

## I Don't Wanna Grow Up ...

### Student parents face uncommon hurdles on path to success

BY KIFFIN COLLINS  
The Battalion

"I'm sorry my paper is late, but my daughter has been sick," is not an excuse professors expect to hear, but statements like this can be common in the life of a student with children. Brenda Hebner, a senior agricultural development major, was 21 when she had her first child and is dis-

covering the hardships and benefits that come with parenthood.

She said her decision to have a child while attending college was partly due to her strong belief in Roman Catholicism.

"My family and I firmly believe in our religion, and they strongly supported my decision to have this child," she said.

She said the most difficult part of being a mother and maintaining good standing with the University is her limited time.

"When [my daughter] was first born, I had to stay up all night with her to feed and change her," Hebner said.

"Now, when she gets ill or scared during the night, I am the one staying up with her until she goes to sleep. It is hard to find time to study and do homework. My day is scheduled around her."

Hebner said the best part of raising her child is the happiness her daughter brings into her life.

"Just the joy of watching her grow and learn makes it all worthwhile," she said.

One student, a senior English major who declined to be identified, is the mother of a two-year-old.

The student was 17 when she became pregnant and had to break the news to her parents.

"I was the kind of person you would never expect this would happen

to," she said. "I was [a] good student and never got into any trouble."

"At first, my parents thought my life was over, and they mourned for me. I kept telling them 'I am not dead yet' and 'I will [raise this child].'"

She said her parents supported her afterward and did all they could to help with money, babysitting or tuition.

She said a typical day for her is long and tiresome, beginning in the early morning and ending late at night.

"I get up at 6:45 a.m. and get ready first then get her ready," she said. "I drop her off at day care, go to class, go to work, attend class again, and pick her up around 4:30 p.m. in the afternoon. She has afternoon activities once a week, and after that, we go home, eat dinner, and she is in bed at 8:30 p.m. Only then is it my time to study and do schoolwork."

Like Hebner, she said the hardest part of caring for a child while being a student is the lack of time.

"I have two full-time jobs, one of which is school, as well as a part-time job," she said. "Most people can study during the day or after dinner. I am not one of them. I get only a few hours of sleep each day, and I am not able to study as much as I would like."

"There have been many times that she has been sitting on my lap at 3 in the morning while I am typing a paper."

She said even with the hardships, there are many advantages in raising a child.

"I do everything by myself," she said. "When she gets sick, I am the one who takes care of her. I miss class and work, but I manage well."

"She is what keeps me going each day. Her innocence and smile mean so much more than grades. She can just smile and I know everything will be okay."

There are many child care centers in the Bryan-College Station area. Many parents rely on them to

provide supervision throughout the day while they attend classes.

Amy Gonter, assistant director of the Texas A&M University Children's Center, said the center offers two programs for children six weeks to prekindergarten, and one for those ages four to five years old.

"The Children's Center serves faculty, staff and students," she said. "We have a full-time program from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, as well as a part-time program from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., allowing parents to attend class or work. Currently, we have 160 children enrolled in our programs."

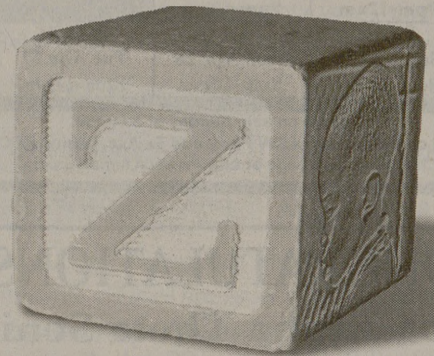
Neither of the parents interviewed said they regret their decision. They only wish for more hours in the day and that people would not judge or stereotype them so quickly.

The student said she has faced stereotypes by other students.

"People are quick to judge me because I don't look or dress like a typical mother," she said. "They talk about me behind my back and comment on my ability to raise a child. I know I am a good mother, as good as any 30-year-old mother."



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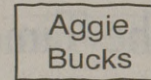
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