



Sports:
Get the scoop on the new Aggie recruits. Page 4

Former A&M student assaulted on Northgate

By Rhiannon Meyers
THE BATTALION

Matthew Bryan Rooney was assaulted Jan. 24, 2004, by two men on College Main at Northgate due to his sexual orientation.

According to the College Station Police Department news release, Rooney, who graduated from Texas A&M in December, was confronted by the young men, who yelled derogatory remarks at Rooney and his friends about his sexual orientation. The men then assaulted Rooney, hitting him several times in the head and face.

Rooney said the assault was unprovoked. "I was walking down the street when people started yelling stuff," Rooney said. "This has happened before."

Rooney said his roommate, Jocelyn Baron, began to yell back, and then the men quickly approached them from behind. Rooney then apologized for his roommate and began to walk away, when one of the men began to punch him in the head.

Rooney said he did not fight back and instead tried to call 911 while being assaulted.

"I don't believe in violence," Rooney said. "Violence doesn't solve anything."

Rooney said the men ran west on Church Street when they noticed he was making a phone call.

Rooney suffered injuries to his nose and mouth and was taken to the emergency room the following day for treatment.



Baron, who also graduated from A&M in December, said she was shocked that Rooney was physically attacked because of his sexual orientation.

"I never expected anything like this to happen," Baron said. "I've always thought of this town and community as being safe and kind. I did not think physical violence would be visited on one of my friends because of who he is."

Rooney said people passing by the attack made no attempt to help him in any way.

"Cars were driving by, and egging the guys on,"

Rooney said. "Someone even drove by and yelled something derogatory about me while I was being punched in the head."

Rooney said he has been verbally abused before in College Station for being homosexual, but this is the first time he has ever been physically assaulted.

Erin Collins, a senior English major and a close friend of Rooney's, said she is appalled and upset about the attack.

"He's a really nice guy and he's one of those people who will take care of you when you need to be taken care of," Collins said. "And I know A&M is conservative, but for something to happen that is an outright hate crime on this campus is appalling."

Chris Smith, president of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Aggies (GLBTA) said this attack was "an act of thoughtlessness and ignorance," and that although physical attacks like this happen less frequently in College Station than they used to, homosexuals still encounter verbal abuse.

ON THE WATCH

College Station Police detectives are investigating this case and asking for help identifying the suspects.

Suspect #1

- White male
- Mid-twenties
- 5 feet 10 inches tall, thin build
- Short brown hair and goatee
- Tattoos on both biceps

Suspect #2

- White male
- Mid-twenties
- 5 feet 10 inches tall, thin build
- Short blonde hair

If you have any information regarding these suspects, please call:

979-764-3600

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: CSPD

See Assault on page 2

Candy land



Four-year-old Katie Wall, of College Station, awaits her prize as grandfather Jerry Wall, of Bryan, wins a package of stickers and assorted candies from a crane machine at a local pizza place late Thursday.

ART WRIGHT • THE BATTALION

Meyer takes the reigns as assistant provost

By Erin Price
THE BATTALION

As Texas A&M's new assistant provost, Dr. Paul Meyer said he hopes he can make a positive contribution to A&M.

"It's been very good so far," Meyer said. "I'm on the steep part of the learning curve, but it's exciting for me."

Dr. Jeanette Phariss retired from the position on Jan. 31, and this is Meyer's first week on the job.

"Jeanette was a legend on campus, but I will do my best," Meyer said.

Duties for the assistant provost include going over new degree and department proposals from colleges and making sure the University follows the rules and regulations set forth by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Meyer spent the past 10 years working for the Texas Higher Education

Coordinating Board and the last six years as the board's director of academic affairs. He also taught English at A&M from 1985 to 1988.

"I still have friends here that were my friends back then and it's nice to get reacquainted," Meyer said.

Meyer also taught English at New Mexico State University and the University of Texas at Austin. He earned a bachelor's degree in physics and physics from Rice University in 1978. He earned his master's and doctoral

degrees in English from the University of Texas at Austin in 1982 and 1985, respectively.

Pierce Cantrell, associate provost for information technology, chaired the search committee for the new assistant provost and said Meyer was among the many qualified candidates for the job.

"Meyer had been at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board since 1994, so we already worked closely with him," Cantrell said.

The search committee consisting of members of the A&M faculty, Texas A&M System and the Board of Regents. The committee posted the job listing on many electronic lists for higher education, Cantrell said.

"Meyer had the experience of knowing how it worked on the other side," Cantrell said. "He is well-respected around the state."

Diana Sousares, administrative assistant for the provost's office, said Meyer has big shoes to fill, but is familiar with certain aspects of his job.

"I think he will do a great job," she said.

Meyer said he is glad to be at A&M with the reinvestment in faculty and developing new research and degrees by A&M President Robert M. Gates.

"This is a very exciting time for Texas A&M," Meyer said. "I'm glad to be back."

"This is a very exciting time for A&M...I'm glad to be back."

— Paul Meyer
A&M assistant provost

Prairie View A&M students file voting rights suit

By Juan A. Lozano
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Civil rights groups and students from Prairie View A&M University filed a federal lawsuit Thursday asking that Waller County District Attorney Oliver Kitzman stop what they claim are threats by his office to prevent students from voting in local elections.

The lawsuit comes a day after Attorney General Greg Abbott issued an opinion saying Prairie View A&M students may vote in their university town if they simply designate Waller County as their residence.

Students have expressed anger and fear after learning that Kitzman last year said Prairie View A&M students weren't automatically eligible to vote in county elections because of state-mandated residency standards. Hundreds of students from the predominantly black school marched in protest last month.

State requirements for voter eligibility say, among other things, a person must be an 18-year-old U.S. citizen and resident of the county at least 30 days before the election.

In a 15-page legal opinion issued Wednesday, Abbott said it is well established in Texas law that college students can vote local-

ly if they designate their campus address as their residence.

But Abbott's ruling is not enough to ease students' fears, said Jon Greenbaum, with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

"We approve of the attorney general's opinion but this issue goes beyond that," he said. "This goes to how the students feel when they go to vote. Students still feel the threat of prosecution."

The deadline to register to vote in the March 9 primary is Monday.

In the 1970s, the Waller County registrar required Prairie View A&M students to complete a residency questionnaire, something others did not have to do. In the 1970s, the Supreme Court said this violated the students' right to vote and ordered the registrar to determine student eligibility the same way it did for all other individuals.

"We want to extend what the Supreme Court did in the 1970s to the district attorney," Greenbaum said.

The civil rights groups and some local officials, including U.S. Rep. Chris Bell, D-

See Suit on page 2

Interfaith donates 100 meals

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

The Interfaith Dialogue Students' Association (IDSA) along with Twin City Mission will donate 100 meals to anyone that stops by on Friday in honor of the Muslim holiday, Eid al Adha.

"(The donation is) not only for the homeless, it's for the community in general," said Renat Shaykutdinov, vice president of IDSA. "It's something that on one hand has a religious purpose, but on the other hand (helps provide) an environment for the common understanding of people of different backgrounds."

The IDSA, a Texas A&M organization, has donated approximately \$1,500 in sheep to be sacrificed and cooked for the occasion. The food will be served at 500 North Main in downtown Bryan at the Twin City Mission dining hall at 4:15 p.m.

"We're trying to make (the food) as Americanized as possible but still incorporate features of both (Arabic and American) cultures," Shaykutdinov said.

The feast will be in celebration of an event in which the prophet Abraham dreamed three times that God told him to sacrifice his son Ishmael. He didn't want to sacrifice his son, and the angel Gabriel brought a sheep to him which he sacrificed instead, said Isil Durma, Class of 2004 and member of IDSA.

"The religious holiday started on Feb. 1, lasts four days and is known as a feast of sacrifice,"

Durma said. "So we're going to cook rice and meat for about 100 people. We anticipate a lot of people coming."

The IDSA was founded in the summer of 2001 to bridge gaps between students of different religions.

It is open to anyone of any religion, although it was established mostly by Muslim students. It holds weekly discussion groups at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on Texas Avenue on Mondays evenings.

The Twin City Mission, a Christian charity, is working closely with the IDSA by donating its dining hall facilities, according to Tamer Sumeshaglan, president of the IDSA and graduate student at A&M.

"We have invited ministers from local churches just to introduce the interfaith and basically understand the commonalities between each other," Shaykutdinov said. "There will be differences, but we stress commonalities. The purpose of the group is to come together to share experiences."

Sumeshaglan said it was a tradition for Muslims to share, especially during this important holiday.

"We have such a small Muslim community in Bryan," Sumeshaglan said. "We wanted to share our food with poor people especially."

