

## MENINGITIS

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Bacterial meningitis is more severe than viral meningitis. High fever, headache and stiff neck are common symptoms of meningitis. Both strains can be spread through direct contact with nose and throat secretions.

According to the Department of State Health Services, Texas had 336 cases of meningitis in 2009. Thirty-four of them in individuals between 15 and 29 years old.

New students, including entering graduate students, at UTPA will have a hold on their ASSIST account if they have not received the vaccination yet. This hold prevents them from registering for classes in the upcoming semester.

The Student Health Services center on campus is offering the vaccination for \$82 but there are certain instances that allow a student to be exempt from the vaccination.

"If you have a note from your physician that says it would be medically dangerous for you to take the vaccine, for instance if you were pregnant, we would wait until you delivered and then give you the vaccine," Rick Gray, director of Student Health Services, said.

The University is aware that some students may not be able to afford the vaccination.

"If a student cannot afford the vaccination, we can drop the cost on their student account," Gray said. "They could either use their financial aid to pay it off or pay it off before the end of the semester. It's up to them."

Students that are already enrolled in the University do not need the vaccination in order to register for next semester. The law is only for incoming students or students who have taken a long semester break from their university.

"All students are getting a pop-up (window) on ASSIST (about the vaccination), but they need to read it," Gilchrist said. "I have a lot of current students that think they need it because they are not reading the pop-up. They do not need the vaccination for next semester if they are already attending (the university)."

Matthew Sustaita, a sophomore art major and a student who will not be affected by this new law, believes all students should be required to receive this vaccination.

"I think that if (Texas) does these sort of policies, it should require the entire population (to receive the vaccination) rather than just a few chosen students because then the law wouldn't be as successful in its purpose," Sustaita said.



By Karen Antonacci  
THE PAN AMERICAN

Russel Skowronek thought it was a prank when he heard the news last Thursday in the car.

The Community Historical Archaeology Project with Schools program received a \$99,425 grant from the National Endowment for Humanities, something that came as a surprise to Skowronek, the director of the program.

"I thought somebody was pulling an April fool's joke a little late," he said. "This was the fourth proposal we had submitted in a calendar year...we've been turned down and turned down. I thought we'd be turned down on

human population over the last 10,000 years. It engages the Valley community by doing activities with schoolchildren about local archeology and history.

"We'll do a half day workshop with... middle school and beyond. Hands-on stuff in archeology," Skowronek said. "Working with projectile points and pottery and how to do an oral history. Real hands-on experiential learning so we get them jazzed about what's there."

CHAPS has developed curriculum to teach these subjects to local schools and will use the majority of the money to fund workshops for teachers.

"(The teachers) will be able to take back to the classroom what we show them and what's exciting about this is then we will join them in the classroom... and be able to observe

# CHAPS lands \$99,425

## Archeological organization plans to use funds for Valley schools

this also, because you get so used to getting the thin envelope or the email that says 'forget it.'"

The UTPA CHAPS program aims to tell the Valley's story by researching the change in its plant life, geology and

their students and measure the successes of their students," he said. "Then use this to develop even more specific curriculum right here on the Valley and celebrate our story down here."

Skowronek said the almost \$100,000 could not come at a better time, since school districts are cutting back on new teacher training and CHAPS has never had any funds to help the teachers.

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Russel Skowronek Director of CHAPS

"We've had no money. That means that everything has been done with a smile and a handshake and the school teachers, we never had any support for them," he said.

Skowronek said that since the grant is highly competitive, he hoped that its prestige will encourage other donors to support CHAPS.

"Money attracts money and I'm

hoping to not only attract more grants but I'm hoping to go to the foundations with this, and local folks will see, 'By God, they did it.' and we are out there doing what we said we would do," he said.

Being the director of an organization dedicated to telling the Valley's story might seem an odd fit for Skowronek, who first came to South Texas in 2005 from California, but he said he was drawn by the dearth of archeological research on the area.

"I came down here and said, 'Gee, this is a real interesting place. There have been Spanish-speaking people here for 250 years, must have been a lot of research that's been done,'" the specialist in Spanish colonialism said. "But the last major project done here was in the 1940's in Falcon Reservoir."

Skowronek said he has high hopes for the future of the program, which includes eight other faculty members, a grad student and a class from the University.

"When I go to these schools, I tell (the kids) to please get through high school, go through college, get a PhD and come take my job," he said. "Because I hope the next person that takes this job is someone that grew up here and I hope...whenever they do they will say, 'You know, for something with no money, look what CHAPS did.'"

## Operation I.D. gears up against bike theft

By Susan Gonzalez  
THE PAN AMERICAN

It is estimated that over 1.5 million bicycles are stolen every year, according to the National Bike Registry (NBR).

According to the NBR, statistics indicate that bicycle theft is one of the few forms of larceny on the rise in the United States, with college campuses being one of the most vulnerable locations for this crime.

"Believe it or not, one of the top crime statistics here on campus that we've seen is theft," Fidel Castro, a public safety and crime prevention officer, said. "And bikes are one of those that (are most commonly stolen). So that's why we've been pushing for Operation Identification...it's a crime prevention technique."

Operation Identification (Operation I.D.) is an on-going program started more than a year ago and involves the engraving of a state driver's license number on valuable items of personal property, such as bicycles. If the item is ever

lost or stolen and returned to the University police department, the owner of the item can be identified with this number and contacted so they may retrieve it.

Danielle Silva, an assistant professor of Portuguese, has seen signs around campus advertising Operation I.D. Despite using her bicycle often these past six months, she really wasn't aware of what it was.

"There is just a phone number on the sign," Silva, a visiting scholar, said. "There is no explanation about how to register the bike. It doesn't say where we are suppose to go, it could be better explained."

Despite this confusion, Silva still plans to eventually register her bicycle.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, junior communication major Amanda Lozano, knew all about Operation I.D. since she's a resident assistant (RA) at Troxel Hall. They keep in close contact with the University police department so they can keep residents informed.

"I took my bike to get registered," Lozano said. "It was cool. I thought 'Well, it's easy, it's free. I might as well because, if it does get stolen, there's a better chance of recovering it.'"

She thinks it's a good idea and feels more secure knowing her bicycle is registered.

"A lot of people (steal) bikes, and it's just easy," Lozano, who has been riding her bicycle a lot this past semester, said. "You never know. It's just really easy to steal these bikes. It's free and it's a good idea to go do it. Just taking the time to go to the police department and waiting for like five minutes and that's about it. It's a good idea, and I'm glad they have things like that. It's taking care of my property and it gives me a sense of security."

So far no items have been returned to owners as a result of this system, but Castro still encourages students to register items.

"We really encourage students to come out and get your bikes registered," he said. "It's free, it's to your benefit, you can't go wrong."

**OPERATION ID**

**For the security of your bike a bicycle decal is required on your bike (free). Park only at available bike rack locations.**

**For more information please contact the UTPA Police Department, 956-665-7151.**

Operation ID signs around campus ask UTPA cyclists to register their bikes.