

THE BATTALION

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A Texas A&M Tradition Since 1893

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University assures residents' safety

By Sonia Moghe
THE BATTALION

University officials assured more than 60 University Apartments residents in a conference Tuesday that gas leaks would be taken very seriously from now on.

"We didn't recognize (gas leaks) as the hazard it was," said Chris Meyer, director of environmental health and safety. "Now that we have, we're trying to correct it."

Meyer said the Texas State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) called agencies across Texas to hear proposals for gas line inspection requirements. He said that while there is currently no wide gas line testing program, the SFMO is

attempting to implement mandatory testing every two years, similar to what A&M is doing now.

"We're ahead of where the other agencies are simply because of our tragic circumstance," Meyer said.

Meyer also assured residents that the gas leak found on Tuesday morning was neither near any apartments nor the result of inadequate repairs and was properly taken care of.

"While before we might not have been in a hurry to repair (the leak), we decided to do it right away," Meyer said. "(The leak) was not in an apartment, not close to an apartment. You can feel safe in your apartments."

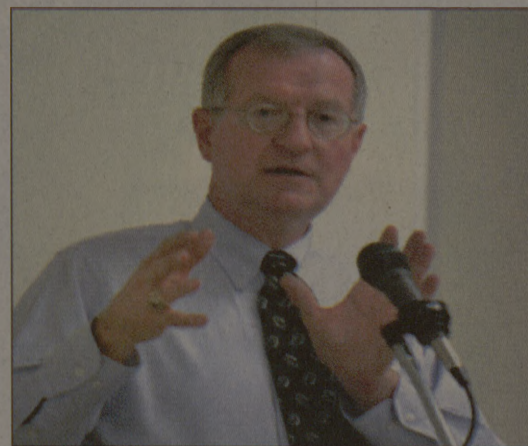
Suzanne Droleskey, executive director of international programs, cited the District Attorney's

ongoing investigation of the fatal July 31 explosion at University Apartments that took the lives of 4-year-old, Lamiya Zahin, and her grandmother, Rabeya Chaudhury as the reason for delays in moving forward with task force investigations.

Two task forces have been created; one will review management, organization and communication issues dealing with the incident, the other will look at problem-response mechanisms in place and assessing customer service, Droleskey said.

"I don't think (President Gates) would have set up a task force if he didn't want everyone to know that he was taking this very, very seriously," Droleskey said. "I believe the accountability will be there."

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WHITNEY MARTIN - THE BATTALION

Department of Residence Life director Ron E. Sasse addresses community residents Thursday night about the precautions that have been made after the apartment fire in July.

Father, son share Aggie Ring Day experience

By Sara Foley
THE BATTALION

When senior history and economics major Wyatt Jaenes was accepted into A&M, his father made him a promise: When he got his senior ring, his father would get his, too. Four years later, both Wyatt Jaenes and his father, Frank Jaenes, were among the 3,097 Aggies to get their Aggie opportunity on Thursday.

"It's actually the largest order (of rings)," said Rorey Walsh, an

employee of the Ring Office at the Association of Former Students.

Frank's first Aggie ring was his only valuable possession when he graduated in 1967. One day in 1980, Frank returned home from working outdoors on a ranch and found the door of his house kicked in and his Aggie ring stolen.

"You feel violated enough when your house is broken into, but to take your A&M ring on top of it, it's a real negative thing," Frank said.

Frank said he never got around to replacing his Aggie ring until now, but sharing the experience with his son adds a special significance.

"It's an exciting moment. With my son reaching his senior year,

being able to share this with him is very special," Frank said.

Wyatt said that when he learned about the tradition of the Aggie rings, he knew he wanted to share the experience with his father.

"I can't wait to go home and shake my dad's hand. We're both going to have the ring on our hand, and it's going to be exciting," Wyatt said.

Wyatt said now that he has his Aggie ring, he feels like an official part of the Aggie family.

"I always felt included in the history of A&M, but this is the critical part — I feel like I'm now part of the history more than any time else," Wyatt said.

Frank said the Aggie ring is more significant than other college rings because of the connection it builds with other Aggies.

"I think the A&M ring is above of all college rings. In my work career, I work with a lot of A&M graduates, and we always know each other by our rings. Now I will have mine again," Frank said.

Wyatt said his father is the reason that he chose to attend A&M and is an inspiration for him.

"I didn't even know what an Aggie was, but my dad went here and so I was going to go here," he said. "He is the most selfless man I've ever met and everything I'd like to be."



DAVE MORRIS - THE BATTALION

Hundreds of students set up tents outside the alumni center Thursday morning to get tickets for senior ring pick-up from 3 to 6 p.m. Tickets were handed out in numerical order starting at 7 a.m. Rings were distributed in groups of 250 every 15 minutes.

Aggie Ring Day

- Eligible students picked up their Aggie Rings from the Clayton Williams Jr. Alumni Center on Thursday
- 3,097 students ordered their rings with 2,881 students picking their rings up on Tuesday
- Students must have completed 95 cumulative hours or 45 resident hours and have at least a 2.0
- The next Aggie Ring delivery will be on November 4, 2004



GRAPHIC: BRANDI DUNN - THE BATTALION

PHOTO: WHITNEY MARTIN - THE BATTALION

SOURCE: ASSOCIATION OF FORMER STUDENTS

New chemical engineering building increases custodial work

By Erin Price
THE BATTALION

The new Jack E. Brown Chemical Engineering building is scheduled to open later this fall, burdening the Texas A&M custodial staff, which is already spread thin due to budget cuts.

Jerry Miller, associate vice president of administration, said A&M's janitorial staff had to cut back on the intensity of cleaning in many areas due to the time constraints.

"I used to have just one floor to clean," Felipe said. "Now I am in charge of floors one and three, and when I have time I go up to the fourth floor because there is no one up there."

Felipe said she works extra hard because her

cut back, but the limits on the quality of other work make many custodians upset.

"The custodians take great pride in their work," Miller said. "It bothers them that they can't do the quality work they are used to doing or meet their own expectations."

Rosa Felipe, an A&M custodian of six years, said the Reed McDonald Building used to have more people, and the decrease in help has left her with added stress.

"I used to have just one floor to clean," Felipe said. "Now I am in charge of floors one and three, and when I have time I go up to the fourth floor because there is no one up there."

Felipe said she works extra hard because her

floors contain classrooms, which tend to be the hardest to keep clean. There are only two full-time janitors in the whole building and an occasional third, she said.

"We still do not have enough people, but we have to keep doing our best," Felipe said. "We want the classrooms to be clean for the students."

Miller said the Physical Plant's funding started to decrease a couple of years ago, and priorities have shifted to the overall maintenance of buildings rather than cleaning.

"Newer buildings, like the Brown Building, are easier to clean, but we still are short staff," Miller said. "It looks like we will have to work with the number of custodians we already have because of

limited funding."

A&M custodians begin their workdays at 6 a.m. daily and clean about 6,000 more square feet per person than workers at other institutions, Miller said.

There are different levels of custodians, and the pay ranges from \$6.57 to \$8.03 per hour, according to the Department of Human Resources Web site. Pay is negotiable depending on experience.

Ben Hansen, a senior mechanical engineering major, has seen the same custodial staff throughout his college career and said it could use some help from the administration.

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Faculty search committees may allow seats for students

By Jibrán Najmi
THE BATTALION

Last spring, Texas A&M President Robert M. Harrold announced a \$19.50 per credit hour increase over the next five years. In an unexpected move, student leaders have proposed the idea of having undergraduate students to serve on various faculty search committees with full voting and ranking privileges.

"It is best for the university in such a short period of time," said Dean J. Bresciani, vice president for student affairs. "I am aware of any other university in the nation attempting anything of this magnitude."

Bresciani said the idea was worth considering but that the decision will ultimately rest with each department.

"Students should definitely have a say in which faculty are hired," Bresciani said. "The faculty re-investment program is being paid for primarily by students."

Of the \$22.81 million raised by this past spring's tuition increase, \$12 million will be spent on attracting tenured faculty to A&M.

"The benefit for students is that tenured professors do a lot of research, and the research is what puts A&M on the map," said Jerri Ann Henry, academic affairs chair for the Student Senate. "As a result, our reputation as a university is enhanced and even more research grants and opportunities arise for students attending A&M."

Among the many concerns expressed by faculty in giving undergraduates seats on a search committee were the discussions of the pros and cons

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Sippial calls for meeting over increased train speeds in CS

By Lacy Ledford
THE BATTALION

In light of a recent increase in Union Pacific train speeds through College Station, Texas A&M Vice President for Administration Chuck Sippial has called for a meeting between University officials, Union Pacific officials and City of College Station managers.

The speed of the Union Pacific trains has reached 50 mph, which is in violation of College Station Ordinance No. 2621, where the current maximum speed for the area between FM 2818 and Holleman Drive is set at 40 mph. Bromley said the federal government has jurisdiction over regulation of railroads and that it supersedes local law. The College Station train speed increase was implemented in June.

"The speeds of trains are determined on the

level of maintenance we put on the track," Bromley said. "We increase the speed by five mph each week until we get it to where we want it."

Sippial said Memorial Student Center director James Reynolds talked with a Union Pacific official last week, and in a casual statement, the official indicated the trains were now operating at 50 mph through College Station.

Sippial said that prior to this, A&M had not been notified of the speed increase.

"I've been told that we've been notified of the speed increase by letter from the railroad, but I have not been able to find that letter, nor has my staff," College Station City Manager Tom Brymer said. "I've had no conversations with any representatives from Union Pacific."

Sippial said Charles Malone, the Vice President of the southern region of Union Pacific,

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