

EDITORIAL

STUDENTS FOR MAYOR

Four candidates are vying this spring to be the mayor of College Station. Usually, this would not be abnormal or particularly noteworthy. What should be noteworthy, however, is that this year, two of the candidates are college students. A largely ceremonial post with some oversight authority, the mayor of College Station is not a full-time position. Some have suggested that the two students are not serious contenders, and should not be considered as such by voters. To the contrary, student participation in local government issues should be encouraged in every way possible.

Texas A&M and Blinn students are an integral part of the Brazos Valley community, and it is only right that students speak their mind on issues that concern them. Many of the problems and solutions the College Station City Council debate directly concern Aggies. For student input to be seriously considered, students must get involved. Sadly, electoral turnout is chronically low among local voters. For college students, the percentage of eligible voters who actually vote is even worse.

With greater student involvement, both at the ballot box and through elected officials, the issues this group cares about will appear at the forefront of the local government agenda. From construction and parking to taxes and the businesses allowed to operate, student views would be much more dominant. In a town overrun with them, this is a positive. This is what the two mayoral candidates are attempting to accomplish, and they merit serious consideration.

More than 50,000 young adults reside in the Bryan-College Station area. That is a lot of untapped electoral power. Of course, not all students agree on every issue, but student input has been lacking in the decision-making process of local government for many years.

At the very least, Aggies should pay attention to the local services provided and how their tax dollars are being spent. It is, after all, our town too.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

What does it mean to be homosexual?

Half the things in Gay Awareness Week seem pointless. Isn't being gay just a sexual preference? Being gay does not give you any magical powers, diseases or an innate fashion sense. For one thing, the week is not about letting Aggies know there are gay people on campus, as Mr. Anderson said. I think that is a given, seeing as how we have a GLBTA and Aggie ALLIES. It is about getting the moderate people on this campus, the ones who are open minded and are not homophobic, to see that homosexuals are treated differently and have been for a long time. If they can get those people to understand, then I would say they would have a majority of people on their side, and hopefully they could prevent some bad things from happening to people. I know that gays are human beings and deserve the respect God intended for everyone. The Day of Silence is better described as day in respect of all those who have never had a voice, rather than a silent protest. Give up your voice for people who had their voice silenced, sounds like a good idea. That some people take this week negatively should matter to us all.

Charles DeWitt
Class of 2005

Tradition Council not representative

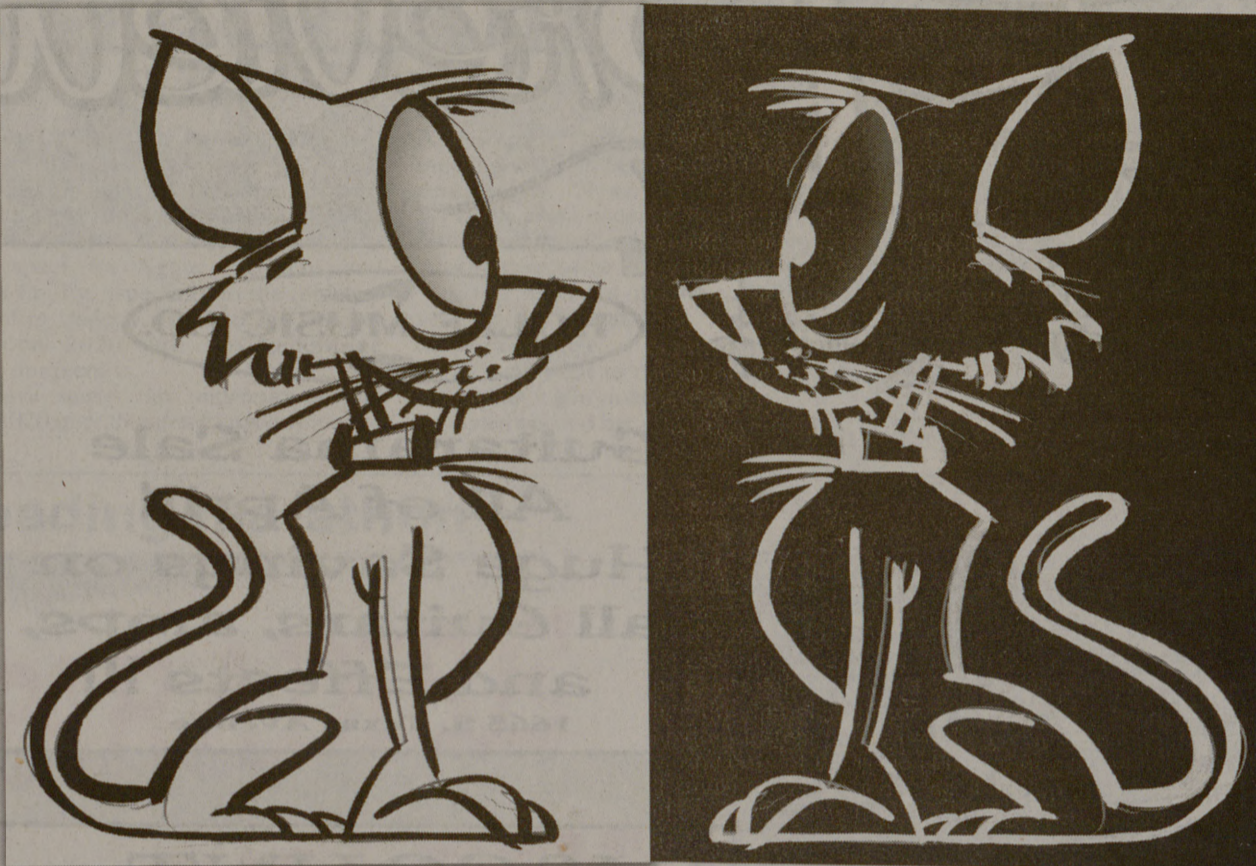
In response to John McFate's April 2 mail call:

I take offense to McFate demonizing ring dunking. As if the Tradition Council not declaring it an "official" tradition somehow makes it bad bull or counter to the Aggie spirit. The several references of "all Aggies" cater to the presumed conformist nature of the student body, but do not hold true for student participation in any tradition. It is almost like oppressively organized religion vs. free expression of faith.

Ring dunking can be a memorable occasion shared with those you've grown close to at A&M before everyone graduates and parts ways. But McFate would defame it, as if only the administration can choose our decent traditions. Should we 'beat the heck outta non-PC thought? Maybe they won't be satisfied until everyone walks in 5-person rows with T-shirts that spell "howdy", or embrace every new tradition that the administration chooses for PR. Whatever the case, the Tradition Council can officially recognize my red-ass.

Chris Ordonez
Class of 2000

MULTIPLE MATTERS



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Cloning is needed for science, not domesticated pets



COURTNEY WALSH

Four to six million dogs and cats are euthanized each year in animal shelters across the United States because of overcrowding and lack of adoption. Six to seven million more will die from starvation, disease, exposure and abuse as a result of abandonment and neglect. According to the Humane Society of the United States, companion animal overpopulation is at an all-time high with an average of 5,500 dogs and cats born every hour of every day, a birth rate seven times that of human beings.

Given these numbers and the unwanted animals dying simply to make more room for future unwanted animals, the idea of anyone paying money to clone a pet seems rather incredulous. Unfortunately, cloning is an available reality and somewhat popular.

Texas A&M is well known for its active participation in the competitive scientific world of genetics and cloning with Second Chance, the successful bull calf clone of Chance the prize bull, the Missyplicity Project, the Noah's Ark Project and the recent cloning of a cat.

While these projects possess scientific merit and contribute much to the ever-expanding sciences of genetics and cloning, these are scientific research projects with specific objectives that never were intended to become pet

store products. For example, the Noah's Ark Project was developed for research and collect of endangered species' eggs, semen and embryos for future cloning if a species becomes extinct.

The use of the reproductive technology from this project for the cloning of someone's favorite dog is little more than technology abuse and the exploitation and victimization of peoples emotions.

Yet, for a hefty fee averaging between \$200 and \$400, plus maintenance fees and actual cloning and creation fees, Aggies can pay for their pet's DNA to be excised, frozen and stored at Genetics Savings and Clone Inc., a for-profit corporation in College Station.

What the public does not realize is that each animal's reproductive system is different from another and variation within the species exists; what works for a dog and vice versa. Besides, cloning is too delicate and experimental to become consistent anytime soon. Even if a successful clone is created, the person is not getting the same pet. Personality is not encoded in any genetic sequence.

As a result, money is being spent for little more than DNA storage and experimentation. And, when millions of tax dollars are spent each year to subsidize animal control, county shelters and city pounds, not to mention the cost of euthanization and disposal of animals, something seems amiss. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) of Texas shelters handle an

average of 1,200 animals each month, so the odds of finding the right pet are favorable. And pet adoption is inexpensive in comparison to the cost of cloning. It costs \$129 to adopt a dog and \$75 to adopt a cat including their vaccinations, deworming, spaying/neutering and identification tags. A clone comes with none of this.

Granted, some animals end up at the shelter because of behavioral or other problems, but who is to say that a clone will not have similar problems.

Someone who has invested heavily in cloning a pet is not going to turn it in to the local shelter if it eats shoes; such a system is rather ridiculous.

When a beloved pet dies, it is only natural to feel pain and grief, accompanied by a desire to have that pet live forever. The public's misconception of cloning has fed into this desire, and people are willing to invest large sums of money in the hope that their pet will be re-created. People need to move on after they lose a pet and put their money to better use by adopting a new animal or donating money to their local animal shelter and animal welfare charities rather than encourage an unrealistic application of a scientific technology simply. At least if an animal is adopted from a shelter, a life has been saved.

Courtney Walsh is a senior biomedical science and English major.

Drug testing violates privacy

An Oklahoma case, *Board of Education of Tecumseh Public School District, Pottawatomie County v. Earls*, concerning the privacy of students has made its way to the Supreme Court. The dispute is whether schools can enforce random drug tests on students in extracurricular activities even when lacking probable cause. The Court should rule in favor of student liberty, but, given its history on this issue, it may only compound its previous blunders.

In a 1995 case, *Veronia v. Acton*, the Supreme Court upheld a school drug testing policy for athletes. However, in a recent Texas case, *Tannahill v. Lockney*, a federal court ruled against a mandatory drug-testing policy that targeted every student on the grounds that such "suspicionless drug-testing" violated Fourth Amendment protections. As Graham Boyd of the American Civil Liberties Union said, "The court's ruling sends an important message to school districts across the nation: that they cannot treat students like suspects."

The current case addresses an Oklahoma school district that required drug tests of students engaged in extracurricular activities. Prior to the implementation of this policy, there existed neither a history of widespread drug use in the school nor any suspicions of drug use in these organizations. The district simply asserted that students engaged in such activities represent the school and are open to increased scrutiny. Most alarming is that actively involved students are targeted, a demographic that is the least likely to use drugs as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor contended in the Court hearings.

In *Veronia v. Acton*, the Court reasoned that students had a lower expectation of privacy than adults, athletes in particular, and curbing drug use was worth the infringement on student



DHARMARAJ INDURTHY

liberty. It also said that schools did not necessarily need probable cause to prompt searches. However, in upholding this rule, the Court implicitly validated testing in all schools regardless of their drug problem history, as is the case in Oklahoma where the drug-testing policy is more preemptive than preventive.

The crux of the issue is in gauging the relative importance of student liberty and the need to stop drug use. Given that other measures such as drug-sniffing dogs, locker searches and drug education can combat drug problems, student liberty should come first. The majority of students are innocent. There is no evidence to suppose that drug-users gravitate to the locker room or the band hall. Moreover, parents should have prerogatives in allowing drug testing on their children.

It is unclear why students have fewer rights to privacy than adults. If they can be randomly drug tested, can they be randomly strip-searched? There is no obvious line, only degrees of invasiveness. It is also unclear why public schools as government institutions are granted lower burdens of proof for their policies. In navigating these policy questions, one cannot deny that there is ambiguity in weighing student rights and pragmatic concerns. When in doubt, policy should err toward student liberty.

Whenever basic rights are removed, there should be a compelling basis, but despite clear Fourth Amendment infringement, that is not the case here. Even if one concedes that some schools have pervasive drug use that merits the infringement of basic rights, certainly this cannot be said of every school.

Drug use is a problem in America. However, the way to combat it is not by compromising constitutional rights. Drug testing, if employed at all, must only be a last resort. The life of an adolescent American is not easy. The majority of students work hard, and those who actively involve themselves in school activities should be rewarded. If there are no grounds for suspicion, students should be presumed innocent and gov-

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