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PROVIDED

A&M faculty members work with the Autism Clinic and Project RICOTA.

Researchers work with apps tailored toward autistic kids

Technology works to improve communication skills of people across spectrum

By Gracie Mock

To assist people with autism in the area, the Brazos Valley Rehabilitation Center partnered with the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M in 2010 to create a specialized clinic offering diagnostic assessment and behavioral intervention.

Now, five years later, A&M faculty members are working with the Autism Clinic and Project RICOTA, two programs in the CDD, to utilize augmentative and alternative communication apps to help those with autism improve their communication skills. The apps, "TapToTalk" and "Go Talk Now," use interactive pictures and speaking functions to teach people with autism how to clearly convey their message.

Jennifer Ganz, professor of educational psychology and affiliated faculty at the CDD, said she and her students are using communication apps specifically to study autism. Ganz said the characteristics of autism lie on a spectrum — an individual's behavioral habits can fall anywhere from not speaking at all to above-average speech capacity.

One approach employed by the apps to help people with autism is called "visual scene display," Ganz said. For example, an app will display a photo of a child surrounded by various toys. When the user taps on different images of toys, the app will play a sound bite naming the item. They may see one picture at a time or the grid might be more complex, Ganz said.

When teaching a child to use a communication app for the first time, the researchers use several behavioral techniques to motivate the child to communicate, said

AUTISM ON PG. 3



Shelby Knowles — THE BATTALION

David Axelrod (right) speaks at the podium Wednesday as Ari Fleischer (center) and moderator Roland Martin (left) look on.

POLITICS

In the ear of the president

White House veterans Axelrod and Fleischer address Rudder crowd

By Bethany Irvine

Former White House staffers blurred party lines Wednesday, discussing their experiences in central roles under the two most recent American presidents.

David Axelrod, senior advisor to President Barack Obama and Ari Fleischer, press secretary for President George W. Bush, addressed a crowd in Rudder Theater.

The discussion, hosted by the Wiley Lecture Series, focused on defin-

ing moments in both administrations while detailing how the White House staff plays a large role in the presidential decision-making process.

Fleischer said working as press secretary allowed him an inside look into the mind of the president.

"You're a firsthand witness to history — you sit in these meetings and you hear it all, you see it all," Fleischer said. "My job is to counsel the president on what to say."

Axelrod, who has advised Obama for six years, said the White House always faces unexpected problems.

"When you're in the White House you learn to respect not only the people who sit in that Oval Office, but all the people who work for them," Axelrod said. "They come from different sides of the political rail. The administration is often defined by same major crisis that you couldn't even imagine."

For the Bush administration, that crisis was Sept. 11, 2001. Fleischer said on that day, he realized the importance of his job.

"On Sept. 11 I knew everything about what the president was doing,

WILEY ON PG. 3

BASEBALL



Pitcher Turner Larkins winds up for a pitch against Abilene Christian.

Kathryn Perez — THE BATTALION

A&M squeezes past Abilene Christian

By Carter Karels

Logan Taylor and Blake Allemand accounted for all three scores to register a 3-2 small-ball victory over Abilene Christian Wednesday.

The bullpens of both squads amassed top-notch performances, and the bats were cold for the most part for the No. 1 Aggies all evening. However, Taylor and Allemand combined to go 6-for-8 to make up for only two other hits from the team.

The Aggies took the lead in the seventh inning and never looked back as Taylor brought in Allemand after a hit to right. Allemand doubled earlier

to right center, and headed to third to load the corners after Mitchell Nau reached first on fielder's choice.

ACU (8-26) took the advantage in the second after loading the bases and Marcelle Carter was walked on a full count. Fans were unhappy, as the previous batter, Russell Crippen, was called for being hit by the pitch, which was ultimately decided by a meeting between the umpires.

The Aggies (34-3) evened the score in the bottom of the inning. Nau reached first base off a walk, and Taylor stepped up to the plate and drove a pitch to right center, bringing in Nau for the game's lone RBI.

The third inning was more of the same, as both teams tallied another run onto the scoreboard.

Turner Larkins pitched the first four innings, and accumulated two strikeouts while only allowing three hits. Kyle Simonds carried the workload after Larkins, coming in during the fifth and pitching two hitless innings. Despite starting the inning allowing a base hit, Mark Ecker came onto finish it in the ninth to keep A&M perfect in weekday games.

The Aggies will stay at home for an SEC weekend series against Arkansas, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

CAMPUS

INCREASES TO PARKING PASS PRICES ON THE WAY

On-campus parking permit prices will increase 3 percent for fall 2015 and each of the next four years thereafter — a 15 percent hike, all told. After that, an inflationary increase of 2 percent will be assessed each year.

The increase comes at the request of Transportation Services, said Texas A&M chief financial officer Jerry

Strawser in an email to faculty and staff.

Revenue generated from the increases will go toward as many as five parking garages set for construction within the next 20 years. It will also be used to maintain roads and sidewalks on campus and to construct surface parking areas, according to the email.

The most recent increases came in 2009 (10 percent) and 2010 (4.2 percent).

Mark Doré



The graduating seniors of The Mugdown.

PROVIDED

Founders of satire outlet reveal identities

Seniors of The Mugdown have 'Coming Out Day'

By Aimée Breaux

One year and more than 500,000 hits on their website later, the seniors of The Mugdown — an anonymous satirical student-run newspaper — released their names to the public via social media.

Called "Senior Coming Out Day," The Mugdown's reveal came just days after it caused a stir on campus after planting controversial yard signs about

the relationship between the Corps of Cadets and fraternities. With almost 3,000 followers on Twitter, the outlet has developed an online following through "stunts" like the yard signs and satirical articles with headlines like, "Best Friends Accidentally Walk Under Century Tree Together, Now Gay." Now, it plans to distribute its first print issue by the end of the semester.

The Wednesday reveal strategically left out who was associated with each of the writers' aliases. According to The Mugdown's

six founders, the aliases serve as a second layer of protection.

If someone were to find out the names of The Mugdown writers, this person would still not be able to identify the source of a particular article, said Jamie Bennett, founder and math senior.

Shelbi Polk, founder and international studies senior, said the anonymity allows The Mugdown the freedom to effectively make campus evaluate itself.

"My teacher in high school would always say, 'It's your best friend and your worst en-

emy who will tell you the truth about yourself,'" Polk said. "And I think that's kind of what we want to be, the best friend who helps A&M laugh at itself sometimes, because we have an amazing university and a really, really special place, but I think it's healthy to look at the truth humorously sometimes."

Polk said The Mugdown intends to reveal the names of its graduates every year, but the decision to release an alias will remain up to the writers.

THE MUGDOWN ON PG. 4