

By Victoria Browning  
Raider's Digest staff

I talk to the secretary, but she tells me it's TAKS week, so he's not there. I come back later. Then again and again. I finally catch Mr. James Bedwell when he's free. I walk into his office and there are papers everywhere. He checks his e-mail before we start, then turns to me and says he's ready to go.

Mr. Bedwell is a busy man. He does individual counseling, and is the counselor for foreign exchange students. He is also the "Trauma Response Team Leader," which means that he handles all of the grief counseling at Southwest. He was picked for that job his first year here.

"It was hard to accept at first because I was trying to fit into a new school and learn a new job," Mr. Bedwell says about being picked.

In the three years Mr. Bedwell has worked at Southwest, he has had to do school-wide grief counseling about five times -- three times this year. His response to the deaths has always been the same, because he says the only thing that changes is the number of students who need to see him.

"People generally react similarly to a loss, but people tend to have stronger reactions to suicide," Mr. Bedwell says.

He does individual grief counseling for students who have had a family member die, or if a student at the school dies. This is normally individual, but in some cases school-wide grief counseling is needed.

"We just set up a safe environment for them to, you know, show their emotion however they want," Mr. Bedwell says. "We just try to meet whatever the specific need is at the moment, because you never know what it's going to be."

Mr. Bedwell also handles most everything to do with college and scholarships for the students. He helps with college entrance, the SAT/ACT exams, scholarship and financial aid, and the senior newsletter.

Before coming to Southwest, Mr. Bedwell worked in Everman for two years and Midland for three. He got a master's degree in counseling at the University of North Texas.

*Victoria Browning writes for Raider's Digest, Southwest's online newspaper. For more student journalism, check out [www.my.hsj.org/Texas/FortWorth/Southwest](http://www.my.hsj.org/Texas/FortWorth/Southwest)*