

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Welcome to the jungle

Animal-loving students share experiences of life with pets

By Kim Katopodis
THE BATTALION

It's hard to believe Chester A. Nimitz is still alive.

Chester lives on the Quadrangle with his roommates, Tony and Russell, and endures various uncomfortable situations on a daily basis.

In the last month alone, Chester has been stuffed to the gills with food and has turned green. Chester A. Nimitz isn't your ordinary student. In fact, while his roommates are in class, Chester is content swimming laps in his aquarium.

Chester A. Nimitz is just one of the many pets owned by Texas A&M students. His owner, Russell Hurst, purchased him at Wal-Mart about a month ago.

Hurst, a junior history major, said he wanted a pet but dorm rules specify that fish are the only pets allowed. Hurst said he is happy with the fish, but his friends in the dorm often overfeed Chester. Once, he returned to find that Chester's whole tank had turned green.

"It turns out someone had decided it would be a good idea to see what would happen if a Skittle was dropped in the water," he said. "Of course it turned really nasty but surprisingly didn't kill anything. We recovered from the fiasco well."

While fish are the only option for those who live on campus, many off-campus students prefer dogs and cats.

Steve Troy, a sophomore finance major, surprised his roommates by showing up with his new dog, Chevy, on move-in day. Troy

describes Chevy as "a dog with a lot of puppy in him."

"One of the things I love the best about him is that he knows when you are about to leave to go somewhere," he said. "So he tries to take your shoes out of your hand when you are putting them on."

While students love their pets, the animals often do things that annoy and frustrate their owners. Troy said that Chevy likes to bark at trains as they go by, but only when they go by at four or five in the morning.

Some students prefer a more exotic pet than the usual dog or cat.

Ryan Mikus, a junior accounting major, owns a California King snake named Mr. T. Almost every aspect of pet ownership changes when the pet is exotic, Mikus said.

Feeding the snake is more irregular, but if Mikus forgets, Mr. T tends to snap at him when he takes him out of his terrarium.

Mr. T doesn't just eat store-bought bagged food, however. Every week or two, Mikus goes in search of a live mouse to feed Mr. T and then watches as natural selection takes its course in his living room.

Snakes are not always popular with everyone, however. Mikus said he sometimes has problems keeping people from harassing Mr. T.

"My roommate, Kevin, enjoys holding the snake while informing him 'If you bite me, I will rip your head off,'" he said. "Also, after a few drinks, my girlfriend likes to slyly open his cage in hopes that the snake will be stepped on and killed. Mr. T doesn't seem to mind this abuse; he is an emotionally strong snake."

Many students adopt their pets from local

animal shelters, because pets there aren't as expensive as buying them from a breeder. The Brazos Valley Animal Shelter offers dogs and cats for adoption. The adoption price includes all shots and spaying or neutering of the animal. The shelter's Web site, www.ipt.com/bas, features photographs of the pets up for adoption, and users can request to be contacted if a specific breed becomes available.

Woodstock Animal Foundation also offers animals for adoption and foster care. Its adoption fee of \$85 also includes all the shots and spaying or neutering of the animal.

Jeannie Skalsky, a Woodstock volunteer and botany graduate student.

Fosters for animals must be 21 years old and be able to bring the animal to Petco every Saturday to help find a permanent home for the pet. Skalsky describes A&M's student population as "an untapped market for fosters." She said fostering animals is flexible, which is good for students who often move around a lot. If at some point a student is no longer able to foster an animal, they need to contact Woodstock and the animal will be placed in another foster home.

Fostering is good for the budget-conscious but animal-loving students because Woodstock incurs all the food costs and medical expenses so that the financial burden does not fall upon the foster parents.

Brazos Valley Golden Retriever Rescue also offers a fostering and adoption program similar to Woodstock's; however, its adoption fee is



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\$150 and there is no age limit for fosters. Leigh Ann Clark, a Brazos Valley Golden Retriever Rescue volunteer, said fosters are their biggest need right now.

For information on adopting or fostering, interested students should refer to the Woodstock Web site at www.woodstocktexas.org, or the Brazos Valley Golden Retriever Rescue site at www.brazosvalleygoldens.com.

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Program	Registration	Cost
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CPR-Pro Rescuer Challenge	Jan. 13-April 24	\$25/\$35
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Water Babies	Jan. 13-May 12	\$25/\$35
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Master Swimming	All semester	\$50
Polar Bear Club	All semester	FREE

GET A JOB WITH REC SPORTS

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- Group Exercise Instructor Auditions! Get ready to show your stuff Saturday, April 26th from 10:00a.m.–2:00p.m. Sign up at the second floor reception desk before April 24th. Audition information packet available when you sign up, call DeAun Woosley at 862-3995 or email dwoosley@rec.tamu.edu.
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Program	Registration	Cost
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- DRIVING RANGE NOW OPEN—The Texas A&M Golf Course is proud to present to Texas A&M students, faculty, staff and the community the newest addition to our services, a full driving range at \$3/bucket. Don't forget about the rest of our recently renovated course with its paved cart paths. Visit today! The Texas A&M Golf Course is OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Call 845-1723 for tee times.
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- Archery, Texas Shootout, April 24–27, all day @ Penberthy

GET GOING WITH TAMU OUTDOORS

Upcoming Events	Registration	Event Date
Kayak Roll Instructional Clinic	Jan. 21–April 21	April 22
7th Annual Aggie Pumpfest	March 17–April 18 (early regis.)	March 19–April 26 April 26

- TAMU OUTDOORS SPRING CLEANING SALE—ENDS TODAY, APRIL 14th. All headlamps 20% off, all climbing shoes 15% off, plus a free Nalgene water bottle when you sign up for any May or August break trip. Climbing shoes, harnesses and backpacks at clearance prices while supplies last! Hurry and buy before the sale ends!

AUGUST BREAK TRIP

- SAIL & SCUBA the Bahamas—Sail on Blackbeard's cruise and trace the historic route of pirate ships and treasure galleons. Registration ends June 9. \$819

REC SPORTS ON-LINE

- RECSPTS.TAMU.EDU—Find everything at our site from Rec Center news, operating hours, job listings, our exclusive Intramural Headlines link, Fitness & Classes schedules, Natatorium hours, Golf prices, Walk of Champions information and much more!