

Have a heart

Money for donated organs does not cheapen value of life

The story of the man who wakes up in a hotel room with a bathtub, covered in ice and missing, is one of the more popular urban myths of the early '90s. The myth, like most horror stories, serves to illustrate feelings of societal helplessness. However, taken at face value, the story comes to one basic conclusion — organs are in high demand. From the moment transplant technology became a viable surgical procedure, the availability of organs to transplant became an issue.



BEVERLY MIRELES

However, this plan would do the exact opposite. By offering to pay some of the expenses of the donor, Pennsylvania is not putting a price on life but giving value to life-saving. Doctors, nurses and even pharmaceutical companies are paid for their life-giving services. It seems that the donors themselves are the only ones not benefiting.

What many people are overlooking is that the money is more of a goodwill offering than a payment. Funerals and medical bills are rarely only \$3,000; the money is more a thanks than an incentive.

Besides, the plan only covers organ donations of the deceased. It does not even mention or make a supportive case for live-donor transplants, which are often described as fearsome and Gestapo-like, even though eggs, sperm, blood and plasma are harvested and paid for every day.

By offering a small compensation for cadaver organs, the possibility of increased donation is promising. People often need just a little extra incentive to do the right thing, even if it is only a symbolic one. With 60,000 people waiting for organs, the plan is definitely worth a shot, especially when the odds of getting an organ donation are not incredibly optimistic.

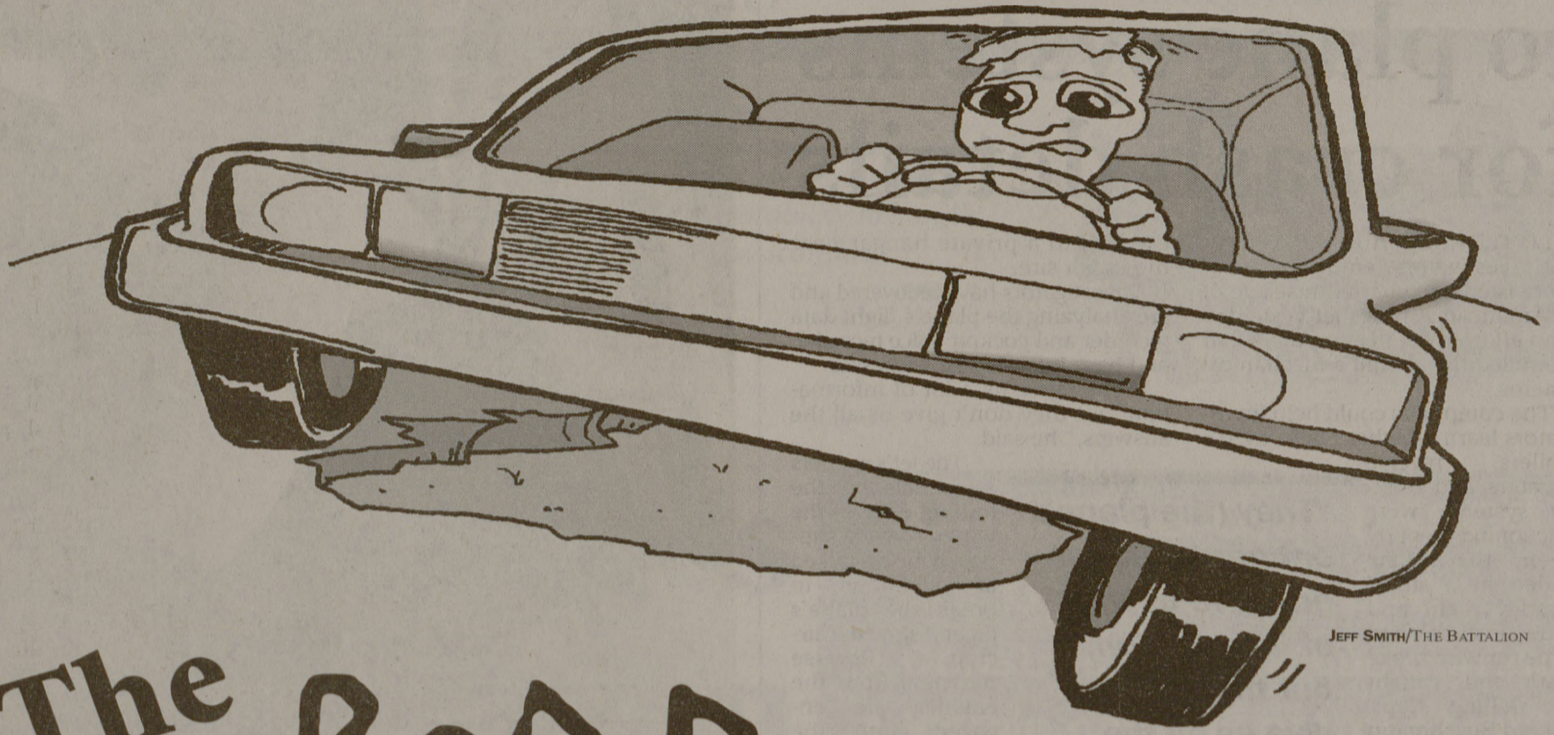
In 1996, according to a Health Resources and Services Administration report to Congress, only 32 percent of possible organ donors actually gave away their hearts and kidneys. So, for the 8,000 to 15,000 possible organ donors each year, only about 5,000 donations actually take place.

For people waiting patiently for organs, this means that unless they can manage to outlive their transplant expectations, many of them will die.

Depressing as those numbers may be, people should take heart in the fact that because of this plan, organ donations could soon be on the rise.

At this point, anything that can be done to help the thousands of people unable to do anything but wait for decent citizens to grant permission for donation would be a step in the right direction.

Beverly Mireles is a junior microbiology major.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

The ROAD less graveled

University streets in desperate need of immediate repair

The saying goes that one has to walk a mile in another person's shoes to really understand them. Unfortunately, most students will begin to test this theory as the roads around the Texas A&M campus have gone from merely annoying, past unhealthy and straight to hazardous for all vehicles.



CHRIS HUFFINES

The roads around A&M need serious attention, and they need it now.

The primary concern is that bad lines of sight and poor drivers make driving on campus the vehicular equivalent of Russian roulette with a bazooka.

Not only are drivers unlikely to make it back alive, but there will almost always be a mess left behind.

However, that is a result of poor planning and stupid students, two things with which the University is perennially plagued. A&M really cannot be held accountable for them.

However, the roads are in such disrepair that portions look like they have barely survived a bombing. This is unacceptable and the University can and should do something about it.

Moving around campus, Ross Street, running between Reed McDonald and the chemistry buildings, is sinking into the ground. The parts that aren't actively forming a fault line are graced with more potholes than

Brooklyn. The half-circle portion of Bizzell Street running in front of the Jack K. Williams Administration Building is no longer pavement but more like a series of rumble strips. These are two of the worst offenders, but every student could catalog a list of less-than-desirable streets.

The administration's excuse (and it is a pretty good one) is that there simply is not enough money currently budgeted to take care of these problems. Without the cash, they cannot fix the problem.

Of course, this is the same administration that just built Reed Arena, is remodeling and repainting buildings right and left and is constantly increasing student fees. It makes one curious as to where all the money is going and if priorities are entirely straight.

What can be done about this? The American way would be to vote the offending members of the administration out of office and vote in members who would respond to what the students want. Except for the fact that the University is not a democracy, that plan would work fairly well.

Dropping to the level of action in the Third World would mean firing squads or a coup are in order. However, that probably will not work either. Pity — fresh blood might be helpful in making A&M a top-10 university.

Two things can be done by students and staff alike, however.

The first is to try to drive as little as possible on campus. While this will mean that fewer of the obnoxious bicyclists will be

weeded out in the most satisfying way possible, fewer drivers on the roads will result in less wear on the roads until they get fixed.

The second thing that can be done is to use the off-campus shuttle system. Again, this will result in fewer drivers, which will lead to less wear.

However, both of these are stopgap, desperation measures.

What really needs to occur is a thoughtful consideration of what the University needs from its road system.

Is A&M going to be a campus open to cars or will the recent trend of closed streets and pedestrian malls evolve into an automobile-free campus? If the former is the case, then the current roadways are simply inadequate for the amount of traffic that passes over them.

If the future holds the latter in store, then the current street system needs to be demolished immediately, as it is both an eyesore and a source of significant wear to any car driving over it.

In the beginning days of the University, no one could foresee how common cars would become at A&M. Now that the problem is here, it needs to be aggressively solved. The passive approach that has been taken lately is unacceptable to the students, and should be unacceptable to the administration.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communications major.

Nike policies still sound sneaky

Probably every chief executive officer of every major corporation in the world has said last year when Philip H. Knight, founder and CEO of Nike, admitted in a public announcement, "The Nike product has become synonymous with over wages, forced overtime and arbitrary abuse."



CALEB MCDANIEL

Ouch. After years of immense international pressure, Nike had caved in under the evidence against them. That evidence included stories of violent abuse of foreign floor supervisors in Nike's Vietnamese plants; some factory workers were slapped in the face with rubber sneaker soles or made to lick the factory floor as punishment for errors. There were environmental hazards; some female employees reported birth defects from breathing harmful vapors without a face mask at work. There were rumors that Nike had found ways to circumvent minimum wage laws in Vietnam. Sadly, the list goes on.

In the tidal wave of international outrage occasioned by these and other accounts, Nike caved again with a Stalin-like suppression of information about its practices.

For whatever reason, principled and practical, Nike has now begun to make a show of straightening up.

As evidenced by Knight's chastened attitude in public, Nike's redemption began last year with an official policy of perestroika. In keeping with a new public openness, Nike recently released a circular to media outlets in May pledging its commitment to improved corporate behavior.

"We all recognize there is more work to be done and our teams in the field, with outside assistance, are tackling issues such as workplace temperatures, health care and nutrition this year," the release said. They certainly sound penitent, but Nike's public announcements about its changes continue to have a disturbing sense of surreptitiousness about them.

The figures on wage increases in Nike's circular, for instance, are presented in Vietnamese currency, leav-

ing the average American reader with no idea about how much workers are actually paid. And even in this latest release, Nike continues to argue that all things considered, their workers do not have it so bad, a gross rationalization if ever there was one.

Propagandistic interviews with workers who are very happy with their jobs pepper the release, but one is left to fear that these employees are the exceptions rather than the rule.

Even so, Dara O'Rourke, an environmental researcher at Berkeley and long-time Nike critic, seems convinced. According to a *Los Angeles Times* article in April, he praised Nike for its improvements without dismissing its still-needed reforms.

Even the (few) statistics cited by O'Rourke, however, smell suspiciously of chicanery. At one factory, for instance, the number of workers reporting respiratory problems fell from 86% of the workforce in 1997 to 18% of the workforce in 1998.

Aside from the fact that without knowing the size of the workforce, these percentages could mean anything, this figure proves only that workers are not talking about their health problems not that they are now free of them.

Nonetheless, in spite of these concerns, Nike is at least abandoning its former stance, which is a good start. Meanwhile, though, other companies should take note.

Nike's meekness, genuine or otherwise, is witness to the power moral suasion still has in the market. After its dramatic fall from grace, other shady operations who run to foreign countries will not be able to hide there for long.

Unfortunately, Texas A&M University itself is no stranger to these controversies. Allegations earlier in the year about sweatshops used by collegiate licensing companies strike an unsettling chord at home. It is time, like Nike, that we face the music as well.

Here's hoping Nike — and others — will do a better job walking a mile in their workers' shoes than they have in the past.

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EDITORIAL



The Battalion

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SLEEPING GIANTS

Vision 2020 should combine insights with more student input

At Friday night's official unveiling of the Vision 2020 strategic planning report, the language in the air was almost as apocalyptic as the coming of the millennium itself.

In a keynote speech, Vision 2020 co-chair Jon L. Hagler described the project as Texas A&M University's "rendezvous with destiny."

"The stars are aligned," he said. These prophecies are impressive indeed, and the report they refer to is no less impressive. Vision 2020 is a powerful call to action.

It features a refreshing focus on academics, a clarion call for more multicultural diversity on campus, a vision for enriching the University's impoverished arts community and many other laudable goals.

Most encouraging of all, Vision 2020 is characterized by a sober understanding of where the University is and how far it

still has to go. In his Friday speech, Jon Hagler reminded the assembly again and again, "We have much to be proud of, but we are still a sleeping giant."

But hidden in the background of Vision 2020 lurks a 40,000-pound sleeping giant — the student body — and the project's lack of substantial student input is alarming.

Of the over 250 members of the Vision 2020 task force, only about a dozen were students.

Administrators have failed to include students in the planning process for Vision 2020. Student opinions have not been solicited except in small numbers, and student awareness of the administration's activities has been minimal at best.

Vision 2020 can erect an Emerald City at the end of the yellow-brick road, but so far it has been too much like the wizard behind the curtain.

To be successful, school officials must pull back the curtain,

and soon. Without a formal plan to rally student support, Vision 2020 will leave a bad aftertaste of a policy handed down from on high instead of collaboratively built from the bottom up.

A failure to include students more proactively will spell doom for Vision 2020.

Today's students are tomorrow's alumni, tomorrow's donors, tomorrow's legislators and the parents of tomorrow's students.

By 2020, the students who are not included in the project now will be the ones called upon to fund it.

They must be convinced early that it will be an investment worth making.

Vision 2020 does have the potential to be a rousing success, and its findings may indeed awaken the University's sleeping giant.

But to do so, administrators will simply have to awaken the sleeping student body first.