

EDITORIAL UNWARRANTED CENSORSHIP

The Texas A&M Student Government Association Election Commission has demanded that Shannon Dubberly, candidate for Class of 2004 vice president, remove "inappropriate" campaign material. Dubberly's fliers, which include the words "damn," "pimpin'" and "Who's your daddy" may very well be childish for a student body campaign, but it is up to voters to decide individually if Dubberly's fliers are in poor taste. No candidate should be subject to prior restraint. University elections should be a model for free political speech.

Election Commissioner Caytie Sarandis' defense of the current guidelines, which have been approved by the student senate and give the election commission complete discretion to decide if campaign materials are appropriate, is a direct violation of a candidate's First Amendment rights.

There is no justification for such discretionary suppression of political speech. The election commission is setting a negative example in its attempt to limit candidates' campaign material by what it deems inappropriate and request removal or disqualification if guidelines are not followed.

Sarandis' action is blatant disregard for free speech guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Dubberly is right to refuse such supervision.

As adults, student candidates should be expected to uphold common ethics in their quest for office, just as the student body should be capable of deciding what candidates they support without prior restraint by the election commission.

Perhaps in the future, the election commission will allow individual student candidates to exercise their own judgment when deciding what merits quality campaign material for their personal campaign. It will then only be the candidate's problem if he is not chosen by the student body. Political candidates are expected to make their own beds; the election commission should let candidates lie in them.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Big Event is a waste of time

This weekend I will not be like others who are going to participate in what is supposed to be a great day of community service. For the past 10 years my friends and I have signed up to do Big Event with the hope of making a difference and helping others. Both years have been disappointed. My idea of helping out is not scrubbing mold off someone's sofa furniture so they can host a dinner party. It's not clipping bushes and laying mulch in a nice neighborhood for a young couple with kids who could do yardwork. It's not moving a grand piano because the interior decorator thinks it would look better. This is ridiculous. I thought Big Event was meant to make a difference. I guess it has lost its meaning.

Rachael Hines
Class of 2003

Worse things can happen for A&M

Response to Emily Peters' March 20 article:

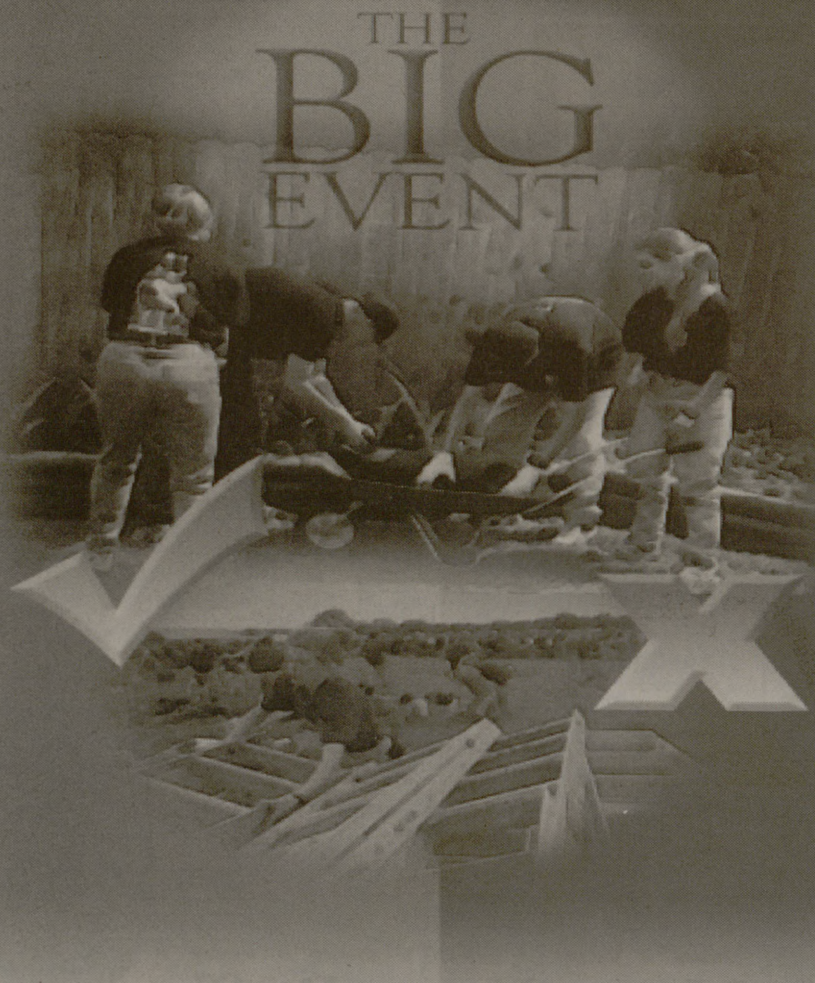
I did not think it could be possible for A&M to pick a new president that could be disliked more than our current one, Dr. Ray Bowen.

It is unfortunate that Bowen is not well-liked, but his credentials are hard to beat after the Bonfire decision and the 'Harvard on the Brazos' 20/20 plan. After reading yesterday's article on Jon Whitmore, a t-sip from the dean of fine arts program, it looks like Bowen may have to try even harder to be the most disliked president in school history.

If Whitmore wins, he would do his best to get us to become a liberal school like up in Austin. Whitmore is known for raising diversity, and I believe all the A&M big-wigs are paranoid about getting more diversity on our campus; but this is not the way to go about it. Let's try to stay a conservative school and hope Whitmore is not the new Aggie President.

Lamar Mueller
Class of 2005

Big Event or big deal?



ANGELIQUE FORD • THE BATTALION

Activities benefit both students and community



MELISSA BEDSOLE

It is the time of year when students should put aside school work and give up one Saturday morning to not only be part of this school, but part of this community. While it is widely known that Big Event is a chance for students to give back to the Bryan-College Station community, this event also gives back to the students. Since 1999, there has not been a Bonfire to unite residence halls, student organizations and students not involved in anything on campus, but Big Event provides that opportunity.

The entire community is offered help and those requesting jobs range from people who are needy, either physically or financially, to people who look forward to Big Event as a chance to be involved with A&M activities. Some community residents take time to cook for volunteers who come to their homes and help with the work.

The idea that jobs taken care of by Big Event are small or meaningless is simply not true. There are some jobs that may be smaller, such as helping elderly residents clean up their houses or yards, but those are the requests people have made and that is what they need done.

Turning jobs away by deciding they are not worthy of students' time would be unfair and unkind. There are also larger jobs taken on by student groups. One of the larger tasks for this year's event will be for some groups to assist the Keep Brazos Beautiful organization planting trees along Harvey Mitchell Parkway. Others will be assigned to help with a carnival for Harvey Mitchell Elementary School.

For many people requesting students' help, Big Event is not simply about getting a job done. This is an opportunity for community residents to interact with students in their homes. For some local residents, especially those who are elderly or live alone,

this is one of the few chances they have to talk with students and exchange stories about each other's experiences with the University.

Big Event is not just something that Aggies do; it has become one of the things that distinguishes Texas A&M from so many other schools. Since A&M started Big Event in 1982, 24 schools across the nation have followed with similar programs. Representatives from Pittsburgh and Virginia

While it is widely known that Big Event is a chance to give back to the Bryan-College Station community, this event also gives back to the students.

Tech will be visiting College Station this weekend to look at A&M's Big Event success.

Finally, for many people, Big Event is not just a one-day event. It provides an incredible opportunity for leadership, hard work and success for the many students who make up the Big Event committee. Each year the committee must raise approximately \$45,000 to cover expenses of the event, and it is this hard work that makes the day possible for others. Also, this year the organization successfully established the Big Event Endowment Fund to secure long-term financial stability for the organization.

Big Event is a rewarding experience for everyone and Aggies should be thankful the opportunity exists on campus. Students on the Big Event committee, as well as students who volunteer for the day, are being rewarded by seeing how a small amount of their time can impact someone else's life. The community is not only being given "One Big Thanks," they are being rewarded with the kindness and helpfulness of the Aggie Spirit.

Melissa Bedsole is a senior psychology major.

Participants are not helping those in true need



RICHARD BRAY

At first glance, Big Event sounds like a great idea. There were more than 5,300 students involved in Big Event last year, according to the Big Event Website. More than 525 jobs were completed, and thousands of Bryan-College Station residents were helped.

Unfortunately, Big Event ignores local citizens who need help the most while giving back to a community that would be just another Texas cow town without Texas A&M.

Since 1982, Aggies have thanked the Bryan-College Station community with Big Event, in which students mow lawns, paint, make repairs and generally clean up the local area.

Most of these are middle class homes owned by people who owe their economic livelihood to the money students bring to this community. Without the economic stimulus A&M provides, Bryan-College Station would basically be Hearne.

Since A&M students have chosen to help their neighbors and ignore the fact that they do not owe Bryan-College Station anything, they should at least spend their resources helping the members of the local community who truly need help.

Giving back to the community should be an important part of being an Aggie, but with limited resources, decisions must be made regarding how best to apply them. With that in mind, Big Event requires too much time and energy on the part of its organizers for it to limit its self to visiting schools and planting trees.

Big Event should not be canceled entirely, but organizers should adapt their efforts so students who volunteer will actually be accomplishing something meaningful with the valuable time they set aside to participate. In assisting those who need the help Big Event could provide, Big Event would

better serve the Bryan-College Station community by helping to alleviate real problems. Not only do the students who participate deserve a Big Event with larger goals, but the Bryan-College Station community deserves better.

The fact that Big Event is just a big joke would not be nearly so bad if students did not take a disproportionate amount of pride in their involvement. Placing one's participation in Big Event on a

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resume does not impress anyone. It is one day out of the year in which a student mows a lawn or does some painting. There are plenty of 12-year-olds with the same capabilities who do not expect to be given a career for one afternoon of manual labor.

If students really want to impress employers with their philanthropic triumphs, they would participate in organizations that have more lasting and meaningful impacts on the community.

Groups such as HOSTS (Help One Student to Succeed), Meals on Wheels, the Boys and Girls Club, Adopt a Grandparent and Twin City Mission have been helping for a long time and more than just one day out of the year.

Work done to aid these groups is what the organizers of Big Event should be aiming for — a meaningful project that causes real change in the community. Now that would be something worthy of being on a resume.

Richard Bray is a junior journalism major.