

On the homefront

Resident Advisers must juggle dorm life with studies and quirks of the job

By Michael Whitlow
THE BATTALION

Andrea Kitten's motivation for becoming a Resident Adviser (RA) was simple. "I had to get a job, and I love living on campus," said Kitten, a sophomore English major. "My freshman year I saw how much fun my RAs were and how many people they met. I decided I wanted to try it. I wanted to stay in Krueger Hall because of the high number of freshmen I could help."

For many campus residents, RAs are the best sources for fixing problems in the dorm or keeping the hall safe. Meg Boan, a junior finance major, said she was recruited for the job. "I came to A&M from Reno, Nev.," Boan said. "I knew no one here, and my RA made sure to look after me. She invited me to her room one night for dinner, and helped me get involved with my Hall Council. After that year they encouraged me to be an RA."

Now Boan is an RA for Underwood Hall and is the chair for Staff Council.

Most RAs agree that living in the dorms and meeting new people is well worth the paycheck. Yet despite the obvious perks of the job, Carrie Edstrom, a senior political science major and a RA for Krueger, said it still has drawbacks.

"There are times I've been on duty the night before a test," Edstrom said. "Sometimes I won't get the chance to study because so many people will need something. Our supervisors tell us to put school first, but that's not always possible with some of the requests you get. I've learned that I shouldn't procrastinate, but knowing I shouldn't doesn't mean that I don't."

Kitten agreed that job responsibilities often interfere with schoolwork.

"It is hard to study sometimes," she said. "I'll come home from class and be like 'I've got to study.' But it seems like as soon as I crack a book open there's a knock on my door and somebody needs something fixed. Most of the time I have to wait until everyone else goes to bed, but I've always been a night owl so that doesn't bother me."

In addition to juggling work with studying, RAs are faced with other difficulties in the line of duty.

"Paperwork," Kitten said. "There are piles of it. Whether they need a faucet fixed or a key replaced, I've got to fill out a form, file a separate report and fill out all these other different papers. It's crazy."

Boan said residents tend to take out their frustrations with the rules on their RAs when the rules are there for residents' safety.

"I hate having to feel like the police," Boan said. "When I see my residents outside the hall, I'm introduced as their RA, not their friend. I've had residents cuss at me or write nasty things on my board when they get caught breaking rules, but I've seen girls that got beat up by boyfriends that were let in without escorts. If I have to upset 50 girls to protect one, then I'll do it."

It is this ability to make a difference that makes most RAs say the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

"I love knowing everyone," Kitten said. "Just taking care of my hall, there's 60 people. My door is always open and my residents are always just dropping in to say 'hi.' Plus if there's some current issue that I care about, I can get involved in that issue by hosting a program about it."

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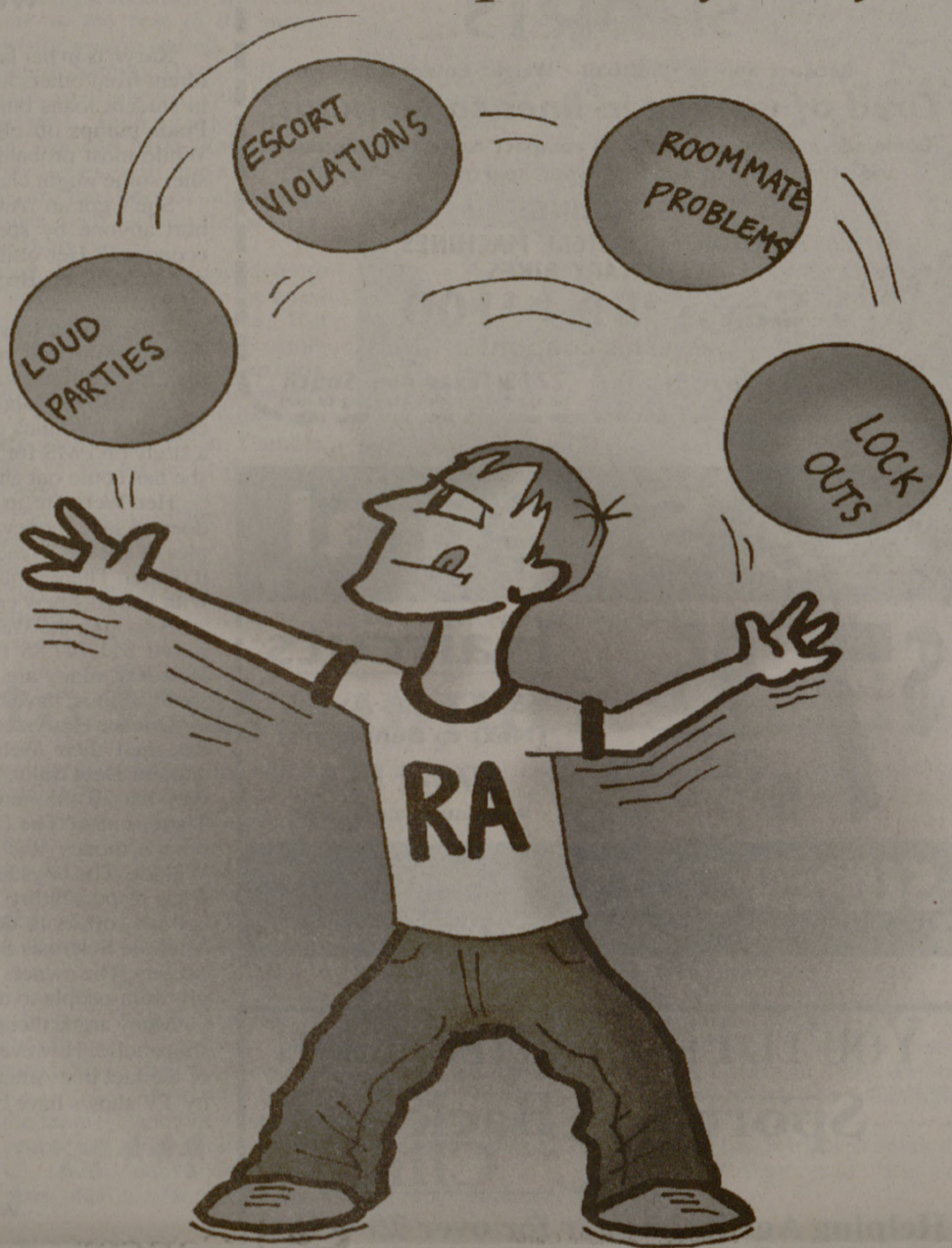
— Andrea Kitten
Resident Adviser for Krueger Hall and a sophomore English major

Between meeting new friends and the occasional odd occurrence, a RA's life is seldom dull.

"One morning, it was about 10 a.m. I was in the shower when the fire alarm went off," Boan said. "I jumped out of the shower, threw on a bathrobe, and hurried outside. So here I am having to deal with UPD and University Maintenance soaking wet and wearing practically nothing."

Edstrom agrees that unexpected events are becoming the norm.

"One time I went to check out the fourth floor lounge," Edstrom said. "Almost all of the girls on that floor were crowded together and staring out the window. Apparently across the courtyard one of the girls had left her blinds open. She had her boyfriend with her and they were having a very good time together. We told our supervisor we had a sex education program and that it had the highest attendance of any program we held that semester."



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