

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Tuesday, June 17, 2003

## Summertime warnings

Certain precautions need to be taken to stay safe in the sun

By Melanie Manville  
THE BATTALION

Now that summer is in full swing, many students spend a lot of time in the sun, whether walking on campus or sitting by the pool. While studies show that sunlight can improve a person's mood by increasing the level of serotonin in the brain, students must be aware of the dangers of being in the sun, more specifically, tanning.

According to the National Coalition for Skin Cancer Prevention, 90 percent of all skin cancers can be attributed to the sun. In 2003, it is expected that 54,200 new cases of skin cancer will occur and, of these, 7,600 will be fatal, according to skinancer.org. One of the most serious and prevalent forms of skin cancer is melanoma. If discovered early, it is almost 99 percent curable, but left untreated it is deadly. With this in mind, students need to be aware of the warning signs and take precautions. Some students feel that they are still too young to worry, but health experts encourage taking precautions now to prevent any future problems.

"I am worried about the dangers of tanning, but I don't plan on tanning for my whole life so it is not a big concern," said Megan Adcock, a junior accounting major.

Although most anti-tanning organizations urge people to stop tanning com-

pletely, they also give out a few tips to help reduce the dangers of tanning.

The American Medical Association says it is best not to plan outdoor activi-

ties between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest. It also suggests wearing sunglasses that offer 100 percent UV ray protection to protect your eyes, and most importantly, to wear sunscreen when outdoors.

Many Texas A&M students have no problem with this rule.

"Beer, babes and sunscreen. That is my motto," said Jeremy Austin, a junior civil engineering major.

Jacob Garcia, a junior agricultural development major and lifeguard for Bryan Aquatic Center, stresses the importance of sunscreen.

"Although some people may believe they need extremely high SPFs, SPF 15 is more than enough to protect them from the sun's rays," he said.

Another popular alternative to laying by the pool to achieve the perfect tan is indoor tanning. According to industry estimates, 28 million Americans are tanning indoors annually at about 25,000 tanning salons around the country.

"I tan indoors because it doesn't take up a lot of time, and it helps me take a break from a busy day. I get a chance to just lie there and think," said Randi Wenzel, a sophomore communications major.

According to TanningTruth.com, a Web site sponsored by the Smart Tan Networks, moderate tanning is the smartest way to maximize the potential

benefits of sun exposure while minimizing the potential risk of either too much, or too little exposure. They also give the golden rule of tanning: don't ever sunburn.

Everyone is at risk for sunburn. But according to the American Cancer Society, people with moles, freckles and other skin markings, fair skin, or light hair and those who spend a lot of time indoors, are more susceptible to burning.

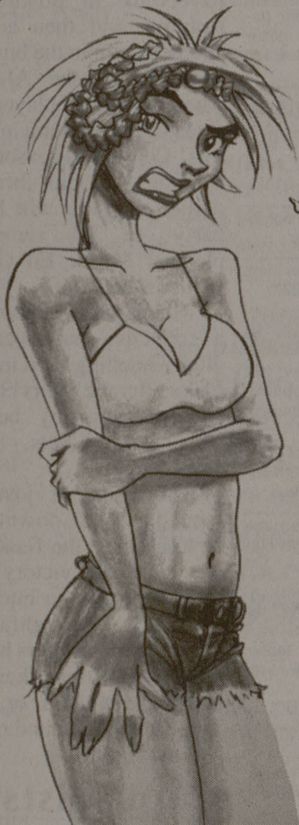
TanningTruth.com adds that a tan is the skin's natural protection against sunburn.

Indoor tanning may seem the better option because it is regulated by the U.S. government. Some laws include that each tan must be 24 hours apart, and a tanner must wear safety goggles in the tanning bed to prevent eye damage.

Perhaps the safest way to tan would be the new UV-free tanning. In this device, a tanner goes in and is "misted" with self tanner. According to the pamphlet on the Mystic Tan UV-free systems, the process only takes about 14 to 18 seconds and provides you with a streak-free, dark tan that is specifically tailored to your skin type and complexion.

"The spray tan option is great; the only bad thing is you have to wait a couple hours to shower," said Sarah Murray, a sophomore communications major.

So whether a student is planning on getting a tan this summer or not, certain



GRAPHICS BY IVAN FLORES • THE BATTALION

precautions need to be taken to prevent future skin problems, even if it's just wrinkles.

## Designer's whim leads to serious fashion industry buzz

By Jackie White  
KRT CAMPUS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — "It's just kismet, a weird kismet," Rita Accurso announces, pounding the air with her hands.

She is talking about how the whimsical novelty tops she created have taken off on a remarkable flight among fashion consumers. She barely gave them a nudge.

Cast members from television's "NYPD Blue" recently ordered nine. Several New York and Hollywood upscale boutiques have responded favorably. A buyer for Jeffrey, the exclusive fashionistas' favorite mini-department store in downtown New York City, was interested but failed to place an order.

And a Hollywood friend has promised to pitch them to Los Angeles boutiques. "I just sent her more. She keeps selling them before she can get to the stores."

They are one of a kind, quirky, lovingly detailed and soft. "There is a kind of innocence about them," she says.

It started about a year ago. Accurso, who is part of a large Italian-American family known especially in Kansas City for a midtown deli and restaurant, was working as a bartender. One night, she was at home and bored. "I just started messing around," she says.

Taking a man's extra-large white T-shirt, she sewed in seams until it was pared down to a small, skinny size. She pulled print fabric from the piles of textiles scrunched into a bookcase,

choosing one of her favorite images, geisha girls. She cut them out and, slowly and tediously, began to embroider them onto the shirt.

She made one and then another. She used other fabrics, other images. She sent one to Hollywood to her best friend, Deanna Madsen, who is married to actor Michael Madsen. And the serendipitous process began to evolve.

Deanna Madsen wore it to a party where it caught the attention of other young women who wanted the shirts for themselves. Madsen's friend, Gay Whittaker, was marketing her own fragrance with specialty stores. She began, literally, to sell them from the trunk of her car. When she called on stores to promote her perfume, she also showed the shirts.

Meanwhile, sportswear buyer Kelly Schneider of Halls in Kansas City spotted Accurso wearing one at a party and, after seeing the collection, wrote an order. "They were so special. Each one had its own personality. I think people need a reason to buy something special right now," Schneider says.

Casey Simmons, co-owner of Stuff in Kansas City, says, "Each piece is unique. Each piece is lovingly created by her. And each piece makes a statement." Stuff also carries beaded pillows, handbags and embellished denims made by Accurso.

She buys fabrics from Cy Rudnick's Fabrics, vintage stores and estate sales. This day, she displays recent finds — stylish 1950s ladies and the cowgirl prints she purchased from an

Albuquerque, N.M., woman who makes children's clothes.

The T-shirts, dyed in a variety of soft colors, are neatly stacked nearby.

Her label is La Rita Ro, adapted from the nickname, La Rita Rouge (red-haired Rita), a French friend assigned to her.

Accurso has sewn as long as she can remember. When she was 3, her mother and grandmother, a tailor, taught her to pull a needle through material, and soon she was making Barbie dresses from the flour sack fabrics her grandmother brought from Italy.

She has always made her own clothes, combining them with vintage pieces in ways that set her apart. "I love Betsy Johnson, Vivienne Westwood and Comme des Garcons. I could never afford their clothes. So I made my own," she says.

If she buys an item, she is likely to change the buttons or deconstruct and restyle it. Never wanting to look like anyone else, she loves to wear gloves, hats, high boots and lots of velvet.

When she describes her personal style, she grins, thinks a moment and says, "Va-va-voom!"

Today, her most formidable challenge is to make her new labor-intensive venture work financially. Although she thinks she could sell the T-shirts for considerably more on the West Coast, prices start at \$100 at Halls.

"I figured up once I'm making \$3 an hour."

On the upside, she is wading into an apparel project at a time when, as Schneider notes, both



PHOTO BY KRT CAMPUS

Rita Accurso, a young fashion designer, is the creator of quirky t-shirts.

consumers and retailers are desperately seeking new, unique styles. Also, hand-crafted looks such as embroidery and crochet are rising fast in fashion ranks.

On the downside, it is difficult for upstarts like Accurso to get notice, much less financial success, in a faithless, erratic, trend-driven business. Sustaining the buzz may well be the toughest part.

But Accurso is not concerned.

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