

# T-shirts communicate many things

(CPS) — They work hard, master difficult bodies of thought, conduct scientific research and converse in foreign languages.

But now that spring is here, students again are communicating with each other a little more primitively: with their T-shirts.

"Students have their identities tied up with shirts to a very great extent, and I believe they do communicate with one another through their 'shirtspeak' language," said Prof. Shay Sayre of San Jose State University, who surveyed students at six campuses about their T-shirt preferences.

"T-shirts give you a group identity, it shows your loyalty to a particular team or group," added Memphis State University's Bettina Cornwell, who also has conducted scholarly research into why T-shirts, of all things, are so popular on campuses.

"Colleges are wonderful areas to look at and study T-shirts because so many students wear them," Cornwell noted.

Not everyone is happy that stu-

dents wear T-shirts, or with what they're saying.

In early March, University of Southwestern Louisiana Dean of Student Life Mary McPhaul told a USL fraternity to stop selling T-shirts with messages that "could be construed as negative when the university is trying to put its best foot forward."

USL business fraternity Pi Sigma Epsilon had been selling shirts emblazoned with the "Top Ten Reasons I Chose To Attend The University of Southwestern Louisiana," including "Wanting a foreign graduate student to teach me English" and "Could Not Spell L S \_."

A similar shirt — listing 15 reasons why "Beer Is Better Than Women At Tufts" — was sold last spring at Tufts University in Massachusetts. It led to a ban on potentially offensive shirts in certain campus "zones," which later was overturned on free speech grounds.

Such shirts say more about the wearers than about the schools they attend, Sayre and Cornwell contend.

Both professors said that shirts

sporting collegiate logos or the Hard Rock Cafe T-shirts are popular at nearly all campuses.

"These shirts say 'I'm well-traveled,'" Cornwell said.

Some are better-traveled than others. When eight Soviet exchange students arrived at Grinnell College in Iowa earlier this term, Grinnellians chose to greet them with a T-shirt reading, "Not Your Average Communist Party."

"Students covet shirts from places furthest from their campus. Hard Rock Cafe shirts are popular, but the more scarce the shirt, the more stature it receives from other wearers," Sayre said.

Sayre, who surveyed 563 students at the universities of Wisconsin, Colorado, Southern California and Texas, as well as Florida State and San Jose State universities, found regional differences in what shirts are most popular.

For example, students at Florida State (FSU) tend to wear T-shirts with Greek letters, particularly sororities. Wisconsin students like Spuds MacKenzie and Corona

Beer shirts, while Colorado students go for a more natural look, favoring plain white T-shirts.

Of the students surveyed, 88 percent said their T-shirts reflect their lifestyle, and 87 percent agreed with the statement "T-shirts tell me about people."

Corona and Spuds shirts are popular because they glorify alcohol, speculates University of Wisconsin's Mike Veveer. "You could say this is a big party school."

Most of Veveer's 15 T-shirts have a political message.

"I think kids want to belong, and some types of products symbolize belonging," Sayre concluded. "Whatever you want to be, you wear on your chest."

For example, in her survey, Sayre found that FSU students often thought "I wish I were a member" when they saw others wearing shirts with Greek symbols.

"I'd agree that to some degree it's a status symbol," noted Maria Palios of FSU's Kappa Kappa Gamma.

University of Southern Califor-

nia (USC) students are more apt to wear shirts from their own campus than any other type of shirt, maintained USC student Attila Weixer.

"School pride is real big here." "I'm willing to bet that every student here has at least one USC T-shirt," Weixer, who has about 25 T-shirts. Four are USC-related.

T-shirts are such a big deal at Southern Cal, he noted that many enterprising students design and sell their own. For example, one student-made shirt that Weixer owns has a BMW emblem and say "USC - the Ultimate Business Machine."

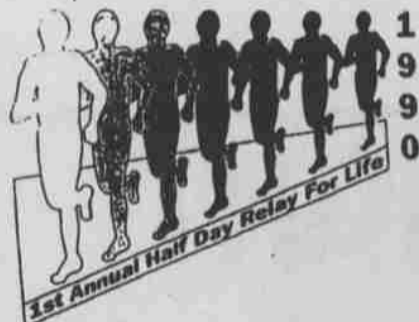
Nationwide, the enduring fad adds up to a big business, especially for college bookstores.

Of the 1,200 bookstores that are members of the Ohio-based National Association of College Stores (NACS), 98.3 percent carry T-shirts with scholarly logos.

"I'd imagine (bookstores) probably make a 35 percent profit margin from T-shirts," speculated the NACS's Hans Stechow. "I'm sure they do much better on T-shirts than they do on textbooks."

## Campus Recreation/Intramurals

### TEAM RELAY WALK-A-THON / RUN-A-THON



BENEFITS UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY

WHEN: April 22, 1990

7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: UNLV Track

HOW: Register and pick up pledge cards at MSU 126, 739-3221

(Campus Recreation/Intramural Office)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 18, 1990

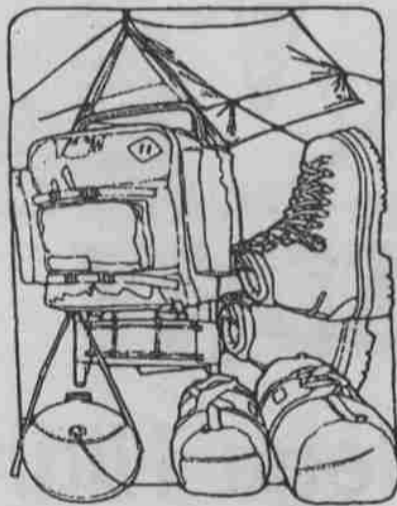
4:00 p.m. (MSU 126)

ALL UNLV STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF ARE INVITED!

Form your own team of friends or co-workers and be a part of this twelve hour event to benefit

United Cerebral Palsy

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4 person league

Captain's Meeting,

Sign-ups on

Tuesday, April 3

MSU Oasis Room, 4:00 p.m.

For more information, or to sign-up for an event, we are located in MSU 126, 739-3221.