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Aggie community offers support

Parents, local businesses rush to aid of students

BY JEFF WEBB AND DIANE XAVIER
The Battalion

Over 300 people answer call for blood donations

BY ERIC DICKENS
The Battalion

There is always a need for more blood donations, but in a time of crisis and tragedy the need becomes even greater. The tragic fall of Bonfire yesterday is an example of when donors are needed most.

Twenty-eight students were brought to The St. Joseph Regional Health Center in Bryan and the College Station Medical Center as a result of the collapse of Bonfire yesterday. To maintain blood supplies in these hospitals an increase in new donations will be required.

In a fortunate coincidence, two blood donation centers were already on campus yesterday as part of a week-long blood drive. Red Cross and Carter Blood Care have had several blood donation sites set up across campus since Monday and had been receiving an average student turnout of 60 people per donation site everyday.

But as the pieces of the fallen stack were being sifted through yesterday morning, the call went out on local radio, television and by word of mouth that more donations were needed to keep up supplies in Bryan-College Station area hospitals.

In response to these calls, over 300 people turned out yesterday to donate blood.

David Gray, an employee of Carter Blood Care, said the donation sites have seen a boom in donors and have had to take measures to accommodate the eager participants. The busses that serve as on-campus donation centers were opened an hour ahead of schedule at 9 a.m., and the set-up crew had to work swiftly as there was already a line of students waiting to donate blood.

Gray said that by noon yesterday, the blood donation site at Rudder Plaza had seen as many students as they saw the entire day before.

Emily Potter, a blood donor volunteer and a junior biomedical sciences major, said the increase was not surprising in the wake of a tragic event such as Bonfire collapsing.

"Donating blood is always a good cause," she said, "but [this larger turnout] is obvi-



Kellye Stone, an American Red Cross worker, handles the large amounts of donated blood as a result of the Bonfire tragedy yesterday.

ously in response to the tragedy."

Juan Olivo, a blood donor volunteer and a senior economics major, agreed, saying "Aggies always help Aggies, especially in a situation like this."

The influx of new donors created some problems and delays for volunteers working at on-campus blood centers. By noon, when the larger crowds waiting to give blood had not decreased, the Carter Blood Care donation bus in front of Sbis Dining Hall was forced to schedule appointments for future donors.

Even with the appointments, students still had to wait over thirty minutes before they could donate, but no one seemed to mind.

Blood donation will continue for the rest of this week with an increased effort. Red Cross programs from Dallas, Waco and Tulsa will be sending blood to St. Joseph's tomorrow along with the Gulf Coast Blood Bank of Houston.

The Red Cross will also station a mobile unit off campus outside of The Callaway House with extended hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Aggie students were not the only ones feeling the need to drop everything because Bonfire collapsed. Concerned parents began to flood College Station early Thursday in show of support for their sons and daughters.

Garry Bunkley, Class of '71, raced from Abilene after his son, junior redpot and construction science major Brent Bunkley, called at 3:30 a.m. with the tragic news.

"He helped load some of the bodies, so he is really upset," Bunkley said. "He said he needed our moral support, so he asked us to come down."

He said his son was one of the junior redpots on Bonfire site Thursday morning helping emergency personnel with the victims before contacting his parents for moral support.

"He had just come down from the top of the stack to call for the next shift," Bunkley said about his son. "He said he heard a crack and turned around."

Whitney Turner, Krueger Hall Bonfire chair and a sophomore business administration major, ended her shift at about 1:30 a.m. but raced back to the scene around 3 a.m. after she heard the news. She then called her parents upon returning to her residence hall.

Her father John Turner, Class of '70, said he left her home in Round Rock at 4 a.m. Thursday and arrived in College Station a couple of hours later.

Turner said his daughter was injured at Bonfire last year, but continued to support it and participate.

"Last year she got hurt out here," he said. "A log kicked out and cut her leg really bad. But she was still determined to get more involved."

College Station hotels opened their doors to parents of injured students.

Area hotels such as the Hilton, La Quinta Inn, Hampton Inn and Vineyard Court Executive Suites are providing free rooms for the victim's families.

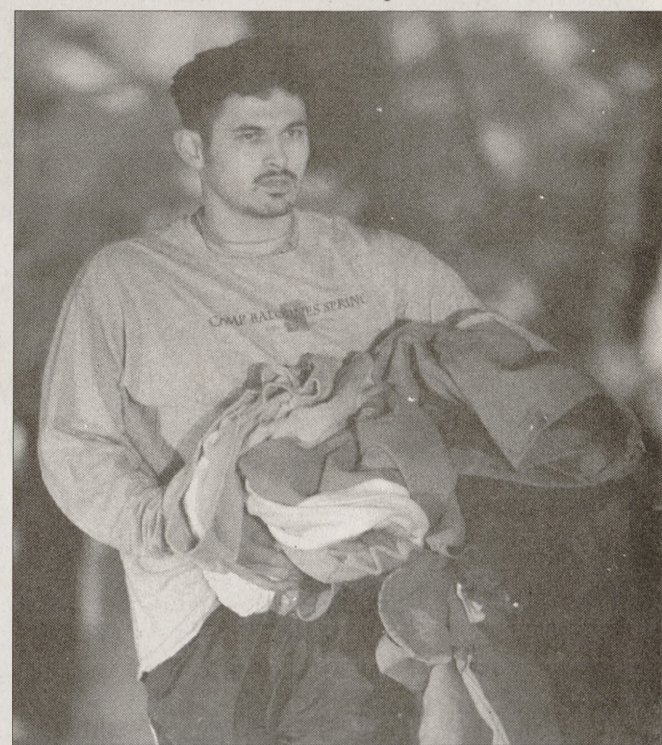
Jim Dunlap, general manager of Vineyard Court Executive Suites and vice president of the Brazos Valley Logging Association, said the numbers of rooms available vary from property to property and are limited.

"We are doing all that we can to help," Dunlap said. "This service will be provided as long as it is needed, and we are happy to offer it."

Dunlap said anyone needing logging should contact the Convention of Business Bureaus at (409) 260-9999.

Ross Smith, a Hilton guest services representative, said the Hilton was holding eight reservations as of 6 p.m.

"Everybody who has somebody injured or has a son or daughter deceased has been given a free room," he said. "Not all of them have checked in yet because a lot of them are still at the hospital waiting for news."



BRADLEY ATCHINSON/THE BATTALION

A volunteer brings workers clean jackets during the rescue efforts at Bonfire site Thursday morning.

As of 6 p.m. yesterday, the Hampton Inn had two of five reserved rooms claimed, Best Western had four of six claimed, and Days Inn had over a dozen parents check in and only had six rooms vacant.

Other help in the A&M community came in the form of free food and donations for the victims' families.

Scott Blackwell, a volunteer with the Association of Former Students, said the organization has a Bonfire fund set up for anyone wanting to make a donation to the family members whose children were injured or killed in this incident.

"We've had a great outpouring of help and many donated items for the workers of this search effort," Blackwell said. "We also provide counseling services and walk-in appointments at Henderson Hall."

Free food was provided by many local businesses such as Subway, Shipley's Donuts, Double Dave's Pizzaworks and International House of Pancakes to students, families and workers.

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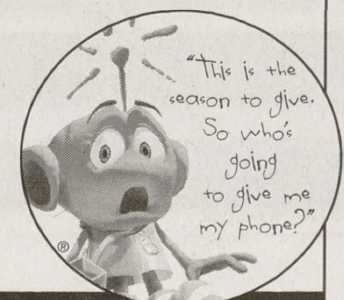
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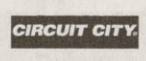


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