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## Prof to host workshop in France

BY NONI SRIDHARA  
The Battalion

Amateur and professional writers will spend two weeks participating in intensive writing workshops in Provence, France, at the first Provence Writers' Workshop, created by Paul Christensen, professor in the Department of English at Texas A&M.

The two-week program will host 20 writers from May 15 to May 31.

The writers will be the guests of the owner of a country inn. The owner is a writer and the mayor of the village. Christensen said the writers will typically participate in activities for 15 hours each day. They will spend each morning in workshops conducted by Christensen and Luis Urrea, a writer in residence at

Southwest Louisiana State University. They will spend the afternoons writing about various assigned topics.

Christensen said they will visit historical authors' homes, villages and monasteries for inspiration. In the evenings, they will participate in readings and conversations.

He said the workshops will focus on three main genres of writing: prose, fiction and creative non-fiction.

Christensen said the workshop will target people in different stages of their writing careers.

"Our main goal is to help these participants get launched or re-launched into their writing careers," he said. "We want this to be not only instructional, but it should also be therapeutic."

## Teen smoking increases cancer risks

WASHINGTON (AP) — Smoking in the teen-age years causes permanent genetic changes in the lungs and forever increases the risk of lung cancer — even if the smoker quits, a study finds. And the younger the smoking starts, the more damage is done.

The research, at a time when more than a third of teens take up the smoking habit, shows "there is something uniquely bad about starting young," said John K. Wiencke, a genetics expert at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine.

The research gives powerful laboratory evidence of why starting smoking before the age of 18 can be particularly harmful to long-term health, said Wiencke, author of a study Wednesday in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

Youthful smoking on a daily basis apparently causes lung damage that lasts a lifetime, he said. Such damage is less likely among smokers who start in their 20s.

"It looks like it is the age when smoking starts that is important,"

Wiencke said. "It didn't matter if they were heavy or light smokers — what mattered is that they started young."

Earlier studies have indicated that young smoking stunts the lungs' full development and increases the risk of breathing problems later in life. Studies have also shown that smoking in the teen years is more addictive and that smokers who begin young are less likely to break the habit.

But Wiencke's study for the first time shows dramatic and enduring DNA damage caused by youthful smoking.

"This reinforces the idea that we need to stop young people from smoking, not only from the addiction standpoint, but also from the cancer risk standpoint," Wiencke said.

Surveys by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that 34.8 percent of high school students were regular smokers in 1995. That number rose to 36.4 percent in 1997.

Of smokers ages 30 to 39, 62 per-

cent had tried smoking by the age of 16, and 24.9 percent had taken up the smoking habit permanently by that age, the CDC found.

About 3 million teen-agers now smoke, the government estimates. And about a third of all smokers will die of smoking-related illnesses, including lung and other types of cancers, heart disease, stroke, emphysema and chronic pulmonary obstruction.

In their study, Wiencke and colleagues tested for DNA alterations in the nontumor lung tissue of patients being treated for lung cancer. The group included 57 people who were current smokers, 79 who were former smokers and seven who had never smoked.

The healthy lung tissue was tested for the number of DNA alterations per 10 billion cells. Some alterations occur with age, but the number of gene changes was much higher among smokers — and highest of all among those who started smoking at a young age, Wiencke said.

## Balancing act



Daniel Looker keeps his balance during the grand finale of the act Tuesday in the MSC as part of the Shakespeare Festival. The festival concludes Sunday.

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## Yugoslav leader declares cease-fire for religious holidays

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic declared a unilateral cease-fire Tuesday in his campaign to crush rebels in Kosovo, saying he wanted to honor the Orthodox Easter holiday this weekend. Western leaders called the move a sham and pledged to press ahead with airstrikes.

Moments after the cease-fire took effect at 8 p.m. (2 p.m. EDT), air-raid sirens wailed in Belgrade, heralding new NATO attacks.

The Yugoslav declaration was clearly aimed at staving off further NATO attacks and at presenting Milosevic's government as interested in resolving the crisis without capitulating to the West.

President Clinton and NATO insisted that half-measures would not end the NATO air campaign that began March 24, while British Prime Minister Tony Blair's office said Milosevic's announced truce "doesn't go nearly far enough."

A rebel spokesman also rejected the cease-fire, which was an-

nounced on Belgrade stations, and said the group would agree to a cease-fire if NATO troops entered the region.

Russia alone was pushing for a cease-fire. "Any peace must be useful," spokesman Yuri Yakushkin quoted Boris Yeltsin as saying.

On the refugee front, NATO aid Tuesday for the 400,000 Albanians who have fled from Kosovo and into neighboring states.

Armies of aid workers set up row upon row of tents and latrines for refugees, while aid flights landed nearby airports, including at Tirana, the capital. Some doctors were off-duty during the night, and sanitation left many refugees with diarrhea.

Conditions were most dire at frontier enclaves at the Macedonian border, where refugees have died.

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