Class gift should be free prophylactics for frosh

To the Editor:

Some time ago, all seniors received an announcement from the Class Gift Committee. In the past, class gifts were donations to library or scholarship funds, donations which truly contributed to the educational environment here.

Now the Class Gift Program has been reduced to a symbolic gesture of "respect." This year's Program is a particularly painful example. The Class Gift Committee proposed to donate "You Are Here" maps to the Institute. Even a set of brass plaques with building names on them would be more useful. Besides, there are plenty such maps around campus already. If the Committee had only taken the time to look for them.

We propose a gift that would be beneficial to both the student body and the general community. Considering how little attention AIDS research has received in this country, it is vital to provide necessary information to all people at risk. The freshman packet already includes a booklet on sex. As part of the Alternative Gift Program, which we propose now, freshmen should also receive an information booklet on AIDS and a simple prophylactic device, such as a condom.

It is customary for a class gift to be a unique, one-of-a-kind item, such as the donor class. This gift need not be an exception. It could bear such an inscription both on the package and the actual product. Furthermore, considering the low bulk price of these aids, the Class of 1987 could afford enough of them to remind freshmen of its generosity for years to come. After the Class's donation is exhausted, future generations might reproduce it, but the present few left over will be collector's items to bring pride to the Institute.

Donations to the Class of 1987 Alternative Gift Program can be sent to Bexley Hall, room 408. The checks will be kept in an MIT account, soon to be opened. We hope that donations will be considered by the graduating seniors, so the Class of 1987 may not be forgotten.

Victor Shnyrovsky '87 Seth A. Gordon '90

Daybreak has counseling for all pregnant women

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to Julian West's column "Daybreak's advertisements are misleading," Feb. 20. My purpose is to provide accurate information on Daybreak's services.

Women (and their partners) concerned with unplanned pregnancies often experience a crisis in which they feel they have very little choice. Recognizing this, many non-profits agencies in Massachusetts provide free services to pregnant clients. Daybreak is one of those agencies. We are independently incorporated and administered. Supervised by professional staff and overseen by a board of directors, trained volunteers offer services at the Center and through outreach.

Daybreak services include (but are not limited to) pregnancy testing, information on pregnancy care and supportive services available to pregnant women, ongoing pregnancy help from an advocate who tailors services to her client's individual needs, maternity and baby clothing and supplies, housing in private homes for clients eighteen and older, and information and referral to a host of community resources. In addition, for those women who decide to terminate their pregnancies, we offer post-abortive support or referrals for professional counseling.

The pregnancy test we commonly use is a USG-Beta Stat, a highly accurate (98.3%) and well-respected indicator of pregnancy. Results are read 25 minutes after the test is begun. Clients either browse in Harvard Square or wait in our waiting room until just before the test is ready. A volunteer counselor then meets with the client privately. The volunteer first provides information about the pregnancy test, emphasizing that only an internal examination can absolutely confirm a pregnancy. She then briefly explains the volunteer nature of Daybreak and services we provide.

Then, the volunteer asks questions from a confidential interview form, including data on the client's menstrual cycle and a brief medical history. This information is used to assess whether there are any factors that could effect the test results.

The test results are then read and given to the client. The volunteer makes herself available to the client, creating a forum for the client to air her concerns and begin to cope with the crisis. With all good crisis intervention, the counselor provides not only empathy and compassion but concrete data on pregnancy, fetal development, and abortion procedures. For the woman feeling pressured to abort, the counselor informs her of services available to her should she decide to carry the pregnancy.

Should a woman decide to have an abortion, we extend to her post-abortive support via volunteers who had abortions themselves. If a woman decides to carry-to-term and wants further Daybreak services, we offer a full-range of assistance including one-to-one support from a volunteer, housing, maternity and baby items, labor coaching, individualized childbirth classes, and referral to other agencies as indicated. It is noteworthy that often we give long-term assistance to clients. For example, a young woman and her son, now six months old, will remain in one of our homes until permanent housing can be located. Another woman and her daughter moved out of one of our homes to an apartment where she continues to receive support from us well over a year later.

Daybreak seeks to reach out to women and men in the Boston area concerned with "crisis pregnancies," particularly college and university students. Had Julia West contacted Daybreak directly, I would have been happy to inform her of our services.

Cheryl Smith, LICSW Daybreak Program Director

ROTC students deserve our respect

To the Editor:

The March 13 Opinion section of The Tech is the best example of why people tend to join the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). "Demonstrators did not harass people," Larry Kolodney '85 summed up. "People have the rights set forth in the Constitution and government." ROTC, the men and women are not striving to become killers, or even "potential cannon fodder" as Kolodney said. They have strong principles, not to make excuses or your host country, take a moral stand, that you can write, study, and feel secure in knowing, even if you do not want to admit it aloud, that you can live, love, and love what you want without the fear of being arrested for your opinions.

Brad McCracken
Instructor of Naval Science