

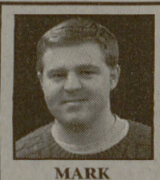
## Hasta la vista, V-day

Contrived holiday is pointless and demoralizing

Valentine's Day ranks right up there with worthless holidays like Groundhog Day, Boxing Day and Presidents Day. Although these holidays serve some purpose, however obscure, Valentine's Day serves no apparent use other than making 99 percent of people involved feel worse about themselves than they already do.



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MARK PASSWATERS

the Tooth Fairy. Unfortunately, these childhood icons do not exist and Valentine's Day does.

Bah, humbug. For single people, this day is "look at how pathetic you are day." They are subjected to their friends' talking about how wonderfully perfect their significant others are. Single people, after a day of this, would rather streak through a village of cannibals.

Instead, they will go and hit the bottle to shake the depression, but at least they can still afford to do so. They will not be selling plasma to afford Godiva chocolates.

In addition, having a significant other, or someone who thinks he or she is one's significant other, is not always all that great either. The phrase "secret admirer" has taken on a new meaning. It is the politically correct term for the word "stalker." This may be the only positive thing about Valentine's Day: Those who are being "admired" get live flowers instead of dead ones — if they are lucky.

Perhaps the most annoying thing about Valentine's Day is the redundancy of the whole thing. If people are in a good relationship, they will show their love often. There should not be one day that overwhelms the other 364.

Instead of Valentine's Day, it would be so much easier to move straight on through to Easter. Rabbits are so much more useful than cupids — at least they can be eaten when they outgrow being cute.

Pay no attention when the Hallmark cards store goes up in smoke.

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KRISTIN MCNEFF/THE BATTALION

## ASHA Condom Day message is a bad idea

Forget shopping for the traditional Valentine's Day gifts like flowers, candy, jewelry and cards, because the only thing that the American Social Health Association (ASHA) is concerned with this holiday is condom distribution.

In Detroit, health department workers plan to hand out condom earrings, lollipops, jewelry, hair accessories and key chains instead of Valentines today. The rest of the nation will have similar incentives as it celebrates National Condom Day.

Texas A&M has decided to jump on the bandwagon as Student Health Services, Health Education and Aggie Representatives Educating About College Health (REACH) hold the annual Sexual Responsibility Week. Activities began Monday, with the mini Health Fair, where anyone was eligible for free HIV testing. Tuesday was "No Means No" day, where a date rape expert panel was available for questions and counseling.

National Condom Day, formerly known as Valentine's Day, began in 1978 at the University of California-Berkeley. This holiday targets college students and hopes to discourage unsafe sex. Today at A&M, condoms and HIV/AIDS information packets will be available in front of the Memorial Student Center.

While romance and love fill the hearts of students at A&M, AIDS Services of Brazos Valley (ASBV) feels it is their obligation to ensure safe sex will be practiced on Valentine's Day. St. Valentine would be saddened to see that a holiday, once sacred in his name, has now become "condom mania."

Whatever happened to exchanging Valentines with friends, families and loved ones on Valentine's Day? This holiday has been turned into another sex-education week. Rather than love, honesty and devotion on Valentine's Day, students are bombarded with thoughts of sex, AIDS, rape and abortion.

Valentine's Day is not a day of sexual desire for everyone. In fact, many people think of Valentine's Day as a day to express feelings to all loves, including friends and family.

Valentine's Day is also a time of romance with a special person. Romance is not an alternative definition of sex. According to the History Channel, in ancient Rome, the month of February was considered a "time for purification" and, in Great Britain, it was common on Valentine's Day for friends and lovers to exchange handwritten tokens of affection in the 18th century.

Regardless, society has succumbed to social pressures and now uses Valentine's Day as a time to preach about the evils of sexual activity.

Instead of promoting safe sex on Valentine's Day, true love and devotion should be promoted. Although many people would disagree, love does not always have to be expressed sexually.

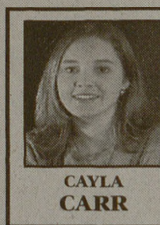
After all, Christians may have decided to celebrate Valentine's Day feasts in the middle of February as a way to "Christianize" pagan celebrations.

Just how is Valentine's Day different from any other day of the year with regard to sex?

The ASHA says an estimated 55 million Americans have STDs, two-thirds of cases occur in people under 25, and one-fourth in teenagers. Obviously this statistic is not a direct result of Valentine's Day. Regardless, the holiday of love has changed into an STD field day. Other days of the year are just as responsible for unsafe sex as Valentine's Day.

By disregarding Valentine's Day and promoting National Condom Day, A&M, along with the rest of society, has become narrow-minded and callous to the real meanings of love and romance. National Condom Day is offensive to anyone who thinks of Valentine's Day as more than sex. It is disheartening to see a day of romance turned into an advertised sexual expose.

Cayla Carr is a junior speech communications major.



CAYLA CARR

## Putting more in the collection plate

Bush's plan to federally fund faith-based programs flawed

Hoping to escape from his father's shadow and validate his victory in a hotly contested election, President George W. Bush has wasted no time in introducing a slate of policies that aim to bring his concept of compassionate conservatism into the federal government.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

Among these are a broad tax cut, a promise to increase military spending and the inclusion of faith-based social welfare programs in the federal funding pool.

The last policy, which was made law by an executive order, has been hailed by fellow Republicans as a way to maximize federal welfare dollars. By using the funds to supplement existing programs, they argue, federal funds can be used to improve welfare services as opposed to just setting up the necessary infrastructure. Others have lambasted the program as a clear mixture of church and state.

Although the plan does have potential constitutional pitfalls, it looks great on paper. Unfortunately, it requires both government officials and faith-based program administrators to monitor the path of the most slippery of substances — money. Federal funding of faith-based programs is an idea doomed to fail.

Admittedly, the term "faith-based programs" is an ill-fitting description for many of the programs targeted by Bush's new plan. Although they are administered by churches, many are little more than inner-city soup kitchens and homeless shelters where needy citizens get what

they need before shuffling out. Volunteers at these centers barely have enough time to make sure everyone gets fed and sheltered, much less spend any energy converting the masses.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that religious beliefs are very much at the center of most faith-based programs. The innate desire of churches to help out their fellow man not only results in social assistance programs like shelters and kitchens, but personal assistance programs as well — religious education. If church members did not believe they were on the right path to success, they would not belong to that particular church. The inclusion of religious teachings in welfare programs is only a natural extension of their desire to help the needy as much as they can.

Even churches that use the federal money to directly fund their relief efforts are receiving a government subsidy. There is no guarantee that the federal dollars will be used to supplement current spending; in many cases the new cash will free up church funds for other uses. In effect, the federal government would be providing the equivalent of a tax credit to churches — a group that already does not pay taxes.

There is nothing wrong with individuals or congregations including a little religion with welfare, but the government should not be in the business of funding the conversion of the needy.

Many argue that a number of federally funded secular organizations provide the same services, and poor citizens are free to choose any program they wish. This might be true in large cities, but, in many rural areas of the nation, such options do not exist. For these people, the

ability to vaccinate their children may come down to their willingness to attend church or Bible study on a weekly basis.

For places where nonreligious relief organizations do exist, services may decline. Unless the Bush administration increases its social welfare budget, something which is not currently in the cards, the existing funding level will be divided among an increased number of organizations. Giving funds to church relief efforts means giving less to secular neighborhood groups.

Unfortunately, less financial help from the federal government may become a factor for all social relief providers. Although Bush's plan is more compassionate than Newt Gingrich's idea to reopen orphanages and poor houses, the prevailing theme is conservatism — fiscal conservatism.

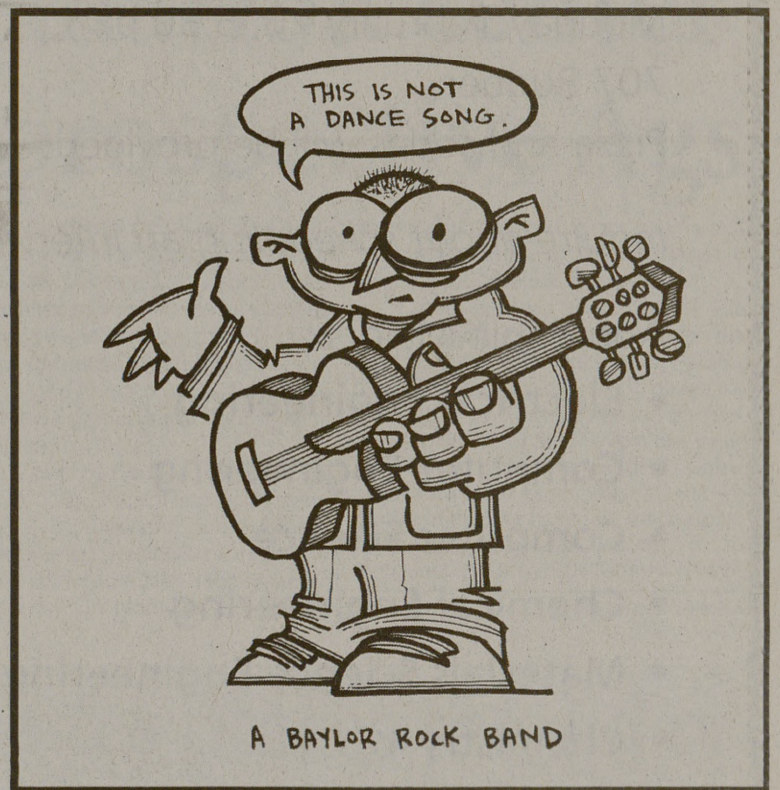
In essence, Bush is passing the buck to private relief organizations. In the new era of Republican government, the federal government will not even bother attempting to administer social welfare programs.

Providing federal funds to religious organizations gives the Bush administration the look of being proactive on social welfare when in reality it is throwing in the towel.

On paper, the plan looks good. In practice, the policy is plagued with a number of problems that only begin with the question of constitutionality. The question is not whether the policy will ultimately fail, but how long it will manage to survive before finally succumbing to one of its many weaknesses.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

### CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST

### Free speech not license to offend

Abortion is murder! Let the woman make the choice! We are all familiar with these catch phrases from some of the fiercest campaigns in America. I am not going to mention my side on the issue, only respond to the techniques of the representatives of one side of the issue. Monday, everyone who walked by the Memorial Student Center saw a huge display of obscenity. The message that was presented was to not abort pregnancies.

This message was presented in the absolute worst way possible. The 30-foot-tall ads carrying massive pictures of aborted fetuses were enough to make anyone sick to their stomach.

In this country, we have the right to free speech, guaranteed to us by the First Amendment of our Constitution. This right does have limits. For example, you cannot randomly yell "fire" in a crowded theater.

Are we allowed to present billboards with pictures of pornography or similar obscene things? Of course not. So why are we allowed to display grotesque photos

of mangled babies on billboard size stands?

On the other hand, we have the right to refuse to listen to anything that is being said. However, this right is taken away when 10-foot-tall photos of the most lewd and disgusting things are stuffed in our faces. We were not given an option.

The nice thing to do would have been to approach people individually with the message and give them the right to refuse to listen or see the message.

Granted, it may not be moral to some to abort a pregnancy at any phase; however, this message

can be told in a mature and moral manner.

More importantly, members of a free and democratic society must be mature enough to understand that for each right society guarantees them, society demands responsibility from them in return.

The absolute rights of an individual to free speech, regardless of content or purpose, should never be a factor that refuses society the right to moral stability.

Joey Dobbs Class of '02

### Mail Call

### Battalion photo went too far

Being American, we all have our own opinions on such issues as abortion, but when I pick up a paper first thing in the morning while trying to eat my breakfast, the last thing I want to see is a disgusting picture like the one on the front page of *The Battalion* this morning. It is bad enough to walk by the Memorial Student Center (MSC) this week, but then we look everywhere else on campus and that picture haunts us. We have the choice to avoid the

MSC, but when we look down on the sidewalk all over campus, there is a stack of newspapers with that picture on it.

Have a little respect for our choice to view or not to view this type of disgusting material.

I have my own opinions on abortion and I am not trying to avoid it. I am just trying to keep from getting sick while eating my breakfast.

*The Battalion* this time stepped over the line, and it is sad to say that I am ashamed of y'all.

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