

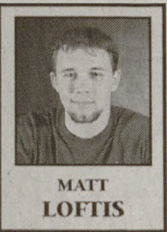
OPINION

THE BATTALION

PTTS finally sees the light

Positive changes by campus parking organization make commute around campus easier

In the confusion of getting registered, changing classes, confirming financial aid and other hassles associated with the beginning of school, it is refreshing this year to see something less complicated than before. Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services (PTTS) has accomplished a feat many would have scoffed at a mere year ago — organizing and improving parking on campus.



MATT LOFTIS

PTTS should be supported in the reforms that have been implemented. The bizarre myriad of red and blue parking lots scattered around campus are a thing of the past. Red lots, resident student parking, are now conveniently located on the east side of Wellborn Road, cutting down on foot traffic and walking distance for on-campus students. Blue lots, commuter student parking, are now located in specific, secluded areas, reducing confusion.

Although these changes have been made primarily in preparation for future construction, PTTS has seized the opportunity to increase efficiency. Unlike last year, those with red parking permits will not have to fight competing blue permit-holders for spots because the lots are now separate and exclusive. In addition, there will no longer be more permits than parking spaces in red parking lots.

PTTS's rearrangement is so effective that blue and red lots have more spaces than last year. Additions to Parking Area (PA) 50, a blue lot near Zachry Engineering Center, created several hundred more blue spaces this year, and resituating red lots has added hundreds of new resident student spaces.

Woody Isenhart, manager of customer service with PTTS, said last year's grand total of available parking spaces was 2,421 red, 5,116 blue and 1,670 shared spaces in combined blue and red lots.

Compared with this year's more reasonable

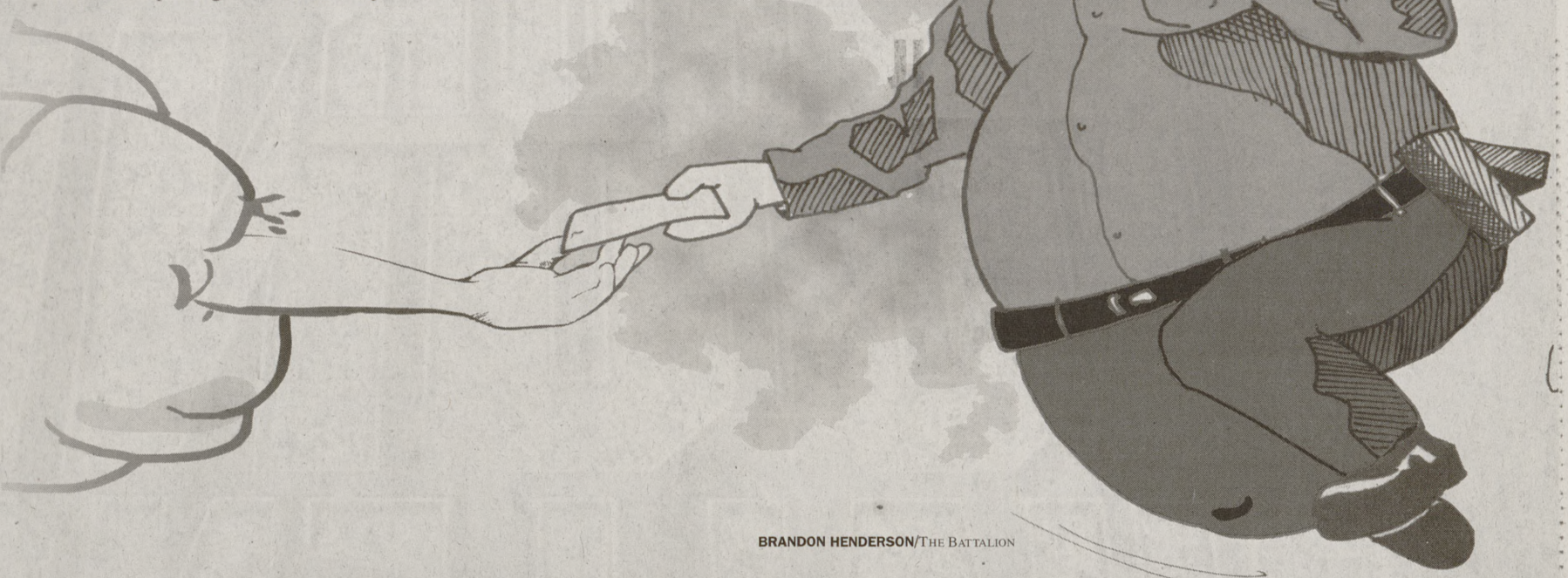
totals of 3,351 red and 6,721 blue spots, there is a noticeably better setup. The improvement is a numerical fact — once parking enforcement begins and the lots are patrolled for illegal vehicles, students will be able to see the value of the changes far more clearly. Although Fish Lot and the lot near Albritton Bell Tower are no longer red lots, the entire area surrounding Kyle Field along with the gravel lots lining Wellborn Road are designated red parking now. The parking lots may be in different spaces, but there is no question that PTTS did well when it reapportioned the spaces.

PTTS is also planning to reduce the number of red permits to equal to or less than the number of red spaces. To date, there are approximately 3,500 red permits purchased; however, last year PTTS sold a total of 4,052 red permits to students for approximately 3,000 spaces.

Provided that parking remains relatively

smooth compared to last year, the biggest concern PTTS faces in the future is maintaining a positive parking situation. Following the construction of the West Campus parking garage, PTTS may make new decisions on the locations of lots. At that point, it can be hoped that it will continue to make thoughtful decisions to increase and improve parking. If there is to be a consistently favorable parking situation on the Texas A&M campus, PTTS must continue to keep parking less confusing and work to make it readily available.

Matt Loftis is a sophomore journalism and French major.



BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

Weighty issue Child obesity can be a form of child abuse

America is seeing a new type of child abuse. Child obesity is becoming a real problem, although some do not consider extreme childhood obesity to be child abuse. When excessive baby fat does not go away as the child ages, then something must be done.



SUNNYE OWENS

Christina Corrigan's mother found her dead in her bed in their Richmond, Calif. home on Nov. 19, 1996. Christina was 13 years old and weighed 680 pounds when she died from congestive heart failure.

Her mother, Marlene Corrigan, is being charged with neglect and felony child abuse.

This death could have been prevented. Extreme child obesity should be categorized as child abuse. In cases like Christina's, the child should be taken away from

the parents. Obviously, Corrigan was abusing her child. When a parent does not know when to say no to a child, something needs to change.

Corrigan should not have had custody of her daughter. If Christina had been removed from her mother's care, maybe her life could have been saved.

Another recent abuse case where childhood obesity was the issue involves Anamarie Martinez, a 120-pound, 3-year-old who was recently removed from her parents' care.

The New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department removed Anamarie from her home last week after her physician said the child's condition was life-threatening.

Her parents received legal papers on Friday, charging the family with not regulating the child's weight.

"I can't believe that is what they are thinking. It is back to blaming us," said Adela Martinez, Anamarie's mother.

Anamarie's parents should be held legal-

ly responsible for her weight. A 3-year-old does not know what foods are unhealthy for her. Her parents provide her with the food she eats. Three-year-old cannot go into the kitchen and make themselves a snack. Their parents must do it for them.

In situations when the child's life is in danger because he or she is extremely overweight, it is obvious the parents do not have the child's best interest at heart.

According to the American Heart Association, obese children are at an increased risk of becoming obese adults. Therefore, successfully preventing obesity in childhood may reduce the risk of adult obesity and help reduce the risk of heart disease.

In today's society, with fast food so readily available, it is mandatory for good health habits to begin early. It is fine to eat a hamburger or pizza occasionally, but when a child is fed nothing but excessively fatty foods, he or she is at a strong risk of becoming an obese adult.

The only way to solve this problem is to

begin teaching healthy eating habits at a young age. This lesson must be taught by parental guidance and example.

Recently, 14-year-old Winnifer Hills, who weighs 450 pounds, was taken from her home and put under medical supervision. She was not removed from her parents' custody, but was taken to the hospital. She suffers from sleep apnea and needs oxygen at night. It is tragic that a person's weight can get so out of control that she needs an oxygen tank to survive.

It is sad to think that parents would ignore a child's weight problem so long that medical intervention is necessary.

In this case, intervention has worked. Since Winnifer was taken from her parents, she has lost 150 pounds and is out of medical danger. Her parents have also learned to cook healthy foods and motivate Winnifer to exercise.

Who knows what might have happened to Winnifer if she had not been placed under medical supervision.

Perhaps if someone had taken Christina Corrigan from her mother's care, she too could have been saved.

Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States. The root of the problem is the parents influencing their children's habits and being unable to say no.

When a child's life is at risk because he or she is overweight, then the child should be taken out of the environment that made him or her that way.

If it means taking children away from the parents in order to save their lives, then that is the step that must be taken.

Children are taken away from their parents when they are malnourished. Especially when it is a matter of life and death, parents should also lose custody when their children are "overnourished."

Sunnys Owens is a junior journalism major.

"Death Row Marv" sparks ethical debate

New action figure mocks capital punishment, insults value of life

For years, there have been toys mimicking real-life tools that allow children to play with things their parents use.

While many of us had pretend cash registers or mini-steering wheels as children, youngsters today have pretend cell phones and mini-laptop computers. This is all very modern and there have been no real problems — until now. The newest toy to hit the market deals with a disturbingly inappropriate subject for children to imitate.

Manufactured by McFarlane Toys, "Death Row Marv" is an action figure that sits strapped to a large wooden chair with a cap on his head that is connected by wires to a voltage switch. Clearly this imitates a man being executed. But it gets worse.

When Death Row Marv is fueled with two small batteries and the lever is pulled, his body shakes all over and his eyes glow red, while he and his chair scoot across the table.

It is not over for poor Marv quite yet. After his shaking stops, he exclaims, "Ha, ha, ha! That's the best you can do, pansies?"

Sixty-five thousand of these toys have already been sold nationwide and are portraying the death penalty as some sort of joke. The death penalty is already one of the

hottest topics in the news, and in the upcoming election. A toy that makes a mockery of the death of another human should not be in the hands of any child.

This toy produces an image that the death penalty or executions are in some way humorous. Whether the death penalty is right or wrong, there is nothing funny about it. Not only is the toy itself completely offensive, but it also seems the producers and marketers of these toys are showing very little compassion.

Death Row Marv hit the stores in Houston on June 22 — the same day convicted killer Gary Graham was executed amid much protest in Huntsville.

Ken Reinstein, spokesman for McFarlane Toys, said the release of Marv on this date was "totally coincidental."

Coincidence is no excuse. That execution was in the news for weeks ahead of time, and there was certainly time to show a little compassion and adjust the toy's debut date.

However, compassion is obviously unfamiliar to McFarlane Toys. It also markets a line of "grotesque spawn figures" that come in boxes highlighting their toys' "dripping entrails" and "removable guts."

Reinstein still claims that his products are harmless.

"From our standpoint, this is just another entertainment product ... there are no political is-

sues behind any of it," he said. "We don't market our stuff to those who don't want to buy it."

Children do not have any concept of marketing. They see toys at their friends' houses or in pictures, and they want one of their own.

Unfortunately, it is not just the children buying the toys that is the problem. T.J. Johnson, president of Third Planet (a comics and toy store) said that Houston police officers were big purchasers.

Johnson explained, "They said they took it to the office, and whenever someone got off on a technicality, they'd light it up."

It is debatable whether the toy itself or the adults thinking it is funny is more disturbing.

While much of this debate simply goes back to the parents' responsibility to closely monitor their children and the toys they choose, parents today have quite a lot to monitor.

Life might be simpler if outrageous toys such as Marv were not even available. Death Row Marv cannot be found at the local toy stores, but he is out there.

At stores such as Third Planet, Marv sits patiently on the shelf, retailing for about \$24.99, waiting for his turn to teach a lesson that no child should learn.

Melissa Bedsole is a junior psychology major.

Bull Board

Good Bull — Very little, if anything, has been said about the decision by Tim and Janice Kerlee to move from Memphis, Tenn., to Bryan-College Station.

Their only son, Tim Kerlee Jr., was killed last year in the Bonfire collapse. Instead of doing what most people would do in such a situation — entirely avoid the place of the tragedy — they have embraced it.

Some people think this is a positive reflection of Texas A&M and the Aggie spirit.

Whether this is true is something only the Kerlees know, but one thing is certain: their continued presence and the love they show for the entire A&M student body makes the Aggie spirit stronger than it was before.

Bad Bull — The National Football League's lords of discipline need a good spanking. Instead of addressing plainly obvious fouls, they have decided to jump on what they wish they saw. The NFL is suspending Mark Carrier of the Washington Redskins for a hit on Carolina's Wesley Walls. Carrier almost hit Walls' helmet with his own. The key word in that last sentence: almost.

In the meantime, Oakland's Regan Upshaw might escape punishment entirely for a cheap shot that landed San Diego quarterback Ryan Leaf in the Napa Valley with seven stitches in his chin.

Carrier has been known for dirty play before — his hit on Green Bay's Antonio Freeman last year broke Freeman's jaw — but the hit on Walls was clean.

Instead of scrutinizing a player's reputation, NFL officials should sit and watch the replay.

— Mark Passwaters

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