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**HMO sale gets approval;
150 jobs still set to be cut**

ARLINGTON (AP) — State regulators officially gave the go ahead for PacifiCare Health Systems' buyout of the Harris Methodist Health Plan — a move that precedes sharp job cuts among Harris' workforce, company officials said.

PacifiCare said 150 employees will be let go immediately at the HMO's Arlington headquarters east of Fort Worth. Most of the hits were to top managers, including Harris president Patrick Spears.

About 20 other deleted positions were in medical support areas, said PacifiCare officials, who refused to be more specific about the job cuts.

Many of the remaining 700 Harris employees were told that their jobs will end in three to 12 months, according to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

As part of the sale, PacifiCare has said it plans to move many of Harris' operations to its service center in San Antonio.

A PacifiCare management team will move into the Harris offices this morning and begin evaluating where to cut more expenses, Pat Feyen, president of PacifiCare of Texas, said.

"We're very pleased," Feyen told the newspaper. "We've worked long and hard on this and think the completion is a credit to both companies."

Spears declined to comment on the deal. Santa Ana, California-based PacifiCare's plan for turning around the ailing Texas HMO was outlined in documents filed in November with regulators.

But at the time, state insurance commissioner Jose Montemayor called the filing "deficient" because it didn't include the price that PacifiCare agreed to pay for Harris and didn't quantify job cuts.

"The law requires them to disclose it to us and for us to evaluate it," Montemayor said. "A lot of this needs to be fleshed out sooner rather than later as we move forward."

Harris had been the largest health plan in Tarrant County, with more than 300,000 members in its primary health maintenance organizations. It served 80,000 other members with other insurance plans.

But the plan had been losing money, and its parent, Texas Health Resources, put it on the auction block two years ago.

Documents released in December disclosed that PacifiCare agreed to pay \$117.5 million for the Harris plan. As part of the deal, Texas Health was to turn around and pay PacifiCare \$62.8 million, primarily to cover future losses that the Harris plans are expected to incur.

"We've worked long and hard on this and think the completion is a credit to both companies."

— Pat Feyen
President of PacifiCare of Texas

Ethical issues discussed by justices

AUSTIN (AP) — State supreme courts need to prepare for the complicated cases likely to come from the continued growth of breakthrough fertility and gene treatments, chief justices from across the nation were told Tuesday.

The justices from the 50 states and U.S. territories were in Austin for a conference to discuss current issues facing their courts and to attend education seminars. The four-day meeting ends Wednesday.

On Tuesday, a professor at the University of Texas law school said that as in-vitro fertilization and other genetic treatments become more common, more disputes involving them are expected to end up in the courts.

Because few states have laws regarding fertilization or gene issues and no federal laws exist, state supreme courts could be asked to set precedent, professor John A. Robertson told the judges.

Cases such as that of Houston auto dealer Don McGill and his ex-wife Mil-

These are maturing technologies that are now well in place, people accept them, insurance of ten covers them."

— John A. Robertson
Professor at UT law school

dred Schmidt are just the beginning of what effect science could have on the courts, Robertson said.

Schmidt's lawyer in December asked the Texas Supreme Court to determine whether McGill has a parental right to Schmidt's daughter, whose birth resulted from a frozen embryo the couple created while still married. A decision is expected next year.

"These are maturing technologies that are now well established, well in place, people accept them, insurance often covers them," Robertson told the justices.

Justices soon will be asked to make legal decisions involving treatments once never thought possible, he said.

"You now have access to the embryo and its genes," he said. "There is a possibility of altering — of first screening it for its characteristics and then if has a genetic defect of altering it, or in the future adding genes to enhance it."

Judges will be asked to decide if embryos should be treated as property or as a person protected by law.

**Pastor says
God faithful
to Church**

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Pastor Al Meredith said that even though a gunman sprayed bullets in the sanctuary at Wedgwood Baptist Church, God was faithful to his congregation — and has been ever since.

"He was faithful that night, but God was there protecting us, kids in a killing field at point-range, shooting over 200 rounds of ammunition," Meredith said Monday night, recalling the night of Sept. 15.

During a 15-minute address at the annual Texas Baptist Evangelical Conference, Meredith recalled details of the night that Larry Ashbrook walked into the Wedgwood sanctuary with two guns, 200 rounds of ammunition and a pipe bomb.

Before killing himself, Ashbrook had killed seven people and wounded seven others.

Meredith spoke of how Ashbrook walked only three or four steps to the aisle several times before he was away. The church's youth believe the stained glass cross he saw at the end of the sanctuary may have inspired him. Then there was the massive pipe bomb.

"If it had landed in the crowd, it could have easily have been 30 deaths from that one pipe bomb," Meredith, the church's pastor since 1987. "But he threw it too far, it all the way through the crowd, up to the front of the church up to the wall by the organ."

The pipe bomb exploded inward rather than outward as designed. Shrapnel landed in the church's entry balcony.

A four-month police investigation which was closed officially last week, revealed few answers. Investigators found no real motive for Ashbrook, whom they termed a "mad" man, who went on the shooting spree inside Wedgwood sanctuary, which he reportedly chose at random. They he acted alone.

**Groff and
Aggie Al**

Texas A&M Wally Groff has a new opportunity at the Olsen Field.

"Our baseball back-to-back relationships and an all-time high set a record for last season's effort to reward holder, we have passes for the Olsen Field. I demand, we have Aggie Alley for re-

Fans will have purchase 50 Aggie Alley.

The student pass may purchase \$50. The gen-

**Player
grievance**

NEW YORK

Braves returned today to start winners' association a grievance to overturn John Rock suspension.

"I'm glad that finally a decision by Cox said, a date commissioner Selig banned Rock from joining the

of disparaging sexuals, minorities.

"Maybe we one of these days

The players' Shyam Das to be fully aware that baseball commitments or short-

**Most Students Are
Making Healthy Choices**

But most students don't know they are most students

Special to the Battalion

The Department of Student Life Alcohol and Drug Education Programs wants every member of the university community to know the truth about healthy decisions and lifestyle choices at Texas A&M University. **The truth is 64% of Texas A&M students drink 0-3 drinks per week.** This information was collected from the June, 1998 CORE survey on a random sample of 861 A&M students. When students were asked "on the average how many drinks do you consume a week", the following responses were collected: 35.4% responded "0 drinks"; 13.9% responded "1 drink"; 9% responded "2 drinks"; and 5.6% responded "3 drinks".

Memory

For many students, faculty and staff at Texas A&M University, as well as at other institutions of higher education, the message "most students are making healthy choices" is difficult to believe. There are a number of different reasons why it is hard to believe this fact. According to psychology and memory research, we remember those events most vivid and memorable (i.e., the 1 person that is passed out at a party vs the 10 people that were drinking moderately). Further, attribution theory tells us that we want life to be predictable so we may inaccurately attribute behaviors to the individual rather than the circumstances (i.e., a student consistently misses Friday classes and we interpret "that's what A&M students do" rather than "that student may have a personal conflict with this class"). Finally, the media and advertising perpetuate an image of the "partying" college student (i.e., MTV Spring Break coverage).

Fact or Fiction

Our perceptions, however, don't always tell the true story. When it comes to substance use and perceptions of substance use, the research shows that there is typically a large gap between what we perceive and what is actually occurring. For example, students reported they believed 61% of A&M students used alcohol 3 times a week or more. In reality,

only 21% of students reported actual usage of alcohol 3 times a week or more. This is a grossly exaggerated misperception regarding alcohol use at Texas A&M University. The problem lies with our perceptions about the misuse of alcohol rather than the actual misuse of alcohol. This is not to say there aren't issues with high risk drinking behaviors at Texas A&M or at other higher education institutions. Many universities are experiencing the after effects of high risk drinking (i.e., alcohol poisoning), but most Texas A&M students are making healthy choices and not engaging in high risk drinking (defined as 5 or more drinks in one sitting).

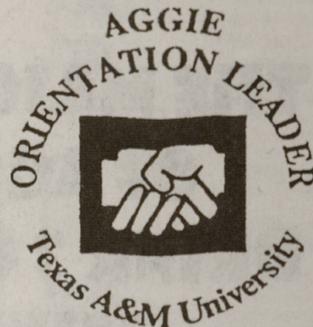
Freshmen

The research suggests that perceptions of peer norms, regardless of the accuracy, may contribute significantly to student alcohol use (Perkins, 1999). For example, students may "party" excessively on a Thursday night because they "believe" that is what "everyone" else is doing. Freshmen are particularly vulnerable to the influence of misperceptions. Coupled with availability of alcohol, new found freedom, absence of parents and the desire to fit in, their alcohol use can increase as a result of the misperceptions they have about A&M students' alcohol use. In addition, they hear "stories", jokes or comments which may serve to perpetuate the myth of the "hard drinking A&M". We are all "carriers" of these misperceptions which contribute to the problem. The result is a "reign of error" (Perkins, 1999). Rumor becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Department of Student Life Alcohol and Drug Education Programs goal is to reduce high risk drinking by telling the truth! Our entire community is a strong agent of change when armed with the facts. When students hear the facts and are supported by the university community, healthy decisions will follow. For more information about Alcohol and Drug Education Programs, contact 845-0280 or stop by their office at 222 Beutel Health Center.

President Ray Bowen's vision for Texas A&M University is "a campus environment that is free of alcohol abuse and its effects in the classroom, in student residence communities (on and off campus), in our time-honored traditions and in those activities that are the social fabric of our campus."

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the Class of 2004?**



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February 7 in 314 YMCA

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Email: aolp@stulife2.tamu.edu Web: http://stulife.tamu.edu/slo/aolp