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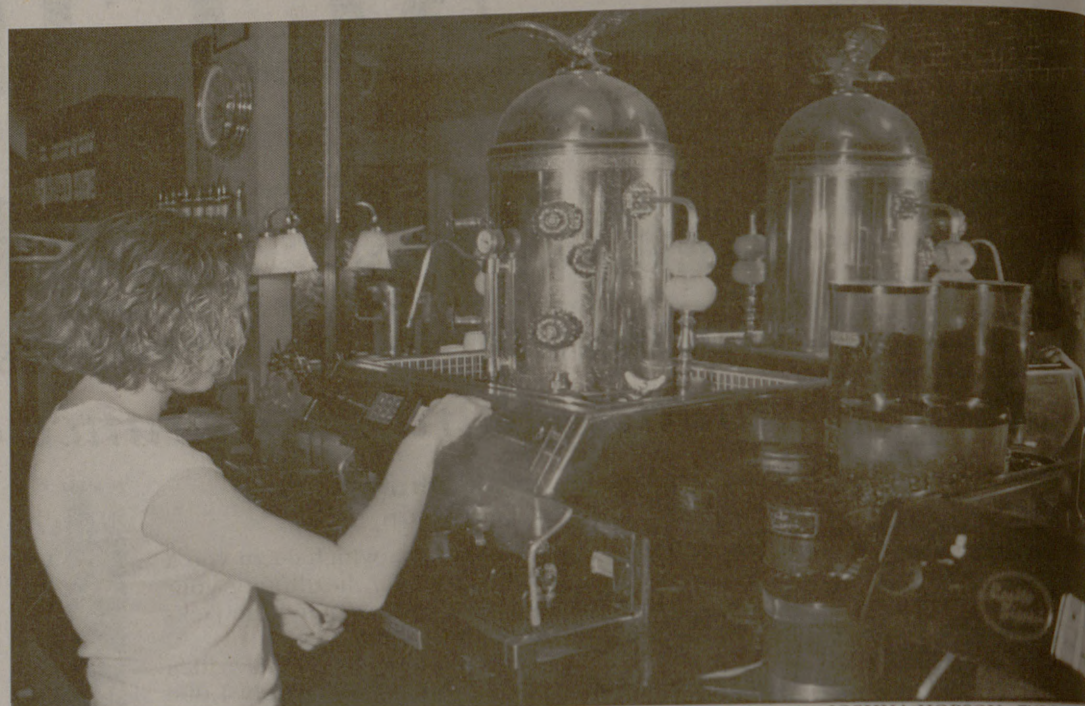
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Sweet Eugene's employee Lesley O'Neal busy at work making a coffee beverage.

Cream or sugar?

Students frequent coffee shops as a place to study and socialize

By Lyndsey Sage
 THE BATTALION

In a Texas town known for agriculture and country music, coffee shops seem an unlikely establishment for success. While they may not be found on every corner like in New York and Seattle, coffee shops have gained a fair representation in the Brazos Valley in recent years.

Jave Cronauer, a senior wildlife fisheries and biology major and senior manager of Sweet Eugene's House of Java, attributes much of the success of local coffee shops to the recent availability of them throughout the community.

"It's an option now. Before it wasn't an option, so people are going," Cronauer said of the growing number of coffee shops in the area.

Becky Smith, a junior speech communications major and employee at Sweet Eugene's, says the "unique, one of a kind atmosphere" is what draws a lot of customers to the coffee shop.

Cronauer describes the atmosphere as a "place to get away but still have distractions."

From the introduction of the first coffee shop in 1475 in Constantinople, to the opening of Starbucks in the early 1970s, coffee shops have offered a place for individuals to gather not just to enjoy a cup of coffee and maybe a pastry, but enjoy entertainment, conversation and intellectual stimulation.

According to Smith, many customers that come in do not even like coffee. However, coffee shops have come to serve as more than just a place to get a caffeine jolt.

"People come here to study, hang out, and listen to bands," Smith said.

"They also have business meetings here and couples come on first dates," Cronauer said. "It's good to come to if you have 30 minutes to kill. It's cheap."

Customers range from avid coffee addicts to those who prefer tea and soft drinks. Along with these drinks, coffee shops have expanded business by adding sandwiches, pastries, donuts, and desserts to the menu. In addition, local coffee shops have taken advantage of the college crowd by offering wireless internet access and, on weekends, local bands.

Shane Walker, a senior anthropology major and employee at Coffee Station, said most of their customers are those "on the margins of the typical person from College Station."

"We get a lot of professors, international students, graduate students and pseudo-intellectuals," Walker said. "The people that don't fit in Northgate come here."

Walker classifies the customers into two categories: people there to study, which increases tremendously around finals time, and intellectuals who "come here and talk about what happens after we die."

"These two factors enable us to stay in business," Walker said. "In the summer, we are pretty much dead during the day until the nights when people come in to study or hang out."

Even though Jenny Reif, a junior finance major, does not drink coffee, she frequents coffee shops about two or three times a week.

"I go for three reasons: to study, to see friends, and Italian sodas," Reif said. "It's quiet as the library so it keeps you awake, less distracting than your dorm room or apartment where you have your computer and television. It's just a better atmosphere to study in."

In her opinion, Reif says television has played a role in promoting and attributing to the success of local coffee shops. According to Reif, the way in which they are portrayed on television makes people feel intelligent when they are there.

Eddie Garcia, a junior accounting major, finds that coffee shops play a dual role by providing the perfect balance for a place to study as well as a place to meet with friends.

"It's a good place to study if you don't want a place too quiet, but it's not so chaotic that you can't concentrate," Garcia said.

In addition, coffee shops provide Garcia and his friends with a laid back, relaxing environment to take time and talk.

Dubbed as "penny universities" in 17th century England because the price of coffee was a penny, coffee houses functioned as forums for the learned and unlearned to assemble and discuss the happenings of the day. Not much has changed from these days as students continue to do the same thing.

According to www.expressobusiness.com, coffee shops in college towns have the best business, some grossing over a million dollars a year.

"With college towns, there are so many different people," Garcia said. "Everyone has different ways they like to study or spend their time, so"

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Cell phones are becoming the ticket to a sold out concert

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP) — When Colombian singer Shakira takes the amphitheater stage in this teen-pop concert, girls in the crowd wave their hands in the air and squeal. Then they whip out their cell phones and call a friend.

Mobile phones have quickly become a popular concert accessory. Fans call friends to brag about the show and hold up their phones so others can hear a favorite song.

At a recent concert at the Tweeter Center in Camden, the crowd was dotted with tiny cell phones, Nokias and Motorolas in pink, silver and blue.

"She couldn't come, and this is our song," yells Casey Connelly, 18, of Ridley Park, Pa., over the thunderous sounds of Shakira's "Underneath Your Clothes." Connelly sways back and forth with the crowd, her phone above her head in one hand.

Sue Aiello, 19, is sitting on the grass with three friends, all wearing tank tops and chatting on cell phones. She plans to call friends when Ja Rule comes on later. "They're working and I'm not," she explains.

Of course, not everybody at the concert is calling to share the music or show off.

"I called in between songs to check on my son," said Jennifer Ritchie, 21, of Leesburg, N.J.

And many parents insist their teens take a phone to a concert for safety's sake, or to let parents know where and when to pick them up.

Concert promoter Butch Stone of Little Rock, Ark., says he's never heard artists complain about cell-phone use during performances or raise ques-

tions about whether people the other end of the phone might be recording the show.

"In terms of piracy, I don't think the technology is there yet," he said.

"Our policy is this: Until the artist objects, we don't restrict cell phones or cameras. I can't recall the artist ever having a problem."

The concert calls are part of cell phones' overall popularity with young people, said Verizon Wireless spokeswoman Brenda Raney.

"People from 18 to 24 are coming of age in a technological era. Because so many of them have them now, they're getting more creative in how they use them," she said.

She also said "people use text messaging everywhere from 'Meet me at the concert' to 'Where are you?'"

MSC