at Texas A&M University.

Greek Week, which will wrap up with award ceremonies on Feb. 21, is coordinated by Order of Omega and includes competitive events among fraternities and sororities designed to raise money for the construction of a girls' addition to the Still Creek Boys Ranch in Bryan.

Rachel Kinman, Order of Omega president, said she expects the event to raise \$9,000 to \$12,000.

"We are hoping to raise at least \$9,000 that will help to build additions to the ranch," Kinman said. "We want to let other students know that Greeks do not just party. We raise thousands and thousands of dollars for charitable organizations."

Kinman said most of the money raised will come from ticket sales from the Pat Green concert Feb. 19 at the Texas Hall of Fame. Elvis T. Busboy and Blues Butchers, a blues band from Dallas, will open the show at 8:30 p.m.

Eric Appel, a Greek Week director and a senior business major, said this year's Greek Week is different from the past.

"It's a totally new Greek Week," Appel said. "We are hoping to generate more enthusiasm and excitement to raise money for the Still Creek Boys Ranch."

This year, PanHellenic will participate in Greek Week with the traditional Greek participants, Interfraternity Council and

Panhellenic Council.

Michael Stewart, the PanHellenic president and a senior mechanical engineering major, said he hopes to build unity among all Greek organizations.

"We want to promote unity in the Greek system," Stewart said. "If we can play together, then we can work together and do anything that we want to do for the University. Giving to charities is a blessing in itself."

Shannon Knuckley, a junior management major, said Greek Week is a friendly but important competition.

"We are out there to promote Greek unity and to have fun," Knuckley said. "Greek Week is a competition based mainly on points."

These points may be earned through participation in events sponsored by Order of Omega.

Greeks will challenge the Corps of Cadets in a basketball game Feb. 17 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Admission is \$2.

Penny wars among Greek organizations will take place on Feb. 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tables will be set up outside the MSC for members of the various organizations to contribute pennies to add points and silver coins to take away points.

On Feb. 19, intramural competition begins between Greek organizations. Competitions will be on Feb. 19 and 20 from 3 to 6 p.m. at Duncan Field.

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Testing company praises A&M's new MCAT policy

AUSTIN (AP) — A company that prepares students for standardized tests is applauding a Texas A&M program that does not require the Medical College Admissions Test for some incoming medical students.

Paul Cohen, a spokesperson for the New York-based company Princeton Review, said the MCAT and similar tests are poor indicators of a student's ability to perform.

"They are also tremendously biased along racial lines," Cohen told the *Austin American-Statesman*.

The program at Texas A&M recruits students from areas with large minority populations and offers them guaranteed admission into the university's medical school if they maintain a certain grade-point average in a science-intensive curriculum during their undergraduate years.

The program resulted from declining minority enrollments in the university's medical school after a federal court ended affirmative action programs at Texas colleges in 1996.

"If these tests really measured how well you were going to do in medical school and law school, you couldn't take a test-preparation course and go up 6 points," Cohen said. "We don't make our

students better doctors or lawyers, we make them better test takers."

Assistant Director of the Princeton Review's Austin office, Jennifer Lynn, said the company was formed because it wanted to give students a better chance at passing the tests. Lynn and Cohen both agreed Texas A&M deserved praise for eliminating the tests, they say are unfair.

Others, however, disagree.

Maria Lofftus, director of academic services for Kaplan Educational Centers' health sciences division, said the MCAT is a valuable tool in predicting a student's success in medical school.

She said the test is also a good indicator of how a student will perform on his medical licensing exam.

Standardized testing has come under more scrutiny as states such as Texas and California have eliminated affirmative action in higher education.

Both states have seen declines in minority enrollment in their medical and law schools.

The decline has also caused the University of Texas' medical school to take a second look at its policies. The school recently announced that it will look at factors beyond grades and test scores in hopes of recruiting a more diverse group of students.

El Niño brings random weather for area farmers

By AMANDA SMITH
 Staff writer

Southeast Texas farmer Dan Copeland depends on the cycle of the seasons to produce fruit and to earn his livelihood.

Copeland, who manages King's Orchard in Plantersville, said the abundant rain in late December and early January made his strawberries ready for picking three weeks ahead of schedule.

"Long steady rains can help the crop," Copeland said. "If we get a lot more rain, then we could lose a lot of strawberries."

Copeland, like other Southeast Texas farmers, stands to lose other spring crops if the heavy rains of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) continue as expected.

El Niño has brought more rain and variable temperatures to the residents of Bryan-College Station, according to a report by the National Weather Service.

ENSO is a cycle that meteorologists have studied for decades, but this El Niño is comparable to the strongest cycle of the 20th century — the 1982 to 1983 El Niño.

Brian Belcher, a Texas A&M graduate assistant in the Office of the Texas State Climatologist, said Southeast Texas expects cooler temperatures and greater precipitation during the winter months.

The average temperature was about sev-

en degrees higher than expected for January and about three degrees higher than expected for the first part of February in College Station, according to a report from the Office of the State Climatologist.

"This is a prime example which shows that what happens during an average El Niño warm episode does not occur every time that there is an El Niño event," Belcher said. "There is some variability."

Bob French, chief meteorologist of KBTX-TV, said he expects El Niño to continue to affect the weather in Bryan-College Station in March.

"The unusual aspect of the weather this year so far is the fact that we have had four to five heavy rainstorms since Jan. 1," French said. "I think we are still going to see the effects of El Niño this spring. I would think that we would have more severe weather than usual."

Texas farmers welcome the abundant rainfall early in the season, French said.

Actual ocean temperatures play the most critical role in the cycle of El Niño because they impact tropical rainfall patterns, according to the National Weather Service. Timing, location and magnitude of ocean warming varies from one El Niño to the next and triggers variations in the amounts of tropical rainfall.

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