

Ags raise disability awareness

BY ANN LOISEL
The Battalion

Sara Whitlock, an educational psychology graduate student, wakes at 7 a.m. to the awaiting arms of a University employee who helps her get out of bed, bathe and groom for her day of classes.

This assistance is a necessity for Whitlock, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth and is unable to walk.

"I do some things differently. I have a bed that raises up and lowers and a swing on wheels that helps me get out of bed," she said.

"It's just what I do—like you just walk. I don't even consider it as a source of frustration."

Students may experience the daily tribulations posed by disabilities, such as Whitlock's, Wednes-

DISABILITY DAY

- **What:** Disability simulation stations
- **Why:** To give students the experience of being disabled
- **Where:** MSC Flagroom
- **When:** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

RUBEN DELUNA/The Battalion
day during Disability Awareness Day, hosted by A&M's Services of Students with Disabilities.

Eight disability-simulation stations will be set up in the MSC Flagroom from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., each simulating a different type of disability including hearing, learning, orthopedic and visual impairment.

"I think a lot of people are afraid of people with disabilities," Whitlock said. "Everybody [should come] because the whole idea is to show people that we're just people—I am not a disabled person, I am a person with a disability."

Aaron Capps, a junior speech communication major and full-time A&M sign language interpreter, said the experience may offer students a much-needed change of perspective.

"The main thing that's important for this campus is to raise awareness—to help people realize that the disabled are people too," Capps said.

"A deaf person just can't hear, that's the only difference. With proper accommodations, any disabled student can be as effective as any other student."

In addition to the stations, Whitlock along with two other students and three A&M staff members will discuss their lives and disabilities at a panel discussion Wednesday at 10 a.m. in Room 206 of the Memorial Student Center.

Plans for new residence hall approved

BY RICHARD BRAY
The Battalion

Campus Planning and Facilities has approved planning for a new \$30 million residence hall to replace Law Hall and Puryear Hall which were torn down in 1995.

The new dorm will be built on Northside near All Faiths Chapel. Law and Puryear occupied that location before they were torn down due to structural problems in the foundations.

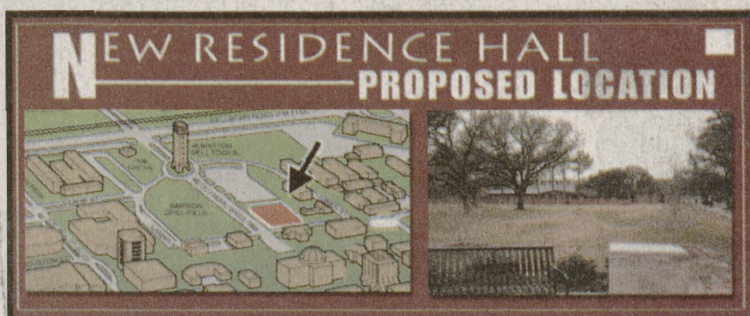
Ron Sasse, director of Residence Life, said the planning for the new residence hall has not yet accounted for size or format.

"Now we will work with Facilities, Planning and Construction and figure out what the residence hall will look like with student input," he said. "The only thing that has been decided is its location."

Julie Cast, Residence Hall Association president and a junior marketing major, said student input will be a vital factor in determining what form the hall takes.

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"There are really a lot of ideas being passed around about whether this should be a modular, or an apartment style—or something dif-



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ferent," Cast said. "But this is going to be around for a long time, and A&M doesn't want to build something that the students don't want."

Sasse said the new residence hall is being built to better meet the needs of the growing number of freshmen that are accepted each year.

"From the input that we have received about not being able to take care of the number of freshmen, our long term goal has been to build a hall to house all the incoming freshmen who want to live on

campus," he said.

Sasse said Residence Life has recognized the need for a new residence hall since 1995.

"Ever since Law and Puryear were torn down, the Board of Regents has asked [Residence Life] to figure out how to replace those facilities," Sasse said.

"Input has been coming in, and we finally put in the formal request."

Will Hurd, student body president and a senior computer science major, said the new residence hall will make it easier for students to find on-campus housing.

"I think having a residential campus is important," he said.

"We have about 12,000 spots on campus and 42,000 students. We usually have some over-assignments, and you have some people that don't get the opportunity to live on campus."

Sasse said the cost of the new residence hall will be between \$10 million and \$30 million, but the actual cost has not been decided.

"When we originally submitted our request to Facilities Planning, we used the figure of \$30 million, but realistically, we're probably looking closer to the \$10 million figure than the \$30 million figure because of the size of the area," Sasse said.

Dorm 9 fire investigation raises safety issues

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

"My only thought was 'Oh my God, I am going to die. My roommate got me up and people were yelling in the hallway for us to get up. The smoke was coming under our door,'" David Morefield, a senior journalism major who was in Dorm Nine when the Nov. 2, 1998 fire broke out, said.

Last week's fires at Texas A&M in Krueger Hall and in the Doherty Building have alerted the campus

to fire safety issues. Neither fires caused serious damage or resulted in any injuries, and a cause for each has been found.

According to the University Police Department (UPD), the cause of the Dorm 9 fire remains unknown. Morefield said the most terrifying part of the incident was not knowing where the fire was. As he crawled closer to the stairwell, the smoke was thicker and the heat was more intense.

"When I got out in the hallway and got to the stairwell, I passed out," Morefield said. "The stairwell was the only exit, and you didn't know if you were crawling into or out of the fire."

One of the last things Morefield remembers about that night was thinking about his wife, who was pregnant at the time. One of his buddies grabbed him to carry him down the stairs from the fourth floor, and the fire alarm finally started sounding—after almost everyone had evacuated the floor.

The reason for the delayed fire alarm response is only one of many unanswered questions remaining from the Dorm 9 fire.

Detective Sgt. David Villarreal of UPD said the investigation is still open on the Dorm Nine fire.

"The more significant leads, and even remote possibilities, were followed," Villarreal said.

"But, they came up with more questions than answers. I have two possible theories, without any concrete proof at this point."

"There are a couple of longshot leads that need to be followed, but we have been swamped with things such as bonfire," he said.

"They were lower priority leads and I would like to investigate those before shutting the folder completely."

University officials feel that significant progress has been made since that incident.

Col. Anthony Groves, assistant commandant for operations and training, said if the door of the room containing the origin of the fire had been closed after the cadets evacuated, the damage and risk to people would have been reduced significantly.

In response to that fact and directives from the State Fire Marshal's office, the University installed devices on doors in each residence hall room that force doors closed when left open.

Fire-safe doors are being installed on each floor of the corridor-style dorms (which includes Corps of Cadets housing), which are designed to create a vertically sealed column in the stairwell.

The doors are designed to close instantly when the general fire alarm sounds in the building—blocking smoke and preventing oxygen from reaching the fire.

The doors provide a safer escape route for the students evacuating the building.

"As [the students] are coming down the stairs, if they are hit in the face with a blanket of smoke, it's very dangerous," Dan Mizer, assistant director of Residence Life, said.

Presently, the doors have been installed in four of the 10 Corps dorms. The other halls will receive the upgrade this summer.

Another issue addressed was fire safety training among cadets.

"The executive officers were charged with doing daily inspections to ensure we were following up with all the things

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FILE PHOTO/The Battalion

McCain wins in New Hampshire

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Arizona Sen. John McCain scored a landslide victory over George W. Bush on Tuesday in New Hampshire's leadoff primary, puncturing the aura of inevitability that had buoyed the Texan's drive for the Republican presidential nomination. Vice President Al Gore staved off a toe-to-toe challenge from Democratic challenger Bill Bradley.

With returns from almost all New Hampshire's 300 Republican precincts, McCain had 49 percent of the vote compared to 31 percent for Bush. Millionaire publisher Steve Forbes was a distant third at 13 percent and former Amb. Alan Keyes was at 6 percent.

McCain's 18-point margin recast the GOP race for the largest states ahead. He won 10 of the 17 GOP delegates at stake, Bush 5 and Forbes 2.

Of necessity, Bush took the long view, telling the Associated Press, "New Hampshire has long been known as a bump in the pad for front-runners and this year will be no exception." After calling McCain with congratulations,

Gore was winning 52 percent of the Democratic vote and 13 delegates, Bradley 47 and 9.

The night's winners, Gore and McCain, were flying from New Hampshire for middle-of-the-night victory rallies—Gore in New York, McCain in South Carolina.

Bradley lost badly in Iowa last week and surrendered the lead he once held in New Hampshire polling, but Tuesday night he found solace in the narrower margin and he vowed to continue his challenge.

The vice president cast his victory as a bad omen for Bradley, whose laid-back style and pledges of political reform were tailor made for independent-minded voters of New Hampshire.

Bradley shifted strategy immediately. For weeks he refused to ridicule Gore's request for frequent debates, but now falter-

ELECTION 2000
New Hampshire Presidential Primary

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Al Gore - 53% Bill Bradley - 46%

REPUBLICAN PARTY
(TOP THREE CANDIDATES)

John McCain - 49% George W. Bush - 31% Steve Forbes - 14%

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ing on Tuesday night he proposed weekly debates starting Sunday through March 7, Gore aides said the vice president would look at the proposal.

Nearly four out of every 10 New Hampshire voters do not declare a party affiliation, and these independents were a potent attraction to insurgent candidates McCain and Bradley in a state with a proud history of knocking front-runners off stride.

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Student senate discusses closing of Aggie Alley

BY JEANETTE SIMPSON
The Battalion

Student Senate will address the closing of "Aggie Alley" at Wednesday's meeting.

"Aggie Alley," a parking area behind Olsen Field open to the general public, was once a popular place for tailgate parties for Texas A&M baseball games.

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Recently, the athletic department decided to close the area and sell tickets to people wishing to park in "Aggie Alley" during games.

A new bill, authored by Justin Strickland, Student Services chair and junior political science major, and Academic Affairs Chair Brent Spencer, a senior microbiology major, is not contesting the closing of the area to the general public, but that the athletic department made this decision without consulting the students.

"The purpose of this bill is a commentary to make students aware that the athletic department made this decision with no student input," Strickland said.

Athletics director Wally Groff said the decision to close the area and make it available only to those who buy tickets, was made out of safety concerns.

"I was not aware that the athletics department needed to involve the students in order to make decision," Groff said.

The decision to close the area was based on the rowdy behavior of some people in "Aggie Alley" following the University of Texas baseball game last year, Groff said.

"The entire area was out of control. Many attending the game expressed concern, both alumni, and current students," Groff said. "This is our response."

Another resolution authored by Off-Campus Student Senator David Kessler, a senior English major, and ten other student senators will honor former Student Activities Director Dr. Ben Welch.

"The resolution is a 'thank you' aimed at showing the students' gratitude toward Dr. Ben Welch for his contributions as director of student activities," Brian Minyard, speaker of the Student Senate and senior biochemistry major said.

"Dr. Welch provided leadership that was immensely beneficial to the Student Activities Department. He was always working to improve the atmosphere of student activities, that is why thanking him for these contributions is important,"

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