

# THE BATTALION

Thursday, March 11, 2004

**BATT LINKS**  
more info @:  
[www.thebatt.com](http://www.thebatt.com)

On the Web:  
The role of women in  
biology.

Volume 110 • Issue 110 • 12 pages

A Texas A&M Tradition Since 1893

[www.thebatt.com](http://www.thebatt.com)

PAGE DESIGN BY: EMILY HENDRICKSON

## Watkins steps down after dismal season

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M men's basketball head coach Melvin Watkins resigned Wednesday following a 7-20 regular season record, capped off by a 0-16 Big 12 conference record.

The resignation will be effective after the team finishes its season. A&M starts play in the Big 12 Tournament Thursday against the University of Missouri at 8:20 p.m. at the American Airlines Center in Dallas.

Bill Byrne, A&M athletic director thanked Watkins for his time at A&M.

"I have accepted head coach Melvin Watkins' resignation effective immediately at the end of the season," said A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne. "I thank Melvin sincerely for the high class and positive image with which he represented Texas A&M."

Watkins was hired as head coach prior to the 1998 season after he led his alma mater, the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, to two consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances in his only two years as head coach.

He never made a postseason appearance at A&M, collecting a 60-111 record during his six years.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity the University gave me, but it's time to move on," Watkins said. "I'm proud of the young men on this team. I regret that we weren't able to enjoy more success this year, but I

feel confident that we have built a solid foundation for the future of the program."

Watkins signed a three-year contract extension during the current season, but it reportedly has a low buy-out. Financial details of Watkins' resignation were disclosed Wednesday.

The focus now turns to who will replace Watkins as head coach at A&M.

"I want to attract a coach who can recruit basketball players and coach them," Byrne said. "I go to experts in the sport and ask for their advice."

Watkins is the second coach to leave during Byrne's tenure. Former women's basketball head coach Peggie Gillom was released shortly after Byrne accepted the athletic director position in December 2002.

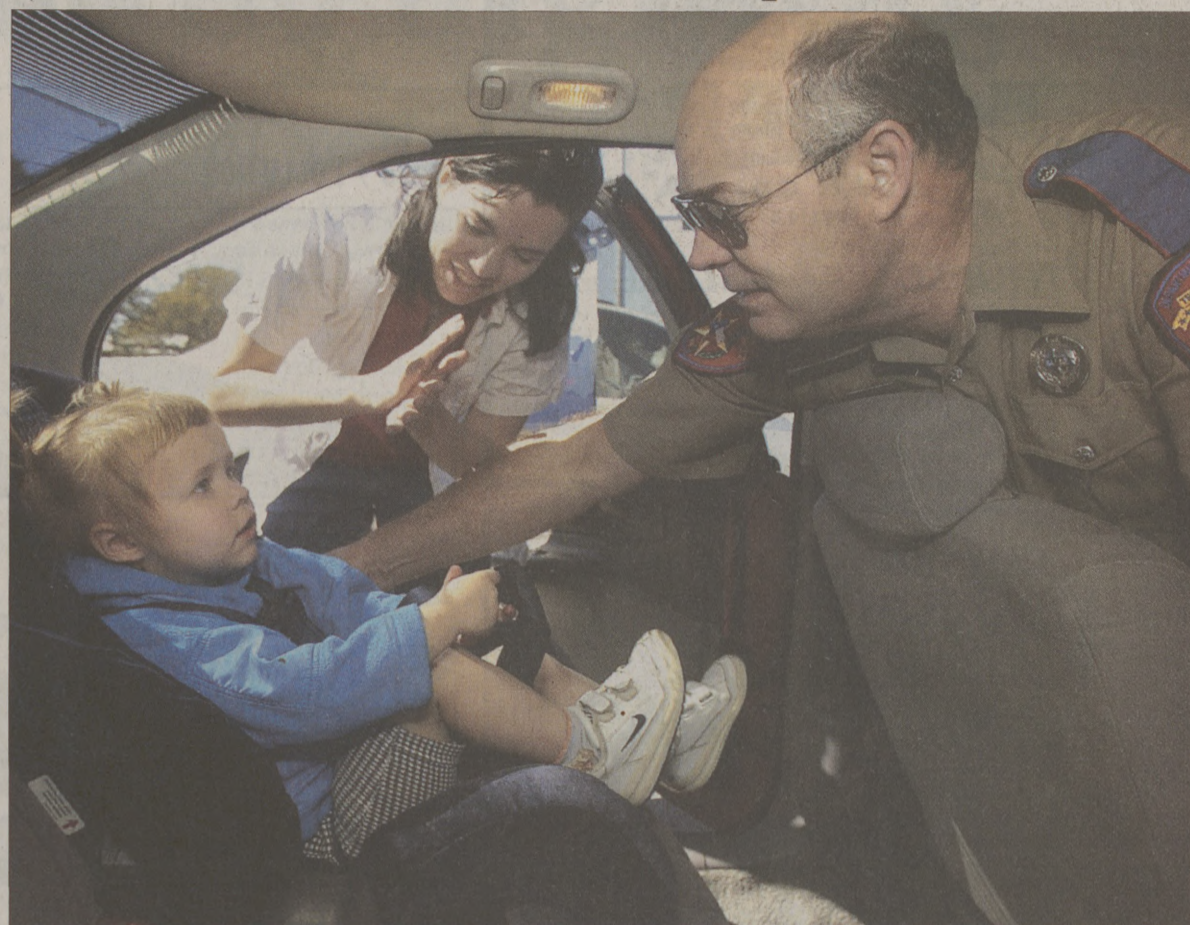
Byrne said the A&M head coaching job is one of the better positions in college basketball.

"We're Texas A&M University," Byrne said. "We're one of the two flagship universities in Texas. We live within 100 miles of (Houston). It's a great opportunity for a coach."

Watkins said he isn't sure where he will go after this season, but that he feels he is leaving a program on the rise.

"It's been great, but you have to win games," Watkins said. "We feel the program is in better shape than when we got here, but it's time to step aside and let someone else get it turned around."

## Buckle up



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Senior Texas state trooper of the Department of Public Safety **Eddie Carmon** instructs **Devon Lee** (center), Class of 1999 of Bryan, how to properly fasten child safety belts for **Rachel Lee**, 2, Wednesday morning at the Barbara

Bush Parent Center parking lot in College Station. Parents in the Head Start Program received free child safety seats and training for proper child seat fastening.

## VP of student affairs candidate visits campus

By Sonia Moghe and  
Melissa Sullivan  
THE BATTALION

A candidate interviewing for the vice president for student affairs position will be on campus Thursday to answer questions and meet and greet Texas A&M students, faculty and staff.

Ken Reeves, executive director for business development at Nola computer services, will be in the J. Stark Galleries from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The position has been vacant since May 2003 when J. Malon Southerland retired after serving in the position for nine years.

Reeves is currently working on his doctorate, and is a former A&M student.

Matt Josefy, student body president and a senior accounting major, said the vice president for student affairs serves as an advocate for students and oversees all aspects of student life from residence halls to the Corps of Cadets to the Memorial Student Center.

"The vice president of student affairs position is the single most important position when it comes to students being involved on campus."

Josefy said.

Josefy said Reeves' strengths lie in his background in human resources and his affiliation with A&M.

Josefy said student input in choosing the right person for the job is vital, and meeting all the candidates is the best opportunity to understand where each one stands.

There will be several candidates visiting the campus over the next three or four weeks, Josefy said.

"The person who ultimately fills this position is someone who needs to be an advocate for students," Josefy said, "someone who students feel comfortable going to with any type of concern."

Chris Mahaffey, Residence Hall Association president, said he wants someone who understands the students and spirit at A&M, and who upholds the kind of availability of the administration that students at A&M are lucky to have.

"I want someone who is open to that kind of access," he said.

Mahaffey said the vice president for student affairs is the head of the "other education."

See Candidate on page 2

## Gas prices deplete wallets nationwide

By Jason Hanselka  
THE BATTALION

As gasoline prices ignite nationwide, spring break travelers may have to dig deep in their pockets to come up with enough money to get to their intended destinations next week.

Most local prices for regular unleaded gasoline average about \$1.59 per gallon and may cause travelers to rethink their plans for the break.

Beth Rodgers, a junior communications major, said her plans are up in the air.

"My boyfriend and I were planning on going to the Red River, but his mom didn't think that was a good idea," she said. "She just got back from an expensive trip, and she is concerned about how much gas will cost for us to go to the river."

Rodgers said she spends about \$25 a week on gas traveling back and forth to Temple for work every weekend.

"Sometimes it feels like it's not worth it

if I'm spending a lot of money on gas just to get to work," she said.

Ryan Carriage, a freshman business major, said high gas prices will not change his planned trip to Colorado.

"We really can't afford to fly, so we're stuck with driving," he said. "We're probably going to spend a lot of money on gas."

Carriage said gas prices play a role in whether he decides to drive back home to Tomball, Texas, which is about an hour and 15 minutes from College Station.

"I don't necessarily have to go back home, so I usually only go once a month," he said.

"I don't go more often because I don't want to spend the money on gas."

Kyle Loveless, owner of Tigerland Express, said the highest jump in his gas prices was 16 cents in one day a few weeks ago.

"There are regular increases in gas prices on Fridays, but they usually decrease on Monday," he said. "Now there are increases on Friday that don't decrease on Monday."

**BATT LINKS**  
more info @:  
[www.thebatt.com](http://www.thebatt.com)

**FUELING PRICES**

- Local regular unleaded prices currently average \$1.59 per gallon
- Gas prices normally increase every Friday and decrease on the following Monday
- Prices will continue to increase as the year progresses

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION  
SOURCE: KYLE LOVELESS, OWNER OF TIGERLAND EXPRESS

Loveless said increases in gas prices start at the corporate level with commodities exchanges on gas and large purchases of gas by hypermarkets such as grocery store chains.

See Gas on page 2

## Greek students get glimpse of A&M life

By Natalie Younts  
THE BATTALION

Four students and their teacher from the American Farm School in Greece are getting a glimpse of Texas life as they spend nine days learning about the Texas culture and farming.

The group arrived in Texas Friday, and were on the Texas A&M campus Wednesday to compare their agricultural school to A&M.

Their A&M visit included a trip to the College of Veterinary Medicine, where they

played with A&M's cloned animals: c.c. the cat and Dewey the deer.

Seventeen-year-old Lefteris Konstantoulakis said the cat was just like any other cat and that he enjoyed seeing it.

The students will also visit the Department of Horticulture, the Vegetable and Fruit Research Center, the Poultry Research Farm and the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum over the next few days.

The group is staying at Doubletree Hotel in Houston, and attended the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and visited

NASA, said Catherina Diafa, the teacher from the American Farm School.

Konstantoulakis said he was impressed with the livestock animals he saw.

The American Farm School is a private agricultural technical school and boarding school in Thessaloniki, Greece, founded in 1904. The students are part of the International Youth Leadership Exchange program.

See Greek on page 2

## Students urged to click their mouse in elections

By Aerin Toussaint  
THE BATTALION

Students are encouraged to vote online for the upcoming student body elections which will be held March 31 and April 1, said Craig Wellington, a graduate student in management information systems and the online voting director.

Open positions include student body president, junior and senior yell leaders, class councils for the Classes of 2005, 2006 and 2007, Student Senate and Residence Hall Association seats and Class of 2004 agents.

"A&M is one of the only schools that implemented online voting while keeping paper ballots available also," Wellington said.

Wellington said that last year, 75 percent of 80 percent of votes were cast online.

Wellington said that this year, the online

voting system will require users to provide their University Identification Numbers instead of their Social Security numbers.

Election campaigning begins March 21, said Melissa Graham, a senior biomedical sciences major and the Texas A&M election commissioner.

In addition to voting online, students may also vote in the Memorial Student Center, West Campus Library, Commons Lobby, Student Recreation Center and Sbis Dining Center from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Being involved in elections provides a chance to meet a lot of interesting people, Graham said.

"The main goal of the election

See Elections on page 2

### Student Body Elections 2004

-March 31 and April 1

-Campaign begins March 21

-Voting locations:

- Memorial Student Center
- West Campus Library
- Commons Lobby
- Student Recreation Center
- Sbis Dining Center

-Voting times: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- For more election info log on to:  
[www.thebatt.com](http://www.thebatt.com)

ANDREW BURLISON • THE BATTALION  
SOURCE: MELISSA GRAHAM, ELECTION COMMISSIONER



SHARON AESCHBACH • THE BATTALION

MSC OPAS & Phoenix Productions and Magic Arts & Entertainment present Fame - The Musical - the performance was held in Rudder Auditorium Tuesday and Wednesday nights.