

12th Man

2021 | VOLUME 26, NO. 2

FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES
IN SUPPORT OF CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS



**RHONDA & FROSTY
GILLIAM JR '80**

E. KING GILL AWARD HONOREES



AGGIES RECORD BEST ACADEMIC YEAR IN SCHOOL HISTORY

3.079

Cumulative GPA (School Record)

3.133

Semester GPA (2nd Highest Ever)

356

AD Honor Roll (2nd Highest Ever for Spring)

65

4.0 GPAs (2nd Highest Ever)

24

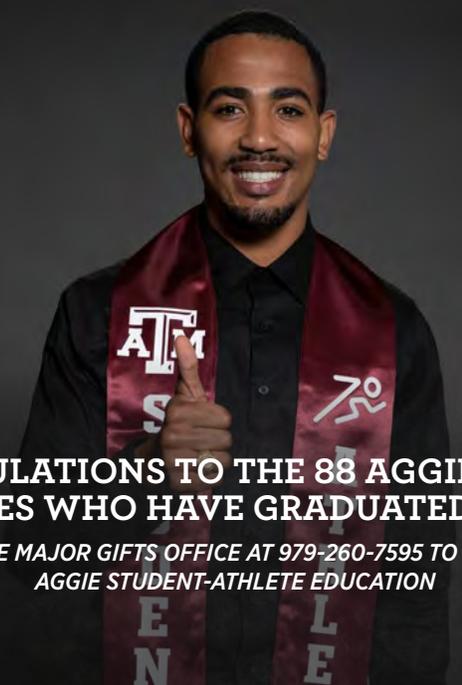
Dean's Honor Roll (Spring Semester Record)

12

Teams with 3.0 GPAs (2nd Highest Ever)

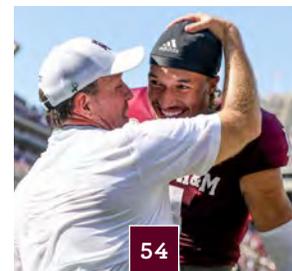
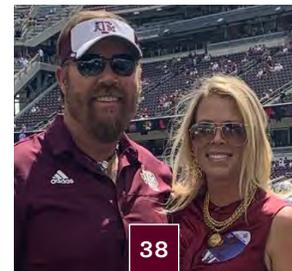
23

Distinguished Students (School Record)



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 88 AGGIE STUDENT-ATHLETES WHO HAVE GRADUATED IN 2021

CALL THE MAJOR GIFTS OFFICE AT 979-260-7595 TO SUPPORT AGGIE STUDENT-ATHLETE EDUCATION



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COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GILLIAM FAMILY
2020 E. KING GILL AWARD RECIPIENTS RHONDA AND FROSTY GILLIAM JR '80 HAVE MADE AN INDELIBLE IMPACT ON TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS AND THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION

12th Man

2021 | VOLUME 26, NO. 2

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Ex Officio

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12TH MAN FOUNDATION

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*Funding scholarships, programs and facilities
in support of championship athletics*



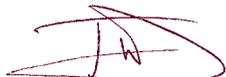
TO OUR DONORS,

Rhonda and Frosty Gilliam, Jr., who grace the cover of this publication, have cemented their impact on generations of Texas A&M student-athletes with their magnanimous approach to life. As their friend, I am proud to honor and recognize their commitment to Texas A&M's excellence and congratulate them, once again, as the 2020 E. King Gill Award recipients.

While the landscape of collegiate athletics has seen dramatic changes in the past 12 months, the commitment to excellence by every 12th Man Foundation donor continues to make a difference for Aggie student-athletes during their time on campus and beyond. In this edition of *12th Man Magazine*, the stories of Olympian Tyra Gittens and All-American Bre Warren, as well as successful business professionals like Barrett Loux, Terrence Murphy and Ty Warren provide just a glimpse into the weight your support has had and will have on the lives of our student-athletes.

As we navigate the evolution of college athletics, the opportunities you provide with your dedication to Texas A&M Athletics remains vital to the success of Aggie student-athletes and is something we can all be proud to celebrate.

Gig 'em!



Travis Dabney '96
President & CEO



TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS NAMES KORTAN, CHADWELL AND SCHLOSSNAGLE AS NEW HEAD COACHES

The 12th Man Foundation congratulates Brian Kortan on being named head men's golf coach and welcomes new head women's golf coach Gerrod Chadwell and head baseball coach Jim Schlossnagle to the Aggie family. Kortan was named head men's golf coach for Texas A&M in June after a successful season as the team's interim head coach. Three-time American Athletic Conference Coach of the Year Gerrod Chadwell was named head coach of the women's golf program on June 8. Two-time National Coach of the Year Jim Schlossnagle was named the 20th head coach in Texas A&M baseball history on June 9.

STAFF UPDATES

THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONS TO OUR DEDICATED STAFF:



Kaitlyn Garcia '19
Donor Service
Coordinator



Camryn Garner '21
Administrative
Assistant



Spencer Pepper '19
Donor Service
Coordinator



Bryce Shelton
Coordinator of
Ticket Operations



Kathleen Smith
Director of Ticket
Systems

In other staff news, the 12th Man Foundation is excited to announce the following staff changes and promotions:

Samantha Atchley '17
Director of Marketing
& Communications

Katelyn Buys '14
Vice President of Administration

Kathleen Curnutt '12
Senior Vice President of Finance

Brian Davis '01
Senior Director of Communications
& Creative Services

Carole Dollins*
Special Event Ticketing

Lauren Hickey
Director of Donor Relations

Phil LeFevre
Director of Business Intelligence

Terri McKee
Senior Director of Accounting

Brendan Quinn '15
Manager of Ticket Operations

Ashlee Shidler '15
Director of Ticket Operations

Lacey Williams*
Vice President of Ticketing

**Read more on pages 54-55*

AGGIE ACCOLADES



NINE AGGIES NAMED TO TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

The Texas A&M Lettermen's Association's Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2021 honors nine Aggies because of their individual accomplishments and team success. This year's class of legends will be inducted at the 43rd Burgess Banquet, which will be held on Friday, Sept. 17 prior to the New Mexico football game. Joining the best of the best in the Texas A&M Athletics Hall of Fame are: Randy Bullock '11 (football), Selena Collins Patterson '04 (softball), Sydney Colson '11 (women's basketball), Dante Hall '99 (football), Austin Krajicek '11 (men's tennis), Christine Marshall '09 (women's swimming & diving), Gabby Mayo '11 (women's track & field), Matt Rose '04 (men's swimming & diving) and Antoine Wright '05 (men's basketball). Additionally, this year's Hall of Honor inductee is current 12th Man Foundation Trustee Dave Coolidge '87 (football). Cliff Thomas '73 (football) is the Lettermen's Lifetime Achievement Award winner. Visit www.aggielettermen.org/burgessbanquet for more information or to purchase tickets to the banquet.



GITTENS, MU NAMED TO THE BOWERMAN FINALIST LIST

Tyra Gittens and Athing Mu were named two of three finalists for The Bowerman, given annually by the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association to the nation's top male and female collegiate athletes. "These two women are certainly two of the top three athletes in the NCAA, there is no question about it," head coach Pat Henry said. "For Texas A&M to have two young ladies representing our institution on The Bowerman is a huge accomplishment." Gittens, the nation's top multi-athlete, had a historic 2021 season finishing as a three-time NCAA Champion winning the indoor high jump and pentathlon titles, as well as the outdoor heptathlon championship. Mu, the nation's top middle-distance sprinter, rewrote the record books in 2021 setting 11 collegiate all-time top-12 marks, including six all-time collegiate records. Gittens and Mu each qualified for the Tokyo Olympics along with 24 other Aggies.

BISHOP NAMED SEC 2020-21 MCWHORTER SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Jon Bishop was named the 2020-21 Southeastern Conference H. Boyd McWhorter Scholar-Athlete of the Year becoming the third Aggie and second track and field athlete to earn the prestigious award. Swimming's Sarah Gibson earned the award in 2017, while track and field's Nathan Hite garnered the honor in 2019. "It's the highest honor that a student-athlete can receive in the SEC, and we're proud that Texas A&M continues a legacy of receiving this award," said Director of Athletics Ross Bjork. "Our goal here is to have our student-athletes achieve their full potential in whatever avenue they decide to pursue." Bishop was chosen by a committee of Faculty Athletics Representatives from SEC universities and will receive a \$20,000 post-graduate scholarship. Already a Texas A&M graduate with his bachelor's in applied mathematical sciences, Bishop is currently pursuing his master's in computer science.





STANDOUT STUDENT-ATHLETES RECOGNIZED AT ANNUAL BUILDING CHAMPIONS AWARDS

Texas A&M student-athletes Rachel Bernardo, Bryce Deadmon and Ciera Johnson were recognized with the Distinguished Letterman Awards during the eighth-annual Building Champions Awards in May. Awards were also presented for various academic, service, leadership and athletic endeavors. The full list of award winners includes:

BREAKING BARRIERS AWARD

The B.L.U.E.print

BILL ERWIN SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Macie Kolb (soccer) and Jon Bishop (track & field/cross country)

NYE ACADEMIC AWARD

Kenyal Perry (women's basketball) and Layden Robinson (football)

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Athing Mu (track & field) and Jaylon Jones (football)

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Tyra Gittens (track & field) and Shaine Casas (swimming & diving)

LOHMAN INSPIRATION AWARD

Aaliyah Wilson (women's basketball) and Will Frizzell (baseball)

SELFLESS SERVICE AWARD

Natalie Scheifele (track & field)

DISTINGUISHED LETTERMAN AWARD

Rachel Bernardo (track & field/cross country), Bryce Deadmon (track & field) and Ciera Johnson (women's basketball)

TEXAS A&M WOMEN FINISH SECOND, TOTAL THREE EVENT NATIONAL TITLES

The Texas A&M women's track & field team claimed three event championships and broke two collegiate records en route to a second place team finish at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in June. Athing Mu dazzled track and field fans across the nation breaking her own 400m collegiate record by .11 seconds to win the national title with a time of 49.57. Just over an hour later, Mu split 48.85 to anchor the Aggies to a 4x400m championship. The Aggie quartet of Tierra Robinson-Jones, Charokee Young, Jaevin Reed and Mu clocked an all-time collegiate record time of 3:22.34. After concluding day one of the heptathlon with 3,834 points, a leading score by 162 points, Tyra Gittens claimed the heptathlon national championship with a total of 6,285 points. "We lined it up, this group of ladies did a tremendous job," said head coach Pat Henry. "We knew that we didn't have a lot of bullets, but we knew that we have an elite group of ladies that can score."



AGGIE OLYMPIANS



ATHING MU (USA)

*GOLD (800M)
GOLD (4x400M)*

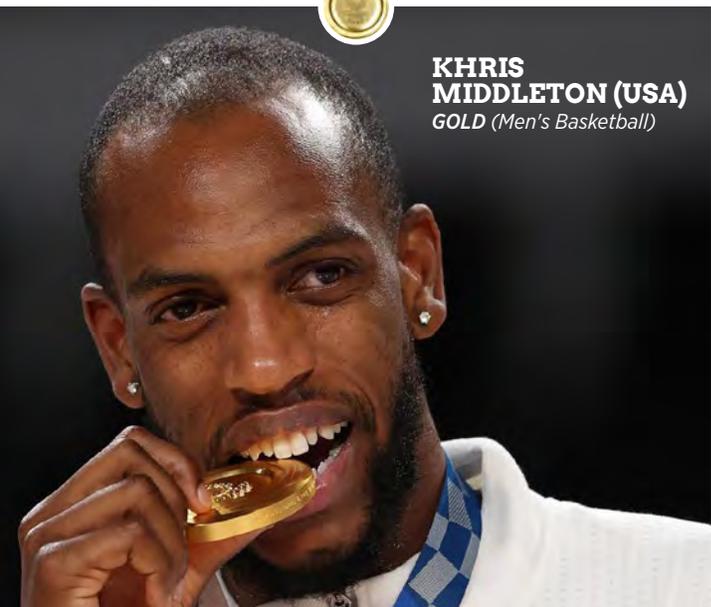


AGGIE ATHLETES BRING HOME A SCHOOL RECORD SEVEN OLYMPIC MEDALS

Twenty-six Aggies made their way to Tokyo to compete in an Olympic summer games unlike any other. Despite all the challenges in such unique circumstances, five Texas A&M athletes combined to bring home a total of seven medals, the most ever in a single Olympiad. The dynamic track running duo of Athing Mu and Bryce Deadmon became the first Aggies in history to win multiple medals at the same Olympics. Fred Kerley became the first Aggie in program history to medal in the short sprints. Sydney Pickrem became the third women's swimmer, along with Breeja Larson and Christine Marshall, in program history to medal at the Olympic Games. Khris Middleton became the second Aggie men's basketball alum to win a gold medal, joining DeAndre Jordan, who won gold in 2016. Seven other Aggies competed in the finals of their respective events. Tahar Triki placed fifth in the triple jump, Annie Kunz sixth in the heptathlon, Lindon Victor seventh in the decathlon, Maggie Malone 10th in the javelin and Tyra Gittens 10th in the long jump. In the relays, Emmanuel Yeboah helped Ghana to its first finals appearance in the 4x100m since 1994, and Deon Lendore helped Trinidad & Tobago to an eighth place finish in the 4x400m. Tori Vidales and Team Mexico finished just off the podium in fourth place in the softball tournament while Austin Krajicek of USA Tennis also nearly medaled in the men's doubles tournament, placing fourth.



KHRIS MIDDLETON (USA)
GOLD (Men's Basketball)



SYDNEY PICKREM (CANADA)
BRONZE (4X100 Medley Relay)





FRED KERLEY (USA)
SILVER (100M)



BRYCE DEADMON (USA)
GOLD (4x400M)
BRONZE (Mixed 4x400M)





12TH MAN FOUNDATION

YOUNG ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP

New membership option launched to strengthen connection between recent A&M graduates and Aggie Athletics

BY MACY TORONJO

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a Young Alumni member, visit the 12th Man Foundation's website or call 888-992-4443.

THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION RECENTLY LAUNCHED a new Young Alumni membership option aimed to keep Aggies connected to Texas A&M Athletics after graduation.

Available to all A&M graduates within the past 12 years, this new membership level gives younger former students the opportunity to stay involved and keep the spirit of the 12th Man alive within them no matter where their future takes them.

With a \$50 annual contribution, Young Alumni members are eligible for all benefits equal to the standard \$150 membership level until 12 years post-graduation. At a lower minimum donation for a full membership, Aggies can stay involved while they are in the beginning stages of their professional lives.

A Young Alumni membership provides the opportunity to support the athletics department while getting an early start on building valuable priority points for future ticket and parking requests.

Additionally, Young Alumni members receive a membership card and window decal and stay informed about Aggie Athletics with subscriptions to the 12th Man Foundation's magazine and Texas A&M Athletics Update emails.

"Our goal was to provide a one-of-a-kind program to grow Young Alumni members and educate them on the ins and outs of the 12th Man

Foundation," said Callie Boenigk, manager of Annual Fund.

As an added benefit, the 12th Man Foundation plans to host events around Texas where Young Alumni members can network, grow professionally and share in the Aggie Spirit.

"By educating recent graduates on the importance of giving back to A&M Athletics, we aim to increase our exposure and make this membership option attractive to this demographic," Boenigk said. "I want to make sure they know what is available and how they can make an impact on our student-athletes and athletics program."

Members also have the opportunity to continue experiencing gameday at Kyle Field at a familiar price level by purchasing Young Alumni season tickets. Located in the south upper deck of Kyle Field for the 2021 season, Young Alumni season tickets cost \$325 – the same price as a sports pass.

As A&M's former student population continues to grow, perspective Young Alumni members represent a significant group of potential donors.

"It's important for the future success of A&M Athletics to keep Aggies engaged when they graduate and leave campus," said Boenigk. "The Young Alumni membership level offers exclusive and exciting opportunities to encourage continued involvement." ■

ROBERT DENNIS '83

A conversation with the chair of the 2021
12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees



- » ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON AND CO-FOUNDER OF TEXAS SPINE AND JOINT HOSPITAL IN TYLER, TEXAS
- » FORMER MEMBER OF THE CORPS OF CADETS AND ROSS VOLUNTEERS
- » MEMBER OF CHAMPIONS COUNCIL AND PREVIOUS CAPTAIN OF THE EAST TEXAS CHAPTER
- » WIFE, SHELI, AND ONE SON, BRYCE

What makes Texas A&M special to you?

I'm a first-generation Aggie. I fell in love with Texas A&M on my initial campus visit when I was coming up from high school. From my first "howdy" on campus, it just felt right to me. Texas A&M is special to me because of the honored traditions and the loyalty and dedication that you have for one another and to Texas A&M. The Aggie Spirit and the Aggie network continues to unite us long after our time on campus.

What did you study at Texas A&M?

I was a business management major at Texas A&M. I knew I wanted to pursue a career in medicine, but I also wanted to have a business background to help me understand and run the business side of the medical practice. Business management provided me enough elective hours to satisfy my requirements for medical school.

What led you to a career in orthopedic surgery, and what do you credit for your professional success?

I've enjoyed sports my entire life, and during medical school, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in surgery. Orthopedics allowed me the opportunity to combine my love of sports and surgery. After completing my orthopedic surgery residency, I completed a sports medicine fellowship in Sydney, Australia. I would credit my professional success to treating people with respect and having grit. Those are two qualities I developed while I was at Texas A&M.

How did you first become involved with the 12th Man Foundation?

I became passionate about A&M sports when I was a student. I never missed a football game at Kyle Field or a basketball game at G. Rolie White. I attended as many baseball games as I could, and I attended some away football games because I was in the corps. Later, I became involved with the 12th Man Foundation when I

bought football season tickets and upgraded my seats with the addition of the Bernard C. Richardson Zone Club. Then, Sheli and I became active in the East Texas Champions Council. Like a lot of our donors, we started as transactional season ticket holders and progressed to philanthropic giving. As we increased our involvement, we just wanted to give back more to Texas A&M and the 12th Man Foundation.

What motivates you to continue supporting Aggie Athletics through the 12th Man Foundation?

I think two of my main motivating factors to continue supporting athletics through the 12th Man Foundation are, number one, A&M Athletics is the window through which the world sees our university and it provides an opportunity to showcase our great traditions, culture and core values. I would say the second motivating factor is, I, like most Aggies, take great pride in seeing the transformation of our facilities to support A&M Athletics. Our incredible facilities help our coaches recruit and develop our student-athletes both in the athletic arena and in the classroom.

What do you see as the role of the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees and your role as the 2021 chair?

First, I'm humbled and honored to be the chair of the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees this year. The role of the board of trustees is to support our mission of funding scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics at Texas A&M. The board of trustees appreciates our loyal donors and is committed to being good stewards of their donations. We are fortunate to have Travis Dabney as our president and CEO and an unbelievable staff at the 12th Man Foundation. This past year has been stressful for everyone, and I'm proud of the 12th Man Foundation staff for their professionalism and flexibility. ■

2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHAIR



ROBERT DENNIS '83
TYLER, TX
Orthopedic Surgeon

- » BBA in Management (1983)
- » Former member of the Corps of Cadets and Ross Volunteers
- » Attended medical school at UT Houston and completed residency at UT San Antonio
- » Completed a Sports Medicine fellowship in Sydney, Australia
- » Co-founded Texas Spine and Joint Hospital in Tyler, Texas
- » Member of Champions Council and previous captain of the East Texas Chapter
- » Active member of Annual Fund Committee
- » Wife, Sheli, and one son

CHAIR-ELECT



CHRIS COOPER '89
CHATHAM, NJ
Deloitte & Touche LLP

- » BBA in Accounting (1989)
- » Began career in Dallas with Deloitte & Touche LLP
- » Relocated to the northeast and was admitted to the firm partnership in 2000
- » Led and provided services to Deloitte's preeminent global audit clients in various industries
- » Serves as leader of the Life Science and Healthcare Audit practice of the U.S.
- » Supports the Mays Business School and The Association of Former Students
- » Football season ticket holder since 1999 and has donated generously to many capital funding projects
- » Wife, Terry, and three sons

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR



DAVID DUNLAP '83
THE WOODLANDS, TX
Retired (Energy Industry)

- » BS in Petroleum Engineering (1984)
- » Former member of the Corps of Cadets, Fightin' Texas Aggie Band and Ross Volunteers
- » Former President/CEO and Director of Superior Energy Services
- » 25 years at BJ Services in a variety of engineering, operations and management positions in both international and sales divisions
- » Member of Texas A&M's Petroleum Engineering Industry Board, the College of Engineering Advisory Council and the President's Board of Visitors for the Corps of Cadets
- » Awarded an Ernst & Young's 2013 Transformational CEO from the U.S. Gulf Coast Area
- » Diamond Champions Council member
- » Wife, Anne, and six children



EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

TRAVIS V. DABNEY '96
COLLEGE STATION, TX
President & CEO

ROSS BJORK
COLLEGE STATION, TX
Director of Athletics

12TH MAN FOUNDATION
BYLAWS CAN BE FOUND AT
WWW.12THMANFOUNDATION.COM



JAY GRAHAM '92
HOUSTON, TX
Spur Energy Partners

- » BS in Petroleum Engineering (1993)
- » Founder & CEO of Spur Energy Partners
- » Appointed as a member of the Texas A&M Board of Regents in 2019
- » Member of the Petroleum Engineering Academy of Distinguished Graduates
- » Serves of the Petroleum Industry Advisory Board and the College of Engineering Advisory Council
- » Co-founder and advisor to Texas A&M's Petroleum Ventures Program
- » Founded the April and Jay Graham Fellowship for Military Service Initiatives at the Bush Institute
- » Diamond Champions Council member
- » Wife, April, and two sons



KEVIN MCDONALD '89
HOUSTON, TX
NexTier Oilfield Solutions Inc.

- » BS in Agricultural Economics (1989)
- » JD from the University of Texas School of Law (1992)
- » Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel at NexTier Oilfield Solutions Inc. (formerly Keane Group Inc.)
- » Held professional leadership positions at Valero Energy, Anadarko Petroleum and Cooper Industries
- » Served as President & Chief Executive Officer and acting General Council of Arms of Hope
- » Practiced as a partner at international law firm Fulbright & Jaworski LLP
- » Served in leadership roles at Marathon Oil Corporation from 2012-16
- » Wife, Nathalie, and three children



DON MEYER '78
SAN ANTONIO, TX
Scout & Molly's Boutique

- » BS in Animal Science (1978)
- » 35+ years of experience in the insurance industry
- » Partner at Scout & Molly's Boutique
- » Has made generous donations to several 12th Man Foundation capital campaigns and A&M Foundation endowed scholarships
- » Wife, Carol '78, and two Aggie children



JACK LAFIELD '72
DALLAS, TX
Caiman Energy

- » BS in Chemical Engineering (1972)
- » Founder and chairman of Caiman Energy with a 40-year career in the energy industry
- » Has contributed significantly to support student-athlete scholarships, the R.C. Slocum Nutrition Center, the redevelopment of Kyle Field and the soccer program
- » Regularly provide Aggie Rings for military veterans and support engineering scholarships
- » Wife, Michele, and three children

2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES



WAYNE ROBERTS '85
AUSTIN, TX
Abrigo

- » BBA in Business Analysis (1985) and MBA (1986)
- » CEO of Abrigo
- » Technology industry veteran with an extensive background building growth companies and teams
- » Lead donor for the Shannon '86 and Wayne '85 Roberts Basketball Student-Athlete Center for the men's basketball program
- » Diamond Champions Council member
- » Supporter of the Mays Business School
- » Two children



JOE WRIGHT '82
MIDLAND, TX
Retired (Energy Industry)

- » BS in Petroleum Engineering (1982)
- » Retired as Executive Vice President and COO of Concho in 2018 after 14 years in various leadership positions with the company
- » Serves on the Board of Directors for Concho and Oil States International, Inc.
- » Diamond Champions Council member
- » Has contributed to multiple facility projects for A&M Athletics
- » Wife, Jill '83, and four Aggie children



DAVID COOLIDGE '87
HOUSTON, TX
024 Family Office LLC

- » BS in Industrial Distribution (1988)
- » Served as Founder and Owner of Velite Capital Management, a commodity fund focused on natural gas trading from 2006-15
- » Member of the 12th Man Kickoff Team (1985-87)
- » Diamond Champions Council member
- » Namesake of the David '87 and Ashley '88 Coolidge Football Practice Fields
- » Wife, Ashley '88, and four children



GEORGE "TREY" HENDERSON '80
LUFKIN, TX
Henderson Mineral Inc.

- » BS in Agricultural Economics (1980)
- » Owner of Henderson Mineral Inc.
- » Serves on boards for Southside Bank, Brookshire Brothers Holding Inc., Overseas Hardwood Company, George H. Henderson Jr. Expo Center and The Pineywoods Foundation
- » Served on the Governor's Task Force on Evacuation, Transportation and Logistics in 2005, Angelina College, Memorial Health Systems of East Texas, The Texas Ethics Commission and The Texas Parks & Wildlife - Private Land Advisory Board
- » Wife, Brigettee, and two sons



MICHELLE HICKOX '89
PLANO, TX
Independent Bank Group

- » BBA in Accounting (1989)
- » Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Independent Bank Group in McKinney, Texas, since May of 2012
- » Serves on the Executive Board of the Texas A&M Mays Business School Commercial Banking Program
- » Board member and audit committee member of the Baylor Oral Health Foundation, which supports the Texas A&M College of Dentistry
- » Husband, Rob '90, and two Aggie daughters



MAYPHOUS COLLINS '94
HOUSTON, TX
Amagine Technologies Corp.

- » BBA in Management (1994)
- » President and CEO of Amagine Technologies Corp.
- » Founded Amagine Technologies in 2009 which has been ranked 15th among the 100 fastest growing Aggie-led businesses in the world
- » Recipient of the Texas A&M University Department of Multicultural Services 30 Year Distinguished Service Award
- » Wife, Akilah, and three children



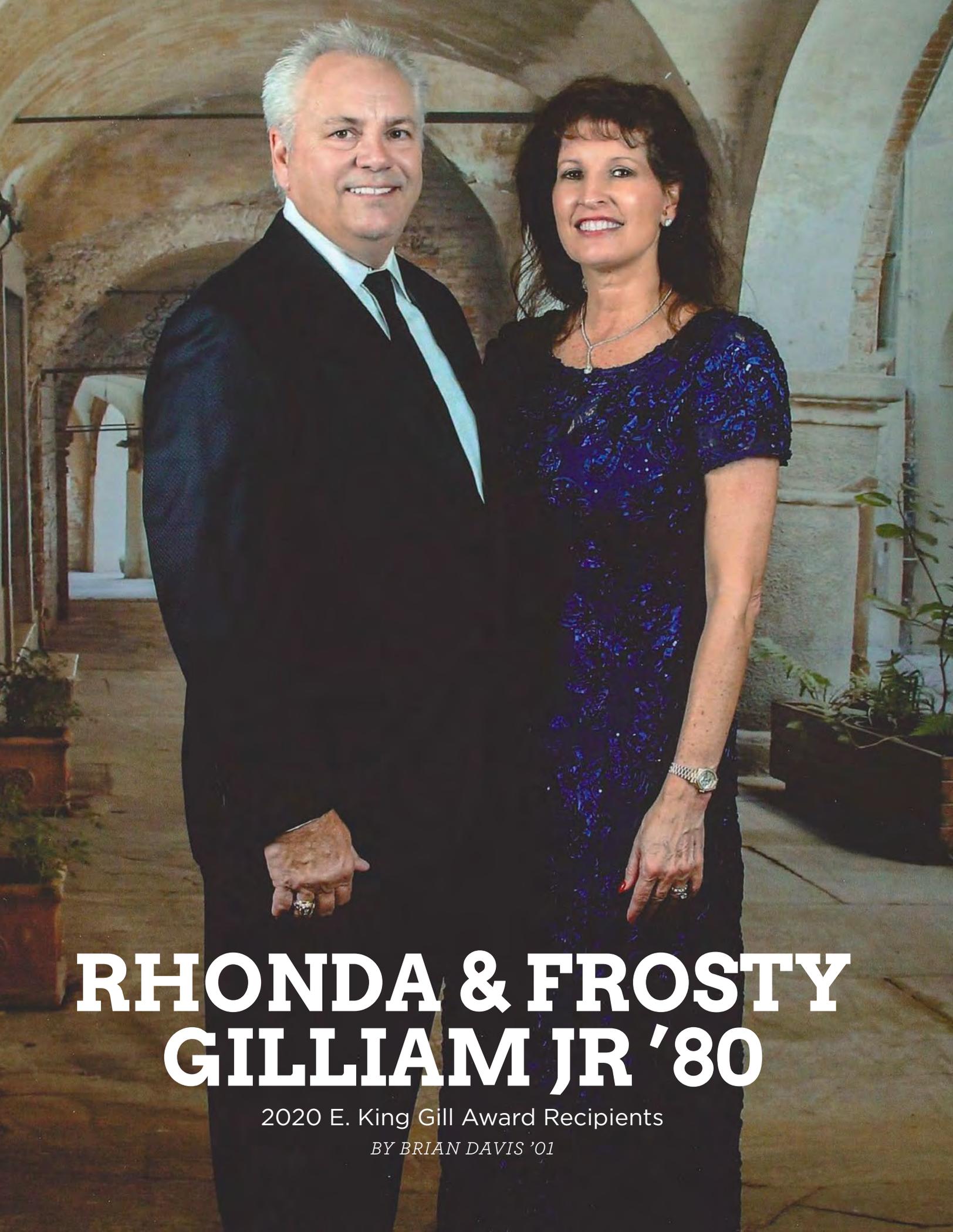
JOSH DAVIS '94
HOUSTON, TX
Stellus Capital Management

- » BBA in Finance (1995)
- » Founding partner of Stellus Capital Management and co-head of the Private Credit strategy and serves on its investment committee
- » Has generously supported numerous capital projects including Blue Bell Park, the Cox-McFerrin Center for Aggie Basketball and the Bright Football Complex renovations
- » Supports the Mays Business School and serves on the advisory board for the Trading, Risk & Investments Program (TRIP)
- » Wife, Stephanie, and three children



JEFFREY MILLER '85
FORT WORTH, TX
Vortus Investments

- » BS in Petroleum Engineering (1985)
- » Holds an MBA from Columbia Business School
- » Co-founder, CEO and Managing Partner of Vortus Investments, a Fort Worth-based private equity firm focused on generating long-term capital gains through investments in the lower/middle market upstream energy industry in North America
- » Has generously supported capital projects including E.B. Cushing Stadium and the Davis Player Development Center's expansion
- » Serves on the Advisory Board for the Department of Petroleum Engineering
- » Former walk-on for the Aggie track and field program
- » Wife, Susan, and two Aggie children



RHONDA & FROSTY GILLIAM JR '80

2020 E. King Gill Award Recipients

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

FROSTY GILLIAM WAS READY TO ANSWER.

As a 20-year-old transfer student from Odessa College, Frosty was on Texas A&M's campus meeting with Doug Von Gonten in the Harold Vance Department of Petroleum Engineering.

The question: Why did Frosty want to be a petroleum engineer?

A year and a half earlier, he was set to enroll at A&M and major in biomedical engineering. Then, during the week of Frosty's high school graduation, his father – Frosty Sr. – started his own oil field service company specializing in wireline logging. Frosty Jr. decided to stay home and help his dad get the business up and running.

“The name of his company was Temperature Evaluation Logging Company – Frosty, the Cool Temperature Man,” Frosty said. “He was the best out there. All of the field superintendents for the major oil companies that he worked for knew him. They all called me Junior.”

When he started, “Junior” admits he did not know much about the business.

“My dad sat in the air-conditioned truck running the log,” recalled Frosty, “and I was outside getting grease down my neck, having my fingers smashed and stuff like that.”

While working in the field those 18 months as his father's “swamper,” Frosty watched as engineers fresh out of college visited sites to learn the ropes.

“I saw all these guys come out wearing khakis and blue jeans and I'm wearing coveralls with grease in my hair,” Frosty recalled. “They're carrying a



notepad and I'm carrying oily gloves. I thought to myself, I want to be one of those guys.”

That was his answer to Von Gonten, a revered professor and one of the most influential petroleum engineering department heads in A&M's history.

“I told him that while working in the field, I see all these guys from A&M come out,” recalled Frosty, “and they look like they're enjoying themselves. They're all clean and I'm all dirty.”

Von Gonten's response: “That's what we like to hear.”

DESERVING OF RECOGNITION

Answering is what Frosty is all about.

Even though it meant putting his future on hold, Frosty answered the call when his father needed help.

And along with Rhonda – his wife of 36 years – Frosty has answered every call to help Texas A&M Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation.

The Gilliams' willingness to step up time and time again in selfless support of Aggie Athletics has been extraordinary and is why the couple was named recipients of the 2020 E. King Gill Award.

“It's extremely humbling and overwhelming to even be considered a recipient of the E. King Gill Award,” said Frosty. “We give back to this university

The Gilliams were officially presented the 2020 E. King Gill Award on April 23, 2021, during Champions Council Weekend. Rhonda and Frosty, pictured above with Travis Dabney, Robert Dennis, David Dunlap and Ross Bjork, have been stalwart supporters of Texas A&M Athletics since buying football season tickets in 2005.

“
We give back to this university because we love it, and it has given us so much. There's no way that we can ever repay Texas A&M.

– FROSTY GILLIAM JR '80

“

With my involvement with the 12th Man Foundation, I can honestly say that one of the true blessings has been being able to get to know Rhonda and Frosty.

– ROBERT DENNIS '83

because we love it, and it has given us so much. There's no way that we can ever repay Texas A&M. We are grateful and thankful to the 12th Man Foundation for this recognition.”

Since 2011, the E. King Gill Award has been presented annually to a person or family to honor supporters who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to the 12th Man Foundation's mission.

“I could not be happier for Rhonda and Frosty to receive this award,” said Robert Dennis, chair of the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees. “When you talk about Rhonda and Frosty, they're just such incredible people to begin with and they're just so humble and so generous. With my involvement with the 12th Man Foundation, I can honestly say

that one of the true blessings has been being able to get to know Rhonda and Frosty.”

The recipient of the E. King Gill Award is selected based on financial commitment, exemplary service and leadership as a volunteer advocate, ethics and a high level of distinction as a role model.

“Rhonda and Frosty are extraordinary people and committed supporters who have played a significant role in Texas A&M's success academically and athletically during a transformational period in our university's history,” said Travis Dabney, 12th Man Foundation president and CEO. “I'm extremely proud of what they have done and everything they embody.”

ICING ON THE CAKE

Forrest “Frosty” Gilliam Jr. '80 was born in Hobbs, N.M., in 1956. He was raised in Odessa and has lived in West Texas for most of his life.

He grew up playing sports and rooting for one of A&M's longtime conference rivals – the Arkansas Razorbacks. Frosty's mother was born in Arkansas, and his extended family bleeds cardinal red.

“We had little pigs on our car,” he recalled. “My uncle was very involved in the school and tried to get me to come play baseball for Arkansas.”

After graduating from Odessa Permian High School in 1975 and working those 18 months until

Friends and family helped surprise Rhonda and Frosty with the E. King Gill Award on October 9, 2020 – the night before Texas A&M upset 4th-ranked Florida.





his father was able to hire more employees, Frosty followed his best friend, Tom Bartlett, to Aggieland.

A&M was a perfect fit for the lifelong Razorback fan who quickly switched his allegiance and had a great experience becoming an Aggie.

“The Razorbacks and Longhorns were already rivals with a mutual ‘dislike’ for each other,” he said. “So becoming an Aggie was icing on the cake. I didn’t even have to practice.”

Now an Aggie through and through, Frosty admits his animosity for the Longhorns is limited to the field of play.

“I have many friends and family who are Longhorns,” he said, “my brother included.”

Frosty worked hard and spent a lot of time studying while in school. He earned his petroleum

engineering degree in 1980 and is especially grateful for those who helped him along the way.

“Dr. Von Gonten and Dr. (Stephen) Holditch are two men who poured into my life,” he said of his former professors. “Dr. Von Gonten was a special person. I’m sure he was to every student, but he made you feel special. He was very instrumental in my development as a petroleum engineer.”

CHANCE MEETING

Rhonda (Norwood) was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1962. Because of her father’s job with Continental at the time, Rhonda’s family moved from Missouri to Ponca City, Okla. to Tulsa, Okla. before landing in Houston when she was 10 years old.

Proud parents of their son, Matt '09 and daughter Laura (Cortez), the Gilliams were lead donors for the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field and have one of the 12 Founders Suites at the iconic stadium. Frosty also served on the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees from 2012-18, acting as the board’s chair in 2017.



Pictured with friends and fellow A&M supporters Neal and Sonja Adams and Cindy and Allan Taylor at a 12th Man Foundation “Rockin’ Through the Ages” themed event, the Gilliams have a reputation for getting in costume for a good cause. According to Sam Torn, Frosty especially enjoys Halloween. “He dresses up as Batman, and he has the Batmobile,” said Torn. “Hundreds if not thousands of kids come through his house, and he gives them massive amounts of candy. He just loves doing that.”

After graduating from high school in 1979, Rhonda attended Sam Houston State University along with her best friend.

“I considered Baylor and A&M, but I didn’t have ties to any Texas schools,” said Rhonda who earned a degree in marketing in 1983. “My mom didn’t go to college and my dad went to Pepperdine.”

While in college, Rhonda spent every summer and Christmas break working with her father in Houston at Amoco – a major oil company at the time that later became BP.

“Actually, I was only supposed to do it once,” she admitted. “It was a sons and daughters program, and my dad worked there. And my younger sister worked there during the summer before my senior year.”

They worked in separate buildings, but Rhonda would ride a van over to see her sister during breaks. On one day in June of 1982, she went to see her sister who was working as an administrative assistant that week for a young engineer named Frosty.

“I saw them in the breakroom,” recalled Frosty, “and later asked her sister who she was sitting with, and then I asked to meet her.”

The next day, Frosty and a friend, John Beecherl, saw Rhonda and her sister in the breakroom.

“John and I had our snickers and a coke and then coolly walked by without acknowledging them,” he

said. “Five minutes later, there was a knock on my office door, and there Rhonda and her sister stood.”

Frosty and Rhonda talked until she had to go back to work in her building.

“I gave her a few minutes,” said Frosty, “and then called her up and asked, ‘Hey, where do you want to take me to lunch tomorrow?’”

They went to lunch, started dating and were married at Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston on Sept. 22, 1984.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

Amoco was Frosty’s first job out of college. He started in Odessa before being transferred to the Houston office in 1981.

“The joke for the Odessa district was that they didn’t care what your GPA was,” Frosty recalled. “They wanted to know what your 40-yard-dash time was. They were very competitive in sports and were the Amoco champions in football, basketball and softball.”

Frosty left Amoco shortly before he and Rhonda were married and spent the next three years working for an independent company in Houston.

In 1987 – five months after their son, Matt, was born – Frosty was laid off due to financial problems at the company following the oil bust in the mid 1980s.

“

Rhonda and Frosty understand what their gifts do to promote athletics as the front porch of the university and how that helps young men and women gain a college education and lead productive lives.

– SAM TORN '70

“He would always tease about quitting or getting fired and going back to Odessa,” Rhonda recalled. “When he came home and told me he had been laid off, I didn’t believe him.”

Frosty landed a new job in Dallas a week later and spent the next 6 months working there while making plans to start his own business back in Odessa. In 1988, Frosty and his younger brother, Tim, started an oil and gas exploration company called Aghorn Energy Inc.

“My brother was already living in Odessa and sort of working for my dad,” said Frosty, “so I asked him if he wanted to be my partner and work in the field as the pumper.”

A University of Texas graduate with a degree in journalism, Tim represented the “horn” in “Aghorn.”

“Luckily I’m the older brother and the engineer, so ‘Ag’ came first,” joked Frosty.

ANSWERED PRAYER

The Gilliam brothers bought Aghorn’s first two wells for \$90,000. Frosty paid for his half by selling his Amoco stock.

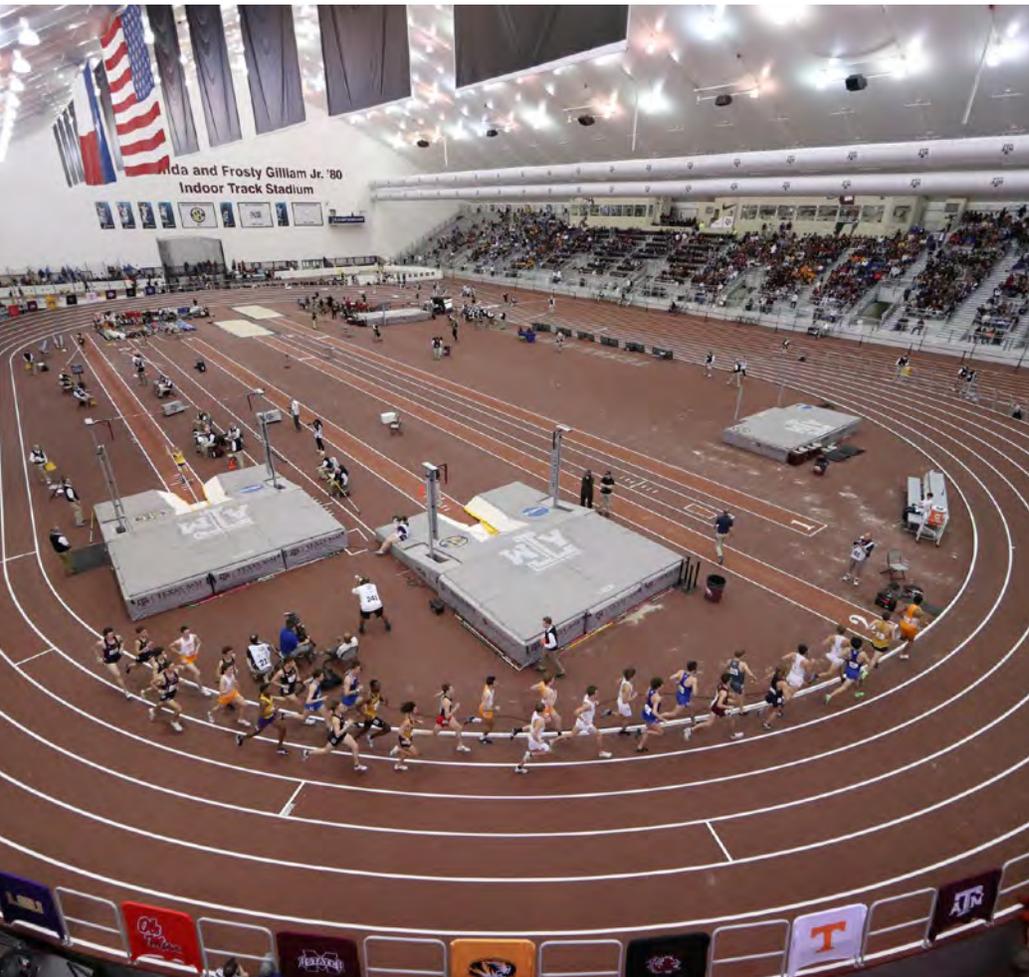
“It was rough at first,” he recalled noting that the two wells were not making enough of a return to support them. “My dad was gracious enough to let me work for him as a salesperson.”

Over the next year, Frosty was able to find enough work for his dad’s company to cover his salary while also trying to buy more wells from oil companies for Aghorn. Then, during a round of golf in April 1989, Frosty and his father had an eye-opening conversation.

“I was putting on the third hole,” recalled Frosty, “and my dad said, ‘You may need to start looking for another job if you aren’t able to find some wells soon.’”

Business was slow, and Frosty’s father wanted to

The couple has given significantly to multiple facility projects on campus including the Rhonda and Frosty Gilliam Jr. '80 Indoor Track Stadium and the Cox-McFerrin Center for Aggie Basketball.





protect his field employees.

“He knew his employees depended on him for their jobs and supporting their families,” Frosty said. “He also knew I had a degree in petroleum engineering and could find a job for another oil company if needed.

“I went home and told Rhonda, ‘I think my dad is laying me off. I have to find a job in the next couple of months.’ Rhonda said, ‘Let’s pray about it.’ We prayed that the Lord would give us an answer by June 1.”

Frosty spent the next two months sending out resumes, talking with friends and continuing to make offers to oil companies to buy some of their wells. The Gilliams also welcomed the birth of their daughter, Laura. They started to get nervous as June inched closer and closer.

“On the Friday before Memorial Day I received a phone call from a guy at Texaco,” recalled Frosty, adding that they generally called to tell him he was outbid. “He tells me, ‘You were the successful bidder on these two properties. And here’s the amazing thing. You weren’t the high bidder – you were the fifth highest bidder, but the other four dropped out. So now it’s yours if you want it.’ We called that an answered prayer.”

Frosty and Tim borrowed \$220,000 from their father at 10 percent interest to buy the two properties, which were producing about 35 barrels per day.

“We paid him back – plus interest – in 11 months,” Frosty said.

The brothers continued buying properties, and a major deal in 1991 took the company to another level. In 1996, Tim decided he wanted to move on to something else so Frosty bought him out and

“

We try to be good stewards of the money the Lord allows us to have. Most of it goes back to Him. Some of it goes to A&M. A lot of it goes to help other people.

– FROSTY GILLIAM JR '80



In addition to the E. King Gill Award, Rhonda and Frosty were recognized as 2018 recipients of the Texas A&M Foundation's prestigious Sterling C. Evans Medal Award and were honored as the Odessa Chamber of Commerce's 2012 Outstanding Citizen of the Year.

added Trent Day as a partner. Today, Aghorn has 23 employees and owns approximately 1,000 wells, mostly within 30 minutes of Odessa.

REDISCOVERING TEXAS A&M

While focused on building a career and family in West Texas, Frosty became disconnected from A&M. In fact, when Matt began looking for colleges, A&M was not even on his radar.

"We never really talked about A&M with Matt," Rhonda admitted.

"We were two-percenters," added Frosty.

At Frosty's suggestion, they decided to visit Aggieland so that Matt could see what A&M was about.

"I hadn't been there in so long," recalled Frosty, "I didn't know where anything was."

They toured campus and met with staff in the petroleum engineering and computer science departments.

"When we left, I didn't really say anything about it," Frosty said. "Then one day he said he was going to A&M and wanted to major in petroleum engineering."

After dropping Matt off for Fish Camp in 2005, Frosty made his way to Kyle Field and stopped by the 12th Man Foundation's offices. There, he

purchased four Aggie football season tickets.

That transaction proved to be the beginning of a relationship that would help transform Texas A&M Athletics into the juggernaut it is today.

LASTING IMPACT

In 2008, Rhonda and Frosty committed their first seven-figure gift to the 12th Man Foundation as part of The Championship Vision campaign, which helped fund the McFerrin Athletic Center and A&M's indoor track and field stadium that bears their name.

They have continued to make an exceptional impact on Aggie student-athletes with significant support of multiple facility projects including the construction of the Cox-McFerrin Center for Aggie Basketball as well as renovations to Olsen Field at Blue Bell Park and the Bright Complex.

"Frosty just wants to be a part of building excellence at Texas A&M, not just to say we're the best, but so the benefits of being the best can be shared with the student-athletes and all Texas Aggies," said Torn. "If you need someone at any time, you can call on Frosty and he'll be there."

The Gilliams also made a lead gift for the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field.

"We have been so blessed by the Lord that we've



The Gilliams' son, Matt, earned a university studies degree from A&M in 2009, and their daughter, Laura, earned a wildlife and fisheries biology degree from Oregon State University in 2015. Frosty and Rhonda are also the proud grandparents of Laura's daughters Jaiden and Faylynn.

been able to participate by giving back to our university so that lives can be changed," said Frosty, "and men and women student-athletes have the opportunity to come to a school, be influenced by world-class professors, educators and coaches and meet men and women who genuinely care about them."

Frosty also selflessly gave back through his service on the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees from 2012-18, acting as the board's chair in 2017.

"When it was his time to lead the 12th Man Foundation, it was a critical time in the organization," said Torn, who served on the board with Frosty and was chair in 2014. "It was a time when it was necessary to make a very difficult but very important leadership change. Frosty shepherded that leadership change in the exact right way. He was pivotal in the organization's history."

For Rhonda and Frosty, the highlight of their service was meeting amazing people who love A&M.

"The friendships that we've developed over time have been the most memorable," he said.

SPIRIT OF GIVING

The Gilliams' spirit of giving comes from their unconditional faith in God. He comes first, then

family and then A&M, although Frosty noted with a sly smile and a wink that their two granddaughters are narrowing the gap between family and God.

"We depend on our faith," said Frosty, "and it is the most critical thing in our lives. It pulls us through everything. We try to be good stewards of the money the Lord allows us to have. Most of it goes back to Him. Some of it goes to A&M. A lot of it goes to help other people."

Rhonda and Frosty have been heavily involved with First Baptist Church in Odessa since 1988 and have volunteered their time working with the youth department for the past 30 years.

"Now we are teaching kids who are children of parents that we used to teach as kids," Frosty said.

As the Gilliams' pastor for the past 17 years, Byron McWilliams has seen firsthand the vital role the couple has played in helping others through their faith.

"Many times I have witnessed them step up to meet a need in someone's life in our community that would have gone unmet apart from their generosity," McWilliams said. "They both have a philanthropic and mission-minded heart and are more than willing to share the wealth God has blessed them with to further His Kingdom and causes that

“

Many times I have witnessed Rhonda and Frosty step up to meet a need in someone's life in our community that would have gone unmet apart from their generosity.

– BYRON MCWILLIAMS

make a positive difference in the world.”

Ernest Easley began his friendship with Rhonda and Frosty more than 27 years ago when he moved to Odessa to serve as the pastor of First Baptist Church.

“Something about Frosty most people are not aware of is that he enlisted about 55 men to be a part of his ‘prayer team,’” said Easley, who served the church with the Gilliams from 1994-2002. “Frosty frequently sends out urgent prayer requests on behalf of people that are in the need of prayer. Over the years, we have seen God heal, restore, unite and bless in response to our prayers.”

For the Gilliams, they feel blessed by the doors that God has opened for them.

“He's been so good to us,” Frosty said. “We can never outgive the Lord, and we can never repay him for all that He's done for us. At the same time, A&M has done more than I can ever repay it as far as providing me a world-class education, a network and the ability and opportunity to meet some fantastic people that I never would have met without going there.”

Torn says that for all the Gilliams have done for the 12th Man Foundation and Texas A&M, they've probably done three times as much for their local community and for ministries all over the world.

“Frosty is a very unique, incredible human being,” said Torn, “and his friendship means the world to me.”

Easley adds that Rhonda and Frosty truly have grown to become wise stewards of their time, talent and treasures.

“Our world is better off because of the lives of Rhonda and Frosty Gilliam.” ♥



THE E. KING GILL AWARD

Established in 2011, the E. King Gill Award is presented annually to a person or couple who has been an influential investor and ambassador for Texas A&M Athletics.

The prestigious award honors supporters who have generously helped the 12th Man Foundation realize its mission of funding scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics. The recipient is selected based on financial commitment, exemplary service and leadership as a volunteer advocate, ethics and a high level of distinction as a role model.

The honorees of this prestigious award are recognized on an engraved plaque in the Claudia and Rod Stepp '59 Grand Lobby, located just outside the 12th Man Foundation offices.

E. King Gill Award Honorees

2011	Col. George J. Eppright '26 Carolyn & Jack E. Little '60
2012	Kay & Jerry S. Cox '72
2013	Judith & Weldon Jaynes '54
2014	Alice & Erle A. Nye '59
2015	Dorothy & Artie R. McFerrin '65
2016	Susan '13 & Sam '70 Torn
2017	Carolyn & Tommie E. Lohman '59
2018	Sharon '81 & Jim Wilson '81
2019	Trisha & L.C. “Chaz” Neely '62
2020	Rhonda & Frosty Gilliam Jr. '80

CHAMPIONS COUNCIL WEEKEND



12TH MAN FOUNDATION HOSTS DONORS FOR CHAMPIONS COUNCIL WEEKEND

Coach Jimbo Fisher and student-athletes Jordan Nixon and Seth Small along with former student-athletes Trayveon Williams, Germain Ifedi, Kingsley Keke and Erik McCoy highlighted the annual Champions Council Weekend which was held on Texas A&M's campus in April. Champions Council provides unmatched access to Texas A&M Athletics for the 12th Man Foundation's most devoted and financially committed supporters. For more information about Champions Council membership, contact the Major Gifts staff at 979-260-7595.



A&M LAUNCHES NIL PROGRAM

AMPLIFY aims to support Texas A&M student-athletes during NIL changes

BY ADAM QUISENBERRY

MAJOR CHANGES ARE OCCURRING IN the world of college athletics and with a significant reshaping of the industry unfolding, Texas A&M Athletics has laid the groundwork to navigate these uncharted waters while remaining focused on supporting student-athletes at the highest level.

On June 14, 2021, Texas Governor Greg Abbot signed into law a bill that permits collegiate student-athletes to receive compensation for their name, image and likeness. While the Texas bill went into effect on July 1, 2021, the discussions surrounding name, image, likeness (NIL) have long been key topics of discussion in the sports industry.

In 2019, California became the first state to put forth NIL legislation. That law's passage set off a domino effect that carried the potential to significantly alter the collegiate sports model. At the time Texas ratified its bill, a total of 19 states had passed some form of NIL legislation with many joining the Lone Star State's legislation by going into effect during the summer of 2021.

To address this seismic shift, Texas A&M Athletics launched a program in early June dubbed "AMPLIFY" as a proactive resource to help student-athletes and staff navigate these changes.

"I think you can look at name, image, likeness in two ways," says Senior Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Services, Joe Fields. "You can see it as a detriment and only see the potential compliance issues, or you can look at it as a great opportunity. Here at Texas A&M, I believe we can really elevate our current student-athletes and continue to attract high caliber prospective student-athletes. We have the opportunity to be leaders and establish best practices in this space."

Looking to the future, there is no clear consensus on how exactly the changes brought on by this new



era of collegiate athletics will take shape and the potential for additional NCAA guidelines or federal legislation regarding NIL remain possible factors.

In reality, there are more questions than answers on this topic. However, leaders in the athletics department view the overall power of the Texas A&M brand as an incredible strength that has the potential to open a world of possibilities for Aggie student-athletes. With that in mind, the structure of the AMPLIFY program is to keep student-athletes informed while limiting risk to themselves or the institution.

"Education drives everything," Fields added. "AMPLIFY will feature a large educational component to minimize potential compliance risks and teach student-athletes how to leverage their personal brand. We want to educate our student-athletes so they're prepared to take advantage of some unique opportunities that will be available to them." 🍷

You can read more about the AMPLIFY program on Texas A&M Athletics website. For frequently asked questions on Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) visit 12thman.com/nil-faq.



POWER OF A SCHOLARSHIP

CONTINUING A LEGACY

Bre Warren is following in her father Ty's footsteps while blazing her own trail with Aggie softball

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

“

I WANT HER LANE TO BE HER LANE. I KNOW THE LINEAGE IS THERE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT AWAY FROM HER. I WANT HER TO BLAZE HER OWN TRAIL, AND SHE'LL DO THAT.

— TY WARREN '03

TY WARREN TRIED TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE in the stands at Davis Diamond, but as a former NFL defensive tackle, it was hard to be inconspicuous. At his daughter's high school softball games, Warren sometimes sat in his truck.

Brionna “Bre” Warren just completed her freshman season as the left fielder for the Aggies, and Ty usually found a spot behind the outfield fence.

Ty's days as a star athlete are behind him; Bre's are ahead of her. So, Ty wants the focus to be on her present, not his past.

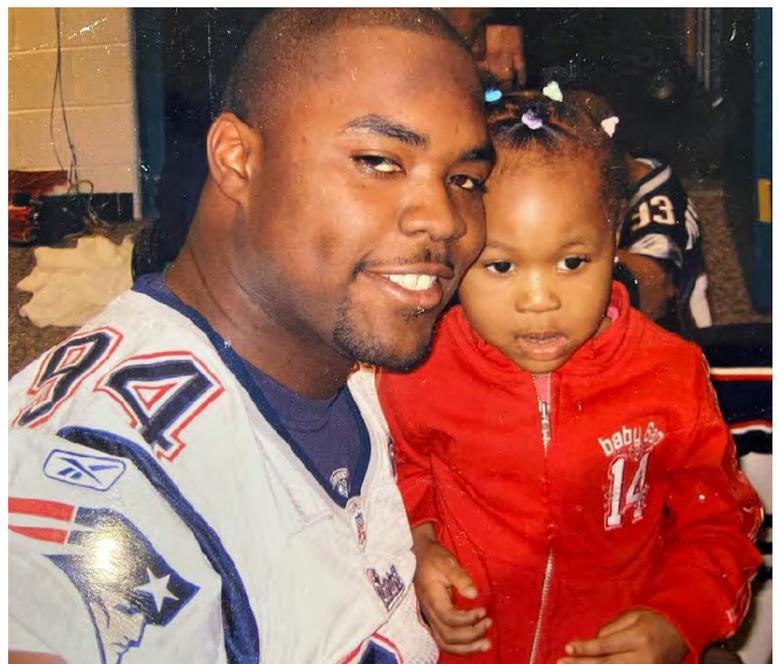
“I want to stay out of the way and just watch the game,” Ty said. “I want her lane to be her lane. I know the lineage is there, but I don't want to take the spotlight away from her. I want her to blaze her own trail, and she'll do that.”

Ty grew up in Bryan and played at A&M from 1999-2002, becoming All-Big 12 as a senior. The Patriots made him a first-round choice in 2003, and Warren played 10 NFL seasons. In 2019, he earned induction into the Texas A&M Athletic Hall of Fame.

Bre knew exactly what she was getting into when she chose to stay in College Station, where everyone knows her father or knows of her father. Her younger sister, Brielle, recently signed to play volleyball at Purdue.

Bre had an opportunity to go elsewhere, too, after playing at College Station High School. Yet, she chose the same path as her father.

“I obviously feel some type of pressure, but not too much,” Bre said. “My dad always taught me from a young age that I'm my own person and my own athlete. People are always going to associate



Bre and her sisters, Brielle, Bailey, Brooklyn and Braylee, inherited their athletic ability from their NFL All-Pro father as well as their mother, Kesha, who is a former basketball player.



“**I GREW UP IN COLLEGE STATION, SO I KNEW HOW I FIT IN HERE. I LOOKED AT MAYBE GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE, BUT I’VE ALWAYS LIKED A&M, AND IT JUST FELT LIKE HOME.**”

— BRE WARREN '24

my name with his, but just stay true to myself and don’t make anything too big.”

The Aggies didn’t recruit Bre because of her father. She ranked No. 9 in the country as a senior, one of the most coveted recruits in the nation.

Bre quickly earned a spot in the lineup, starting all but two games. She finished the season with the third best batting average on the team while earning All-SEC Second Team and Freshman Team honors.

“The last thing you want to do is recruit a great former athlete’s kid and not have them be good, said A&M softball coach Jo Evans, “because then they don’t get in the lineup and you’re being questioned all the time about that and taking heat for it. I think it kind of makes it even harder on those kids, because they have to be really good. They’re always going to get compared to their parents. Bre did all this on her own. She has a promising career ahead of her for sure.”

Bre’s first offer came from the University of Texas in the eighth grade. She also considered Florida State and LSU before committing to A&M, which was her only official visit.

She grew up attending A&M softball games and became a big fan of Amber Garza, a third baseman who finished her career in 2014. Bre knew when she was a high school freshman that A&M was where she hoped to continue her career.

“I grew up in College Station, so I knew how I fit in here,” Bre said. “I looked at maybe going somewhere else, but I’ve always liked A&M, and it just felt like home.”

Ty nearly went to the University of Tennessee. Texas also had a strong interest, but family considerations won out.

“UT at that time was doing well,” said Ty, who received his degree in agriculture development in 2010. “Honestly, I couldn’t see myself coming home at spring break with some burnt orange on. That was probably going to lead to a fight or something.”



Ty totaled 144 tackles and 13.5 sacks and blocked two field goals in his four seasons in Aggieland. He played in three bowl games. The Patriots made him the 13th overall choice in 2003, and he won two Super Bowl rings, earned All-Pro in 2007 and finished with 20.5 sacks.

“When I was little, we would go to his games with the Patriots,” Bre said. “I wouldn’t pay attention. I’ve seen a few highlights. ‘Oh, he’s actually kind of good.’ I’ve grown to love football more. I kind of wish I was this age when he was playing. I was so young I just wanted to play with my friends and figure out what we were going to eat.”

Ty and his wife, Kesha Drayton, whom he met at the local Boys & Girls Club, had six daughters. Kesha is a former basketball player, so the girls inherited athletic ability from both sides.

Bre started in gymnastics, gaining strength and body control. She also played lacrosse and volleyball, finally finding softball when she was 12. Softball became Bre’s first love, because it was outdoors and allowed her to “play in the dirt.”

The Warren girls gained their work ethic and a sense of responsibility on the family’s 300-acre ranch. They tended to cattle and pigs.

Bre started showing cattle when she was in middle school and won grand champion in Houston. The girls also won other showings in Austin, San Antonio and Fort Worth.

Bre’s alarm went off at 5 a.m. for feeding of her heifers. After school and practice, Bre returned home to brush and groom them. It mostly was a labor of love.

“I was really grateful to be showing,” said Bre, who was a member of the Brazos County 4-H. “I didn’t realize how many characteristics it instilled in me until recently. It taught me things like communication and time management. Showing cows is really important.”

Bre’s time now is spent hitting, fielding, lifting and studying as she tries to take the Aggies’ three-time national championship softball program back to the future.

Ty and his uncle, Curtis Dickey, both are in the Texas A&M Athletic Hall of Fame. A father and daughter have never both earned that honor.

No one believes in Bre’s future more than her father.

“She’s a benefactor from everything that I went through, and my wife witnessed me going through while I was playing,” Ty said. “I was able to give her those lessons that I didn’t have when I was coming through.”

“I had a good career at A&M, but her career at A&M is probably going to eclipse anything I’ve done based on who she is and what she knows. I think she’s going to have some pretty good years there.” ■

Proudly following in her father’s footsteps as an Aggie student-athlete, Bre grew up tending to cattle and pigs on the family’s 300-acre ranch and started showing cattle when she was in middle school.



ERICA & TERRENCE MURPHY '05

Real estate entrepreneurs are paying it forward to Aggie student-athletes through their actions and generosity

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

TERRENCE MURPHY'S ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT was emerging long before he and his wife, Erica, established their first real estate business. In fact, that spirit began to blossom before he was even in high school.

"I started my first lawnmowing business when I was 12," recalled Terrence, noting that his clients included offices for doctors and dentists as well as other commercial properties. "My mom would drive me 30 minutes into the city, drop me off and I would mow, weedeat and pick up trash at my properties. Then I would sit under a tree with my water cooler and wait on my mom to come back and get me."

Terrence was born and raised by his single mother east of Tyler in Chapel Hill, Texas.

"I learned a lot from my mom about hard work and doing things consistently," he said.

That relentless work ethic has paid dividends through every stage of Terrence's life.

At Chapel Hill High School, he worked to become a star student-athlete and quarterback earning both academic and athletic scholarship offers from universities across the country.

After arriving in Aggieland as an unheralded recruit in 2001, Terrence worked off the field to earn his Texas A&M degree with multiple academic accolades while rewriting the record books on the field as one of the best wide receivers in school history.

And when his promising NFL career abruptly ended due to a neck injury in 2005, Terrence devoted his work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit to the real estate industry. After attaining their real estate licenses several years later, Erica and Terrence followed their faith to set off on an incredible journey as entrepreneurs.

In 2010, Erica and Terrence launched their first

company – TM5 Properties – in College Station. Eleven years and \$1 billion in total sales later, TM5 Properties is a leader in the Bryan/College Station real state market. And earlier this year, the company merged with eXp Realty to expand the TM5 brand across the nation and beyond.

In all, the Murphys now own and operate 20 companies and employ more than 250 people in the Brazos Valley.

"We are passionate about growth and we have worked hard," said Terrence noting that almost all of their companies' colors are maroon and white. "We built it from an idea I wrote on a napkin – literally – and just prayed over it. When we started we didn't have a road map. We just stepped out in faith and did it. We love growing our companies and the communities have seen the value in what we're doing."

With their generous support as Champions Council members, Erica and Terrence want to invest in the future of Aggie student-athletes by helping provide more opportunities and resources for their transition into life after sports.



COURTESY OF THE MURPHY FAMILY



Erica and Terrence are proud parents of their daughters, Teryn (left) and Tatiana, and their son, Terrence Jr.

A native of Sugar Land, Texas, and a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Texas, Erica shares Terrence's work ethic and passion for entrepreneurship. She and Terrence met in December 2004 through a mutual friend while she was a sophomore at Texas and he was a senior at A&M. They

began dating after Terrence retired from the NFL and were married two years later in February 2008.

The couple could have started their lives together anywhere, but Terrence felt God was calling him to return to College Station. It turned out to be a perfect happy medium for a "country kid" and a "city girl" looking for a place to call home.

"Here we landed and 13 years later, it's one of the best decisions we could have made," Erica said. "It's such a great community and great place to raise our kids. Aggieland has been good to us. We are thankful."

The Murphys have also been good for Aggieland. Not only have they given back to the community in a variety of ways through their businesses, but they are also giving back to Texas A&M Athletics through the 12th Man Foundation.

As Champions Council members, the couple is making an impact on Aggie student-athletes the

“
I'M APPRECIATIVE TO ALL 12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS FOR THE RESOURCES THEY PROVIDE. NOW I'M A DONOR, AND I KNOW IT TAKES SACRIFICE AND SELFLESSNESS TO GIVE TO YOUR UNIVERSITY AND INVEST YOUR RESOURCES, TIME AND ENERGY.

— TERRENCE MURPHY



same way 12th Man Foundation donors impacted Terrence's life 20 years ago.

"Getting a scholarship to Texas A&M changed my life," he said. "Without that opportunity, I wouldn't be the man or the entrepreneur that I am today. I'm always going to be proud to be an Aggie."

Erica and Terrence know first-hand that athletic careers don't last forever and that most college athletes turn pro in something other than sports. Now, as proud supporters of Texas A&M Athletics, their goal is to help student-athletes have success in life after sports.

"That's my passion and I believe one of the reasons God brought me back here to be an entrepreneur," Terrence said. "These are bright kids who don't get the full experience of a college student like summer internships and jobs. Yes, I'm investing back into my university with resources, but I also want to give back to the student-athletes with my actions, not only with facilities and education, but once they walk across that stage, what are we doing to help them transition. Not only to a career,

but in mental health and everything else."

As the quintessential student-athlete success story, Terrence knows what it takes to be successful in life after sports and is eager to pay it forward like previous donors did for him.

"I'm appreciative to all 12th Man Foundation donors for the resources they provide. Now I'm a donor, and I know it takes sacrifice and selflessness to give to your university and invest your resources, time and energy. I will forever be grateful for my opportunity." ♥

One of the most decorated wide receivers in Texas A&M history, Terrence recently hosted a camp in his hometown to teach kids about football, finance and faith. "I'm really proud of Terrence," said Erica. "He's been planning this in his heart for a long time and it's really exciting to see it all come to fruition."

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**GETTING A SCHOLARSHIP TO TEXAS
 A&M CHANGED MY LIFE. WITHOUT THAT
 OPPORTUNITY, I WOULDN'T BE THE MAN OR
 THE ENTREPRENEUR THAT I AM TODAY.**

— TERRENCE MURPHY





POWER OF A SCHOLARSHIP

PURSUING A DREAM

Standout student-athlete and Aggie Olympian Tyra Gittens continues to raise the bar at A&M and beyond

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

TYRA GITTENS HUNG THE HANDMADE POSTER on the wall in her apartment, above the television, so she can't miss it. It's the first thing the Texas A&M track and field star sees when she wakes up and the last thing she sees when she goes to bed. Of course, the words and numbers on the poster don't leave Gittens' thoughts much.

It's her dream.

"Ultimate Heptathlete" headlines the poster, with the how and the why, and it lists reminders and a points goal for each of the seven events. The "ultimate" goal for Gittens is 6,816 points. That would rank 18th all time.

"Sometimes you have to reread your goals," said Gittens, who will graduate from A&M in December 2021. "For a long time, I just kind of really competed based off my talent, my raw talent, and I never actually applied myself. You have to take every opportunity and run with it. Don't let the day get away like coach (Pat) Henry says."

Gittens set a personal-best, and bettered her own school record, with 6,418 points in the heptathlon during the SEC Outdoor Track & Field Championships in May. That ranks third on the all-time collegiate list.

"She has improved every semester she's been

here,” A&M assistant coach Sean Brady said. “She’s at the point now that she’s the collegiate record holder in the pentathlon. The bright side of things is she still has room to improve. Her growth and development have just improved by leaps and bounds since she was a freshman. As a multi-event athlete, she’s maturing to the point where she understands the big picture and the processes that it takes to become one of the best that’s ever been. That took some time.”

The heptathlon entails running, jumping, throwing, and requires speed, strength, endurance and mental toughness. Heptathletes compete in the 100-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put and 200 meters on the first day and the long jump, javelin and 800 on the second, compiling points based on time, height or distance.

Gittens is among the best open high jumpers and open long jumpers in the college ranks, which are events where she collects big points.

At the 2021 NCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships, Gittens helped the Aggies place second overall while winning the national championship in the pentathlon and high jump. Her 26 points rank No. 3 all-time in collegiate history.

Gittens scored nearly 38 percent of A&M’s team total at the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships while winning the heptathlon, placing second in the long jump and finishing third in the high jump. Her 24-point performance was the most points scored by a female athlete at an NCAA meet solely in field events.



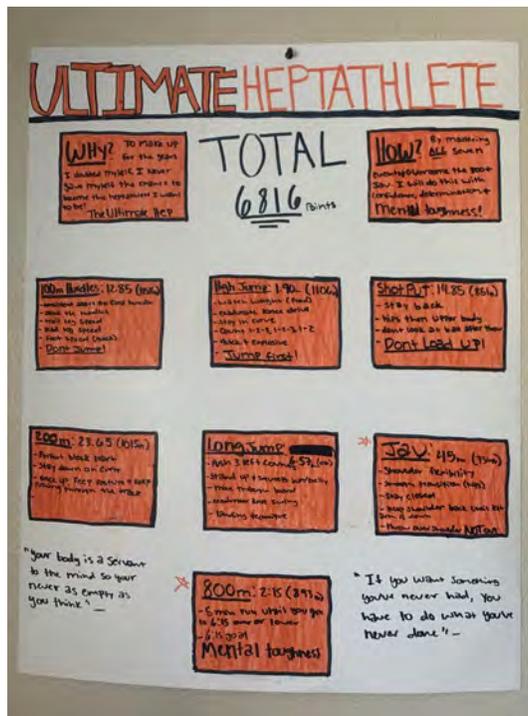
“She’s done more for her team than any athlete that I know,” Brady said. “She is the ultimate team player.”

Gittens was named the USTFCCA National Indoor and Outdoor Field Athlete of the Year and is a finalist for The Bowerman, an annual track and field award given to the top female and male collegian athletes. Former A&M star Jessica Beard won The Bowerman in 2011.

Whether she wins it or not this year, Gittens already is on the Mount Rushmore of female athletes at A&M. That is saying something considering the rich history of the program since Henry arrived in 2005.

“I think she’s the greatest female athlete that we’ve had maybe ever here,” Henry said. “When you think jumping right at 22 feet in the long jump and high jumping 6 foot 4 and running as fast as she runs – 23.3 in the 200 meters – those are really

At the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships in June, Gittens helped Texas A&M finish second overall while scoring the most points by a female athlete at an NCAA meet solely in field events. “As soon as I sat down on this podium I started crying,” Gittens said in a social media post. “Not because I was happy... but because I was exhausted and relieved that the competition was done. It’s amazing what you can push your body and mind to do, but it does come with a price!”



“**BEING FROM A FAMILY OF SEVEN KIDS, MY PARENTS DID NOT KNOW HOW THEY WERE GOING TO GET US ALL TO COLLEGE. MY SCHOLARSHIP HAS TAKEN THAT WORRY AWAY FROM MY PARENTS AND FOR THAT ALONE I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL.**

— TYRA GITTENS '21

Medals, certificates and trophies fill one of the walls and a makeshift trophy case in Gittens' apartment. The nation's top multi-athlete and a finalist for The Bowerman trophy, Gittens had a historic 2021 season finishing as a three-time NCAA Champion winning the indoor high jump and pentathlon titles, as well as the outdoor heptathlon championship. She earned six First Team All-America honors.

significant. I think most people would know Jackie Joyner-Kersey. She's scoring a little more than Jackie Joyner-Kersey (in those events). That shows you who she is."

Gittens also is a sister to six siblings, a former gymnast, a dog walker, an accomplished singer, an avid television watcher and a novice golfer. A longer-than-expected rehab from a torn meniscus her sophomore season taught Gittens that she is more than a track and field athlete.

"Track Tyra doesn't have to be separate from regular Tyra," Gittens said. "Track will always be a passion for me, but it isn't me."

At A&M, Gittens is pursuing a degree in university studies with a minor in communications and journalism. She's passionate about self-development and wants to use her opportunity at A&M to help others through development programs after college.

"Being from a family of seven kids, my parents did not know how they were going to get us all to

college," Gittens said. "My scholarship has taken that worry away from my parents and for that alone I am forever grateful."

Those who know Gittens best call her energetic, which is how track finally found her.

Gittens was born in Saint Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, but has spent most of her life in the United States. She graduated from high school in Nashville, Tennessee, as the most decorated female high school track and field athlete in the state's history, with 17 gold medals in four seasons.

Tyra started her athletic career as a gymnast before trying volleyball. One of her older sisters, Nikki, had a standout volleyball career at South Alabama, and a younger sister, Nsia, is a freshman volleyball player at Southern Illinois.

"Little did they know track was my calling," Tyra said, laughing.

Tyra's track career began by chance when she tagged along with Nikki to a summer track program in Nashville.



COURTESY OF TYRA GITTENS (RIGHT); TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (ALL OTHERS)



During her heptathlon performance at the SEC Championships at E.B. Cushing Stadium, Gittens long jumped 22-10 (6.96m) and high jumped 6-4.75 (1.95m), becoming the first woman in world history to accomplish such marks during the same heptathlon. She won the event with a personal best score of 6,418 to become the third best performer in collegiate history, and she qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in the long jump for Team Trinidad & Tobago.

“Nikki was babysitting for Tyra, so Tyra was at practice but not practicing,” Precision Track Club coach Jan Pippin, a former heptathlete at the University of Tennessee, remembers. “I saw Tyra hopping around outside the track. I told Nikki, ‘Go get your sister.’ I think they thought they were in trouble. So maybe by the next weekend I ended up with the three of them.

“Tyra was little, maybe 10 or 11 or maybe 12. She was young. She had never done track before, and we just started from scratch. My coaching staff and I spend a lot of time teaching proper technique, so I took my time with Tyra. I could tell right away she was a special athlete, but I just didn’t get in a hurry to get results out of her.”

The results have taken care of themselves since. Medals, certificates and trophies fill one of the

walls and a makeshift trophy case in Gittens’ apartment. One day, Gittens hopes to add Olympic and World Championship medals to her collection.

Thanks to her record-setting long jump at the SEC outdoor championships in May, Gittens will have her first chance at adding one of those medals very soon. The jump of 6.96 meters qualified Gittens to compete for Trinidad in the Tokyo Games this summer.

“It’s so close I can taste it,” Gittens said. “It’s not just like a dream. It’s not just like a goal. It’s so close to becoming a reality that it excites me. It’s so motivating, even knowing how much I still need to work on.”

With her bubbly personality and charisma, Gittens has a chance to become the next Jackie Joyner-Kersey, a name instantly recognizable even to non-track and field fans.

“The queen of track and field definitely inspires me every day,” Gittens said. “Like every day, I go look and I read about her, because right now, at this time in my life, I want to see what she did. I don’t want to copy her, but I want to see how she handled everything and how she got to where she was. That’s the journey I’m on right now. It’s very motivational.”

“
**I THINK SHE’S THE GREATEST FEMALE ATHLETE
THAT WE’VE HAD MAYBE EVER HERE.**

— COACH PAT HENRY



IMPACTFUL DONORS

CRYSTAL & DAVID WATTS

With their investment in Aggie student-athletes, generous couple proud to continue family tradition of support

BY SAMANTHA ATCHLEY '17

TO CRYSTAL AND DAVID WATTS, Texas A&M is more than just a treasured university – it's a family tradition. Their love for Texas A&M and Aggie Athletics has been passed down for generations.

"We have a lot of passion for A&M," David said. "We love having that camaraderie with Aggies, and we understand the importance of what graduating from this university can mean for your future."

Although Crystal and David did not attend Texas A&M, the couple has a deep connection to Aggieland.

"We just love A&M," Crystal said. "When I graduated from high school, I ended up choosing a school closer to home, but I've had members of my family go to A&M and the stories they tell are

just the best – and I love to now talk about being a part of one."

As the son of a Texas A&M football letterman – the late William Dale Watts '71 – David's passion for Aggie Athletics began at an early age and still holds strong today. He was present for every moment shown in color during the highlight reel that plays prior to kickoff at Kyle Field.

"My dad was probably the biggest draw for A&M, and I feel like I've passed that down to my family just as it was passed down to him," David said. "I've been going to football games from the time I was two years old up to the Orange Bowl in January. They're just great memories – with friends, with family and with my dad and his wife, Phoebe."

COURTESY OF THE WATTS FAMILY

A former student-athlete himself, David's college football career at both North Texas and Northeastern State gave him first-hand experience in the world of collegiate athletics. Coupled with his exposure to the 12th Man Foundation from his father's dedicated involvement, David developed a well-rounded perspective of the importance of student-athlete support and athletic fundraising.

"As a former 12th Man Foundation board member, my dad would talk to me about how important sports were for the university, for growth and for the Aggie community," David said. "Getting to watch that domino effect play out was a really special thing, and we knew we wanted to do whatever we could to help even if it was at a small level."

When his father passed away in 2012, David felt the need to continue their family's tradition of support in a way that filled the void and left an undeniable legacy. Through the 1922 Fund, Crystal and David found a significant way to make an impact all while honoring a shared passion that connected them to Texas A&M from the beginning.

"Back then I knew nothing about the 1922 Fund," David said. "I remember there was a *12th Man*

“

WHEN YOU GIVE SOMEBODY AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN IMPACT IN ANOTHER PERSON'S LIFE WHERE THEY'RE ACTUALLY INVOLVED, IT JUST MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

— CRYSTAL WATTS

Magazine that had the information and as I was reading it, I thought, 'Wow, we need to look into this. This is something special.'"

After discovering such a fitting alignment between the 1922 Fund and their desire to give, the Watts were drawn in by the unique opportunity. It was appealing to Crystal because it gave them the ability to donate in a way that is unlike any other.

"When you give somebody an opportunity to make an impact in another person's life where they're actually involved, it just makes all the difference," she said. "You get to be a part of it, interact

The Watts family has been incredibly supportive of Texas A&M Athletics with their financial commitment to the 12th Man Foundation over the years.



COURTESY OF THE WATTS FAMILY



Even though they did not attend Texas A&M, Crystal and David bleed maroon and share a passion for supporting Aggie student-athletes on and off the field.

with them and watch them grow, and that's really special."

To the Watts, being a part of a student-athlete's development on and off the field is beyond rewarding. With the full Texas A&M experience in mind, Crystal and David are deeply motivated to make an impact on student-athletes during, and long after their time competing for Texas A&M.

"Facilities will always be renovated and rebuilt," said David, "but if student-athletes graduate from A&M and you were a part of that, you're setting up generations for success. That's what really drew us in."

Given the special place in their hearts for football, the couple's 1922 Fund connection to Baylor Cupp '24 was especially exciting. As more in-person interactions become available, the couple is excited to build a relationship and watch the

sophomore tight end's success unfold on the Aggie football team.

"When we were told we'd be connected with Baylor through the 1922 Fund, we were very excited," Crystal said. "We just love personal relationships, and the opportunity to make an impact in a student's life is an incredible feeling."

With their significant investment in Aggie Athletics as Diamond Champions Council members, Crystal and David are inspired by the trajectory of the athletics department and look forward to seeing the impact of donor support come to fruition. David believes Texas A&M is the best it has ever been and eagerly anticipates the accomplishments yet to come.

"The momentum is growing, and the rewards are going to be big time," David said. "When you can visualize that, it's just a snowball effect. I think the donors, student-athletes and coaches are the best that we've ever had."

With help from dedicated supporters like Crystal and David, the stage is set for a bright future in Aggie Athletics.

"Crystal and I are very lucky we've gotten to a point in our lives that we can give back to the things that we care about, and Texas A&M Athletics is one of them," David said. "We give because we've chosen this organization, these people and this special place called Aggieland. We have a lot of passion and it's important to us to see A&M and Aggie student-athletes be on top." 🍷

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**FACILITIES WILL ALWAYS BE RENOVATED
 AND REBUILT, BUT IF STUDENT-ATHLETES
 GRADUATE FROM A&M AND YOU WERE
 A PART OF THAT, YOU'RE SETTING UP
 GENERATIONS FOR SUCCESS.**

— DAVID WATTS

2021 SUMMER MEETING



AGGIES TAKE OVER COLORADO FOR 12TH MAN FOUNDATION SUMMER MEETING

Donors and their families along with Aggie coaches, staff and current and former student-athletes traveled to Beaver Creek, Colo., and enjoyed a weekend full of Aggie camaraderie at the 2021 12th Man Foundation Summer Meeting. Members at the MVP level or higher are invited to the annual convention-style gathering which is designed to educate donors and honor the impact they make on Texas A&M Athletics. Next year's Summer Meeting will be held June 23-26 in San Antonio. For information about attending the Summer Meeting, contact the Annual Fund staff at 979-260-2394.



COLLEGIATE COUNCIL

How an unforgettable experience on the inaugural Collegiate Council impacted my life at Texas A&M and beyond

BY CAMERON CRENWELGE '21
2020-21 COLLEGIATE COUNCIL MEMBER



IN JULY 2020, AFTER THREE ROUNDS of interviews, the 12th Man Foundation selected eight students to be the first to participate in a one-of-a-kind leadership organization.

The Collegiate Council was created to help educate the student body on the mission of the 12th Man Foundation while providing members with an opportunity to gain professional experience in the world of fundraising and college athletics.

As a proud member of the inaugural Collegiate Council, I could go into detail about every event we worked or how many hours we spent in the 12th Man Foundation office. However, I feel that it is

more important to illustrate what this program means to those lucky enough to be included.

Participation in Collegiate Council has impacted my life in three key ways. First, it has been a catalyst for professional growth amidst a pandemic in which professional learning opportunities are rare. Second, as a member of the Texas A&M equestrian team, it has provided me with a unique outlook on what it means to be a student-athlete at one of the most competitive universities in the nation. And finally, it has given me a greater understanding of what it means to fully embody the values of the 12th Man.

It was in April 2020 – a month after my junior season ended prematurely, three weeks after I had moved home with my parents and one week after my summer internship was canceled – that I found out I was selected as an inaugural member of the Collegiate Council. Considering the circumstances, I was filled with both excitement and uncertainty.

I was honored to have been chosen to represent the 12th Man Foundation, but I was unsure how I could contribute from a professional standpoint. When applying, I anticipated completing a marketing-focused summer internship that would have provided me with relevant expertise within a professional environment.

I now had serious doubts about how the cancellation of my summer internship would impact me both in my performance as a member of Collegiate Council and as a candidate for full-time employment post-graduation.

These doubts dissipated the second I walked into the 12th Man Foundation office.

During a one-on-one meeting with Callie Boenigk, the 12th Man Foundation's manager of Annual Fund who supervises the Collegiate Council, we



The Collegiate Council is a select group of student leaders on-campus who go above and beyond to enhance the 12th Man Foundation's footprint through ambassadorship and student engagement. Visit the 12th Man Foundation's website to learn more.

were able to pinpoint a few areas in which I could focus my professional development.

I was assigned to tasks that allowed me an opportunity to showcase many of the skills I had acquired in the classroom while challenging me to grow professionally without the fear of failure.

I believe these experiences empowered me to take on greater leadership responsibilities within my sport and within the various organizations in which I was involved.

Finally, the variety of professional development workshops focused on self-advocacy, interviewing, and digital networking played a major role in my acceptance of both an internship and a full-time offer upon graduation.

As a student-athlete, I thought I knew everything there was to know about Aggie Athletics. I was active in the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, I was involved in community service and I made an

effort to expand my network through participation in student-athlete development programs.

After my experience with Collegiate Council, I know I lacked a complete understanding of how much was going on behind the scenes to ensure that I had the best experience. Student-athletes have a high level of exposure to the hard work put in daily by academic advisors, coaches, nutritionists and trainers. However, most of us are unaware of the depth of support we receive from the 12th Man Foundation.

Behind every scholarship, practice, workout, and meal, there is an entire team of people working tirelessly to ensure that every student-athlete is provided with the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Fellow student-athlete and Collegiate Council member Julia Black agrees that 12th Man Foundation donors are the backbone of our athletics department.

The inaugural Collegiate Council included Abel Gonzalez '21 (Electrical Engineering), Nicole Lopez '22 (Business Management), Olivia Treadwell '22 (Communication), Cameron Crenwelge '21 (Business Administration/Equestrian), Daria Britton '22 (Allied Health/Soccer), Garrett Wright '21 (Aerospace Engineering), Madison Pennington '23 (Business Honors) and Julia Black '22 (Agricultural Communications & Journalism/Track & Field and Cross Country).





Cameron, pictured above with her parents Abbie and Dale Crenwelge (Class of '81 and '84), graduated from A&M in May 2021 with a BBA in management. As a senior, Cameron was one of 10 Aggie equestrian student-athletes named to the American Wood Fibers NCEA All-Academic First Team, which is given to those who have competed in a minimum of 70 percent of the school's meets, while maintaining a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher in the previous spring and fall semesters.

"As student-athletes, we often take for granted what the 12th Man Foundation does for us," said Black, who is a distance runner for the A&M cross country and track and field teams. "These people are the ones who make the meets, games and trips all possible."

The 12th Man Foundation opened my eyes to how thousands of people I have never met believe in my ability to succeed as an athlete, student and person. Unconditional support is rare, and I'm excited to provide that same support as a Young Alumni member now that I'm a proud A&M graduate.

Before I knew what college was, I knew I was going to be an Aggie. My father was a Texas A&M graduate and even though my mother, a University of Texas graduate, swore she would never wear maroon, you can find her in a Texas A&M equestrian hat almost every meet day.

I grew up watching my father get stopped in airports, amusement parks and even a restaurant in Italy by other Aggies who were eager to swap stories about the Dixie Chicken, Aggie Athletics and their most memorable professors.

When I was younger, I firmly believed that if you graduated from Texas A&M and wore your ring, you magically had friends wherever you went.

But I'll be honest. For three years of my college experience, I didn't feel that same magic I had experienced when I was younger.

Athletics is a grind, and trying to balance constant athletic improvement with academic excellence had me stretched thin.

When the world seemingly stopped as a result of COVID-19, I was devastated. For three years, I had

dedicated myself to my sport and to the classroom. Now, I was being told I couldn't do either.

Upon my return to College Station, everything felt different.

It was through my involvement in Collegiate Council that I came to fully understand what the "Aggie Spirit" I experienced as a child embodied. It wasn't inherent in a place, an outcome of a game or a specific class. It's in every handshake, every howdy and in every heart. 12th Man Foundation members, you are the Aggie Spirit.

Fellow inaugural Collegiate Council member Abel Gonzalez said, "Through the selfless service of the 12th Man Foundation and its members, the Aggie family was able to come together and stand alongside our student-athletes."

When I interviewed to be considered for the Collegiate Council, the final question was, "When you return to Texas A&M as a former student and ask about Collegiate Council, what do you want to hear?"

Looking back at the steps this group has taken after such a short period of time, I know what answer I will receive in the coming years. It is a group filled with leaders who have a comprehensive understanding about what it means to be an Aggie. They are a reflection of the 12th Man Foundation staff as well as its members – a united and loyal group committed to selfless service by way of Texas A&M Athletics.

Fellow inaugural Collegiate Council member Nicole Lopez sums it up well.

"I can confidently say that the council provided me with the very best experience during my college career," said Lopez, "and I cannot wait to see what next year's council will accomplish." ■

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IT WAS THROUGH MY INVOLVEMENT IN COLLEGIATE COUNCIL THAT I CAME TO FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE 'AGGIE SPIRIT' I EXPERIENCED AS A CHILD EMBODIED.

— CAMERON CRENWELGE '21



JULIA BLACK '22'
Agriculture Communications & Journalism
(Track & Field/Cross Country Student-Athlete)



DARIA BRITTON '22'
Allied Health (Soccer Student-Athlete)



CHRISTOPHER GREENWELL '22'
Business Administration-Management



PATRICK JOHNSON '22'
Sport Management
(Track & Field Student-Athlete)

12TH MAN FOUNDATION

**INTRODUCING
THE 2021-22
COLLEGIATE
COUNCIL**

**2020-21 Collegiate Council Member*



CHASE LANE '22'
Communication (Football Student-Athlete)



ERIC MENDOZA '21'
Economics/Finance



MADISON PENNINGTON '23'
Business Honors



KATIE TAYLOR '24'
Business



CAROLINE TORN '24'
Business Honors



SAM TORN '23'
Business Honors/Finance



OLIVIA TREADWELL '22'
Communication

THE PATH TO PROSPERITY

Former All-American pitcher Barret Loux made the most of his opportunity at A&M to build a successful future

BY OLIN BUCHANAN



Barret and his wife, Marileigh, who also attended Texas A&M, were married in 2017 and welcomed their daughter Elianne in May 2021.

“OVERCOMING ADVERSITY” IS REPEATED so often in athletics that it’s almost a cliché. Perhaps every athlete who’s ever competed has been encouraged and instructed to seek a triumphant, alternate route to success when faced with imposing obstacles.

Overcoming adversity was no cliché for Barret Loux.

Loux faced more than a few imposing obstacles as his road to success detoured through Texas A&M, where he was an All-American pitcher from 2008-10.

Loux set out to pursue success in Major League Baseball, but a series of arm injuries curtailed his career.

Yet, he overcame that adversity to find a path to success. That path just led to a different destination.

Rather than working to minimize his ERA, Loux works to maximize clients’ ROI as a Houston-based financial advisor for Northwestern Mutual.

“I feel like, in college, I learned things you need to learn in the real world,” the 32-year-old Loux said. “The biggest thing was how to manage your time. There is so much going on; you have to be efficient to get everything done. It’s an important skill set.”

No one ever doubted Loux’s skills on the mound. As a senior at Houston’s Stratford High School, he was selected in the 2007 MLB Draft by the Detroit Tigers.

However, Loux had already experienced arm problems. In an indication of what his future might hold, he began crunching numbers to make the best decision.

“I already had tendinitis issues in my elbow

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YOU WONDER WHY THINGS DIDN’T WORK OUT THE WAY YOU WANTED, BUT STRUGGLES IN LIFE CONTRIBUTE TO A FUTURE OF OVERCOMING ADVERSITY.

— BARRET LOUX ‘11



which we later realized were from bone spurs,” Loux recalled. “In college, you pitch every seven days. In the pros, you pitch every five days. I didn’t think I could recover and pitch every five days at that point.

“I always had to work harder than most to attempt to stay healthy. It made me put in a lot more work between starts.”

He turned down the Tigers and instead accepted a scholarship offer from Texas A&M. That decision would prove to – quite literally – pay big dividends.

As a true freshman in 2008, Loux was 8-2 and led A&M with 81 strikeouts. Then arm troubles returned, and he had elbow surgery following a subpar sophomore year.

Loux came back strong in 2010, posting an 11-2 record with a 2.83 earned run average to lead the Big 12 Conference with 136 strikeouts and garner All-American recognition.

“It was so cool,” Loux said of his time at A&M. “Just how amazing the fans were. The energy. I didn’t grow up an A&M fan. I was the first in the family to go to A&M, so I wasn’t ingratiated in A&M traditions.”

Loux was a first-round selection of the Arizona Diamondbacks in the 2010 MLB draft, but unfortunately, the injury issues resurfaced. He failed a physical because of a torn labrum and elbow damage and wasn’t signed.

Loux was eventually declared a free agent and signed with the Texas Rangers. He pitched in the Ranger and Chicago Cub organizations until more arm injuries forced him to retire from baseball.

“Obviously, it was frustrating,” Loux said. “You wonder why things didn’t work out the way you wanted, but struggles in life contribute to a future of overcoming adversity.”

Loux set the foundation for his alternate route to success by earning a degree in Finance. He put what he learned to good use when he received a six-figure signing bonus with the Rangers.

“I invested (the signing bonus) through Vanguard and got an early start into the investment world,” Loux said. “A lot of guys sign for good money early on. Then, five or six years later, it’s all gone. Being in a profession where I could help people was intriguing to me.”

Loux might not have attained success in financial

Loux began playing baseball when he was three years old and started pitching when he was nine. Near the end of an All-American junior season at A&M in 2010, Loux was selected sixth overall in the MLB Draft becoming the highest Aggie drafted since 1993.



Injuries derailed Loux's professional baseball career, but he made the most of his opportunity at A&M earning a BBA in finance in 2011. Now he's helping others with their investments as a Houston-based financial advisor for Northwestern Mutual.

planning had he not chosen to accept the A&M scholarship offer. Not only did he get a world-class education, but he also learned valuable lessons on the field, which have helped in his business career.

He learned very little comes easily. He also learned from his coach Rob Childress to welcome the grind and monotony of practice and training.

"It goes back to baseball," Loux said. "A good way to look at tough challenges is to embrace 'the suck.' A hard workout is not fun while you're doing it, but by overcoming something hard, you feel better physically, and you're mentally better than you were because you were able to overcome that adversity.

"Childress was all about the mental game. The idea that it pays to be a winner still rings through my head. You do what it takes to win."

Loux is undoubtedly winning.

He's happy. His business is thriving. He and his wife, Marileigh (Marbach), who also attended Texas A&M, welcomed their daughter Elianne in May 2021.

His Texas A&M scholarship has helped him build toward a wonderful future.

Despite the adversity that led him to redirect his path to success, he also fondly looks back at his past.

"I remember the big games. The big hits. The walk-offs," he said. "You remember the teams. The guys you were around. The Sunday mornings with everybody in the training room. The guys you went through the grind with.

"I look back with pride in terms of what I accomplished. And what I overcame." 🍷

“ I LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE IN TERMS OF WHAT I ACCOMPLISHED. AND WHAT I OVERCAME. ”

— BARRET LOUX '11

TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (BOTTOM); COURTESY OF BARRET LOUX (ALL OTHERS)

HONORING ED RICHARDS '85

Passionate Aggie and dedicated supporter made a lasting impact during an extraordinary life

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, PATIENTS AND COLLEAGUES, Dr. William E. “Ed” Richards ’85 will be remembered for his extraordinary compassion, devotion, wit and humility.

Now, with an endowment in his name, Richards’ legacy of changing lives can forever be connected to Texas A&M Athletics to fund a learning specialist position in the Texas A&M Center for Student-Athlete Services.

A die-hard Aggie, Richards was a pioneer in robotic surgery for gynecologic oncology with a relentless drive to be the best in everything he set out to do.

In Aggieland, Richards developed a reputation for another drive. A long, long drive that demonstrated his unquestionable commitment to Texas A&M Athletics.

While working and living in Lubbock in the early 2000s, Richards often made the 860-mile round trip drive to Reed Arena and back to watch mid-week Aggie men’s basketball games.

“He would get off of work, jump in the car and drive to College Station to watch the Aggies play basketball, then he would jump back in the car, drive back to Lubbock and get home in time to go to work the next morning,” said Scott Semlinger ’75, who developed a close friendship with Richards following a chance meeting in the parking garage after one of those A&M basketball games. “I remember thinking to myself, this is a crazy Aggie sports fan.”

Known to his friends and family as “Eddie,” Richards was a passionate supporter of Texas A&M Athletics for his entire life. While he was in medical school at Texas Tech, friend and fellow Aggie physician Andy Hansen ’71 encouraged Richards to get involved with the 12th Man Foundation.

Along with Susan, his loving wife of 35-years,



Richards made his first gift in support of student-athlete education in the early 1990s to honor his father who suddenly passed away while training for the Houston Marathon.

“They didn’t come from affluent backgrounds, so he and his dad looked at sports as a way to educate people who otherwise would not have an opportunity to receive an education,” Susan said. “That’s why it was important when he donated in his dad’s name that it went to a study room. The education piece mattered to him a lot.”

Richards was a standout supporter of Aggie men’s basketball for many years. “It was very important to him that if you’re an Aggie fan, you should support the team, period,” said Dave South. “No matter the outcome of the game. He felt very strongly about that.”

Like his father, Richards passed away suddenly on Feb. 6, 2021. He was 57.

His funeral was filled with story after story of a kind, caring and dedicated physician who went above and beyond to help people and then became friends for life.

However, not every story of Richards saving a life is from one of his patients. When Semlinger was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, Richards was the first person he called for advice. The next day, Semlinger had appointments at MD Anderson with an esophageal cancer team fit for the President.

“Ed came to my rescue,” Semlinger said.

Born in Pasadena, Texas, on May 24, 1963, Richards grew up loving A&M and was destined to be an Aggie. Choosing to attend A&M was easy, although a remarkable singing voice did earn Richards a scholarship offer from The Juilliard School.

“The quote was, ‘I’m not going anywhere they don’t have a football team,’” said Susan. “He always knew there was something special about A&M.”

The couple met through mutual friends at a party in Houston before an A&M-Rice football game.

“We were Bonfire buddies,” said Susan, who is Class of 1986. “I lived in Leggett Hall and he lived in Crocket.”

After graduating from A&M with a psychology degree in 1985, Richards attended medical school at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock. On the first day of med school, he met another fellow Aggie turned lifelong friend named Justin Gayle ’87.

“I saw his Aggie Ring, shook his hand and we were inseparable from that point forward,” recalled Gayle, an Ob/Gyn who has practiced in College Station since 1999. “We had an instant bond over our shared passion for Aggie sports. We planned our study habits around Aggie football.”

Following med school, Richards and Gayle both spent four years in residency training at Scott & White Healthcare in Temple, Texas. They even bought A&M football season tickets together.

“We were fanatics,” Gayle said. “We were all together as a family for every major A&M sporting event.”

After completing his fellowship training at the University of Kentucky, Richards moved back to Lubbock to begin a career in gynecologic oncology that would eventually take him and his family to Cincinnati, Ohio, and ultimately to their home in Savannah, Ga. Known for singing while operating and wearing cowboy boots with his scrubs,

Ed and Susan, who met at a party while they were “Bonfire buddies” at Texas A&M, raised three daughters – Sarah, Emily and Madeline – and became proud grandparents to Ellie, Brady, Blaire and Liam.



Richards impacted countless lives throughout his career in medicine.

Together, he and Susan raised three daughters – Sarah, Emily and Madeline – and became proud grandparents to Ellie, Brady, Blaire and Liam.

“His girls were his life,” Gayle said. “He was as passionate of a father as he was a physician. And he was extremely dedicated to his patients.”

No matter where he lived, Richards continued his unconditional support of Aggie Athletics as a dedicated fan and donor.

He traveled across the country and beyond with the men’s basketball team. Friend and fellow supporter Sam Torn ’70 shared many of those trips with Richards and made memories that will last a lifetime.

“We were sitting right behind the Aggie bench in Waco for the game which featured ‘The Baptism,’” recalled Torn. “When the game concluded, we were bombarded with plastic bottles and other trash. As we were marshaling the families out of the arena, a Baylor fan accosted him. Ed, who was a very faith-based person, looked at the fan and said, ‘Don’t you know, God loves me, and he loves you, too. Gig ‘em!’”

On a team flight to Nebraska, Richards also befriended the legendary voice of the Aggies, Dave South. Their introduction was over a book about the power of prayer, and a deep friendship grew through their shared interests.

“We rarely ever talked about sports,” admitted South. “We talked about family and friends, politics and life in general. It was rare that a week went by without us talking about something.”

Fittingly, the radio booth at Olsen Field at Blue Bell Park bears the Richards family name. The redevelopment of the storied stadium is one of

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**I LOVED ED LIKE A BROTHER.
I’LL REMEMBER MOST OUR
LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS
ABOUT THE THINGS THAT
MATTERED MOST TO US —
FAITH, FAMILY AND OUR
LOVE FOR TEXAS A&M.**

— SAM TORN ’70



the multiple facility projects the couple proudly supported.

“I was honored when they sponsored the radio booth,” said South, noting that Richards would often come to SEC road football games and help with spotting or keeping stats. “I thought that was pretty nice. Ed would tell me that he loved to sit out on his back porch in Savannah and listen to the baseball broadcast.”

In an extraordinary life, Richards made a lasting impact on virtually everyone he met.

“He was a great Aggie and a great person,” said Hansen.

“I’ll remember most our lengthy discussions about the things that mattered most to us – faith, family and our love for Texas A&M,” added Torn.

“He was a great friend who I miss each and every day,” added Semlinger.

Gayle and his wife, Marilyn, proudly made the initial gift toward creating an endowment for Richards through the 12th Man Foundation.

“We want it to continue to grow,” Gayle said. “He was like a brother to me, and I still feel his presence. He loved this place. I know he’d be proud to have something with his name on it that he can share and give to other people.”

Please contact Lauren Fisher ’17 at 979-260-7952 if you would like to help fund a learning specialist position in the Texas A&M Center for Student-Athlete Services with a contribution in honor of Dr. William E. “Ed” Richards ’85.

While traveling with the A&M basketball team as a donor, Richards developed a close friendship with Dave South and often volunteered to help spot or keep stats for the legendary voice of the Aggies at SEC road football games.

VIRTUAL RECRUITING

With campus visits on hold, the Texas A&M football staff quickly adapted to secure a stellar signing class

BY WILL JOHNSON '01

DURING THE TAPING OF THE “Texas A&M Signing Day Show” inside 12th Man Studios in February, Stephen McGee served as analyst. The former quarterback for the Aggies and Dallas Cowboys asked Jimbo Fisher how difficult it was to recruit in 2020. With no official visits allowed, Fisher and his staff often had to turn to technology to communicate with prospects. Still, Fisher was laughing before the question was even finished.

With a big smile, the head coach belted out, “Well obviously not that tough!”

Joking aside, he was exactly right. A different world, but the same strong class the Aggies are accustomed to signing with Fisher.

According to Rivals, A&M’s 2021 class ranked 5th nationally. It was Fisher’s third straight Aggie recruiting class that finished in the Top 6.

But it’s true the football program had to do it in a different way during the pandemic. They could not bring recruits to Kyle Field to put the atmosphere on display. Nor could the coaching staff visit recruits in their hometowns. The face to face interaction was on hold.

They were no longer physically in a prospect’s living room. They were on Zoom. To bring the virtues of Texas A&M to the prospective student-athlete, they had to go virtual.

While it may not have been what the staff was accustomed to, fortunately, they know full well how

the sport works.

“It’s just like the game of football. Sudden change. You gotta adapt,” said A&M Defensive Line Coach Elijah Robinson.

And the Aggies adapted better than most. All of a recruit’s interactions with a school were through a computer or video screen. A&M had to stand out. Creativity was essential.

“They were doing zooms constantly with all schools,” recalled Marshall Malchow, an associate athletics director for football. “Recruits were doing 10-12 a week maybe. You’re trying to find ways to separate yourself during those calls.”

With the staff willing to adjust and improvise, the program accomplished their goals, and then some. It’s clear prospects took notice.

“All of our Zoom visits were more detailed than the others they saw that year,” said Fisher, “which is a tribute to Marshall and our recruiting staff.”

To get some gamechangers, the Aggies even turned to gaming. The football program held a Madden Tournament. Recruits against the Aggie staff.

“These kids love video games,” said Malchow. “I played more video games than I probably have in the last 10 years.”

And the prospects got the better of it in a one-sided manner.

“I wouldn’t say I was the best at it, but I took part,” admitted Robinson.

The tourney’s winner and loser didn’t matter in the end. The connection did.

“It was fun,” Robinson said. “Another way to interact.”

The Aggies were not able to host a Maroon and White Game at Kyle Field in 2020, but that didn’t stop the staff from bringing festivities to recruits and fans.

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**ALL OF OUR ZOOM VISITS WERE
MORE DETAILED THAN THE OTHERS
THEY SAW THAT YEAR.**

— COACH JIMBO FISHER

A virtual spring game was planned, beginning with a tailgate featuring Terry Price, A&M's defensive line coach who is well known for his outdoor cooking.

"Coach Price got the grill out," Malchow said with a smile.

The coach's cookouts have become the stuff of social media legend in Aggieland.

At the time the spring game would have been played, Fisher ran back the 2019 Texas Bowl win over Oklahoma State. The 24-21 victory was the most recent game the Aggies had played to that date. The head coach ran film of the game's key plays, letting everyone in on his thoughts.

"It was something cool for them to watch him and see how he sees the football game," Malchow said. "He was great with it."

It resonated. Recruits, and the 12th Man, loved it.

On June 1, 2021, prospects began flooding campuses to make face-to-face appearances for the first time in more than a year. Once again, the Aggies were well-positioned as the recruiting world returned to normalcy. But the lessons learned during unprecedented circumstances won't be completely left behind.

"I think we realized for some of these out-of-state recruits, it costs a lot of money to get down here," Malchow says. "So making sure we can bring the place to them. We have all these tools and resources."

A&M recruiting is far-reaching now. The ways of

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IT SHOWS JUST HOW AMAZING THIS UNIVERSITY IS. NOT JUST WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER WHEN THEY'RE HERE ON CAMPUS, BUT ALSO LIFE AFTER BALL

— COACH ELIJAH ROBINSON

the past year will keep those lines of communication open, no matter where a prospect hails from.

"We realize some of these guys, they like Texas A&M, but they may not be able to come four to five times like some of these in-state players," Malchow said. "We know now how easy it is to bring Texas A&M, this experience and feel, to them."

That's why there's confidence in maintaining the Aggies' run of recruiting success.

"There's so many different ways to stay connected," added Robinson.

The coaches know A&M can make an impact on the young men who chose to become a part of the program. And whether they have to do it through Zoom or right there in the living room, this staff knows what comes with being an Aggie. They know the pitch is strong, on screen or in person.

"It shows just how amazing this university is," Robinson said. "Not just what it has to offer when they're here on campus, but also life after ball." ♥

Offensive lineman Bryce Foster was one of the top prospects to sign with Texas A&M in the 2021 class. The Katy, Texas, native surprised Jimbo Fisher and the Aggie coaching staff when he verbally committed on a Zoom call with the A&M staff in December 2020.





TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

ANSWERING THE CALL

Aggie football season ticket holders come together to provide vital financial support at critical time

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

2020. IT WAS BOTH FORGETTABLE and unforgettable.

For Texas A&M Athletics, the past year delivered commotion and comebacks, disruption and devotion, challenges and championships.

On March 12, 2020, all was relatively quiet in Aggieland during A&M's spring break while the Aggie men's basketball team was in Nashville, Tenn., preparing to play Missouri in an SEC Tournament game. Then the COVID-19 pandemic postponed the entire sports world. It would be 191 days before any Aggie team played another game.

"There were so many ups and downs," A&M Athletics Director Ross Bjork said. "I describe it as the old-time fairground ride called the Rotor Ride. You'd spin, and the floor would drop out from below you. It would come back up, and then it would drop back down. That's what you felt like. You were kind of spinning and spinning, and the floor was there one minute, and then it wasn't there."

COVID-19 became A&M's biggest opponent, its fiercest rival, ending the school's 2020 winter and spring seasons prematurely, threatening to cancel fall sports and endangering the future of Aggie Athletics. It took every ounce of Aggie Spirit for A&M's athletics department to survive off the field and to thrive on it during the pandemic.

More than 50 percent of Texas A&M Athletics' annual operating budget is directly funded by \$76 million from donors and ticket buyers for all Aggie sports. Football tickets and contributions are the lifeblood, accounting for approximately \$65 million

of the athletics department's revenue.

That was the bottom line at stake as spring break extended from one week in March to four months into the summer, with uncertainty over when COVID-19 might allow a return to a new normal. The doubt turned to panic on Aug. 11 when the Big Ten canceled its college football season for fall 2020, and the Pac-12 Conference soon followed. The SEC, along with the Atlantic Coast Conference, announced they would continue to hold out hope of playing in 2020.

"The middle of July to the middle of August was the most tenuous, stressful, uncertain time," Bjork said.

On July 30, the SEC announced it would move to a 10-game, league-only schedule, and three weeks later came news that Kyle Field would host fans but operate at a reduced capacity, with a distanced seating plan. Texas A&M football season ticket holders were given the option to opt in or out of the 2020 season.

Forty-five percent opted in, and the 12th Man Foundation executed a reduced capacity seat selection process over four days in September, a process that typically takes 2-4 weeks.

Tickets were delivered, health and safety protocols were put in place and Texas A&M successfully hosted an NCAA-leading average 24,876 fans over four games at Kyle Field in 2020. While far less than the 100,000-plus who fill the stadium in a normal year, the 12th Man was still incredibly impactful

As a small token of appreciation, Texas A&M Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation invited the nearly 3,500 season ticket holders who converted all or a portion of their investment into a philanthropic donation to a closed Aggie football practice in April.



BRIAN DAVIS '01 (THIS PAGE); CRAIG BISACRE/TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (FACING PAGE)



During the closed practice at Kyle Field in April, donors took pictures with the Orange Bowl trophy and caught a glimpse of the 2021 Aggie football team.

during a historic football season.

“The people who were there made a difference,” Bjork said. “The 12th Man really stepped up, and opposing teams thought we had 75,000 or 80,000 fans there. We kept saying, ‘No, we have 27,500. That’s the capacity. No more.’ I think it just goes to the spirit. We also know a lot of people missed out, so what I think it leads to is what happens next, and I think it’s going to lead to pent-up demand.”

The 55 percent who opted out had three options with their season ticket investment: 1. receive a full refund; 2. credit to 2021 season tickets; or 3. donate the money back to the 12th Man Foundation.

As the A&M football team’s trajectory continued to climb throughout a spectacular season, things went from bad to worse financially when the Aggies’ five home games were reduced to four because of a coronavirus outbreak at Ole Miss, which postponed and then canceled the scheduled game at Kyle Field. That represented an additional potential loss of \$4.2 million.

The 45 percent who retained their season tickets were presented the same options with their remaining season ticket investment following the end of the regular season.

The generosity of season ticket holders saved the season for A&M and the 12th Man Foundation.

Joel Moore ’99 and his wife, Jennifer Andrews Moore ’00, didn’t think twice about giving back their funds to the 12th Man Foundation.

“The second you step on campus as a student, those core values are drilled into you,” Joel Moore said. “The building block at A&M, for me, is selfless service. That is something that we as Aggies carry through the rest of our lives, into the corporate world and our family lives. I think that played a part in Aggies stepping up. This is something we were born and bred to do. It’s an honor to be able to give back in a time of need.”

Nearly 3,500 Aggie football season ticket holders converted all or a portion of their investment into a philanthropic donation. Combined, their extraordinary generosity resulted in \$11.6 million directly supporting Texas A&M Athletics and Aggie student-athletes.

“You saw other conferences and other schools have to make really tough decisions about cutting programs and having large reductions in staff or furloughs, and we were very fortunate because of the donations,” said Kathleen Curnutt, the 12th Man Foundation’s senior vice president of finance. “It allowed the athletics department to continue to offer the same services to student-athletes that we’ve always offered. They didn’t have to cut back

on nutrition. Even though the facilities they normally went to were closed, we were able to provide the student-athletes with nutrition to take home.”

In addition to donor contributions, \$16.7 million was retained through season tickets, associated seat contributions and parking for Texas A&M’s four home games.

“This is the quintessential Aggie come-together story,” said Travis Dabney, president and CEO of the 12th Man Foundation. “It is season ticket holders and donors recognizing the need to support our athletics department and our student-athletes, and it is the athletics department employees and the 12th Man Foundation employees coming together and working in an extremely challenging environment, conveying the challenges of that environment, and meeting that with the donors’ generosity

Nearly 3,500 generous season ticket holders combined to contribute \$11.6 million in support of Texas A&M Athletics and Aggie student-athletes.



BRIAN DAVIS '01

“

THIS IS THE QUINTESSENTIAL AGGIE COME-TOGETHER STORY.

— TRAVIS DABNEY '96

to help us get through the year. There’s no question I think Texas A&M has come through this as well as or better than anyone in the country. But that doesn’t mean we don’t have more bumps coming. This isn’t over yet.”

Texas A&M Athletics lost \$36.4 million, which is 56 percent of revenue associated with 2020 football. While Texas A&M Athletics emerged from the once-in-a-lifetime crisis like few other schools, long-term financial challenges remain.

“From the cash-flow models we’ve run here at the 12th Man Foundation, this is a five- to seven-year impact,” Curnutt said. “From our perspective, it’s just going to be an ongoing review of our operating budget every year and making sure we’re tight where we can be and that we’re being good stewards of donor dollars.”

Kyle and Leslie Valentine, both Class of 2000, were among season ticket holders who decided to donate the money they paid for tickets to the canceled Ole Miss game back to the 12th Man Foundation.

“As a business owner myself, I know exactly what they were feeling,” Kyle Valentine said. “For something that I love, and my family loves, and knowing how much Aggie Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation were being impacted, I knew it was important for us to do what we could to help.”

It helped.

It helped fund over 600 student-athletes across 20 sports in a trying year.

It helped the Aggies finish fourth in the final Associated Press football poll after an Orange Bowl victory and 9-1 record, the highest ranking for A&M since 1939.

It helped the Aggies win SEC championships in soccer and women’s basketball.

It helped the Aggies finish second in the NCAA Women’s Indoor Track & Field Championships.

It helped Shaine Casas become the first individual champion in the NCAA Men’s Swimming & Diving Championships in school history.

The rest – and Aggies hope the best – is yet to come. 🍷

CAROLE DOLLINS

Special Event Ticketing

BY ADAM QUISENBERRY



SINCE JOINING THE ORGANIZATION in the spring of 2003, Carole Dollins has been steadfast in her loyal commitment and service to the donors and ticket buyers of the 12th Man Foundation.

With that same conviction of service, Carole is embracing a new position in special event ticketing where she plays a leading role for Texas A&M Athletics in an exciting initiative designed to bring additional concerts, shows and events to Aggieland. Those efforts are already paying dividends, as A&M successfully hosted several headlining events in the spring with more scheduled this fall.

“For me,” says Carole, “it always goes back to customer support and trying our best to take care of our people.”

While coaches, student-athletes and administrators garner much of the attention as it relates to the fortunes of Texas A&M Athletics, contributions from vital support staffers such as Carole often go unnoticed. Carole, in particular, has had a hand in improving the experience for anyone who purchased a ticket to attend an Aggie sporting event in the past 18 years.

Her tenure has included record-setting attendance figures and the transition of ticketing operations from the athletics department to the 12th Man Foundation as well as A&M’s move to the Southeastern Conference and the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field.

With Carole in a new role, Lacey Williams has stepped into a leadership position as vice

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HER ROLE HAS MADE US AS SUCCESSFUL AS WE’VE BEEN, AND SHE HAS PUT US IN A POSITION TO BE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

— LACEY WILLIAMS

president of ticketing for the 12th Man Foundation. Lacey, who joined the 12th Man Foundation team in 2018, has seen firsthand the impact Carole has made on Aggie Athletics. Lacey credits Carole as key to her development.

“It’s been vital to learn from Carole over the past three years,” said Lacey while noting that Carole is one of the nation’s most respected figures in the field. “Her role has made us as successful as we’ve been, and she has put us in a position to be at the highest level. To be able to continue her tradition and build on the success she’s had here is something I look forward to. I value all of her knowledge, everything she’s done and the tireless and countless hours she’s put into making this office as successful as it is.”

In her new role, Carole’s focus will continue to be customer service. With the support of new Texas A&M University leadership, the athletics department is aiming to utilize the impressive facilities that 12th Man Foundation donors have helped make possible by opening new revenue streams and attracting exciting new entertainment options.

“The 12th Man Foundation and our donors owe Carole a debt of gratitude for her commitment and hard work in evolving our ticket operations over 18 years of service,” said Travis Dabney ’96, 12th Man Foundation president and CEO. “I don’t believe I have ever seen a more dedicated employee during my time with our organization than Carole.”

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— TRAVIS DABNEY ’96

LACEY WILLIAMS

Vice President of Ticketing

BY SAMANTHA ATCHLEY '17

THE START TO EVERY AGGIE GAMEDAY experience begins with a ticket. The complex process behind each ticket, however, begins with the extraordinary ticketing staff at the 12th Man Foundation led by Lacey Williams.

With a diverse background in collegiate athletics, Lacey has gathered a wealth of knowledge in ticketing operations and developed a valuable skill set in strategic analytics and management. The University of Kansas graduate brings valuable experience from her time spent with the College Football Hall of Fame, the University of Pittsburgh, Texas Christian University, the University of Texas and Colorado State University.

When the opportunity came to bring her unique skill set to Aggieland, Lacey willingly answered the call.

“When I looked into what the university had to offer, the Aggie connection here and all of the traditions,” said Lacey, “I thought it was a great opportunity to move my family back to Texas.”

Since joining the 12th Man Foundation team in 2018, Lacey has made an immense impact in guiding ticketing operations toward an exciting, upward trajectory.

“Lacey has shown to be an extremely bright and committed member of our staff and in the field of ticketing for some time now,” said Travis Dabney, 12th Man Foundation president and CEO. “We’re very excited for her future growth and leadership as she steps into this very important role for our organization.”

Now as vice president of Ticketing, Lacey is leading her department through a data-oriented, customer-focused approach for the future of ticketing experiences at Aggie Athletics events.

“We are always planning ahead and considering how we handle things,” Lacey said. “We’re typically planning season ticket renewals for a sport before their current season even begins. But at the same time, we’re also putting a lot of thought into how all the pieces fit together with the consumer in mind.”

Behind the scenes, Lacey is leading multiple

initiatives ranging from the functionality of a ticket transfer to the creative strategy of new ticket offers. Considering the rapidly evolving technology in the industry, Lacey’s expertise gives A&M a competitive edge in the midst of fast-paced transformation.

“It takes a significant amount of time, testing and training to make sure that we can execute everything correctly,” Lacey said. “At the end of the day, we’re working to make sure people get their tickets, they get their seat location, they can scan into the venue and have a great experience.”

And with a venue like Kyle Field, Lacey is able to see the power of the 12th Man each fall.

“With one of the largest stadiums in the nation, it’s very stressful making sure every ticket scans in, people have access to parking and the student section is filled appropriately, among many other things,” Lacey admits. “But when the gates open and we see the scan numbers getting up to 100,000, that’s probably the most rewarding thing knowing all of the work has paid off.”

Due to her reputable success, Lacey represents A&M on a national level as a peer-selected ticket committee member for the College Football Playoffs – an honor reserved for industry leaders setting the standard in collegiate athletics ticketing.

“Lacey has played a key role during a critical time for our organization as we transitioned to a new ticketing system,” said Carole Dollins, who helped lead A&M’s ticketing efforts for the past 18 years. “She has great skills and is a proven leader. I really believe she’s going to do a fantastic job in her new role and will take our ticketing operations to even greater heights.”



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I REALLY BELIEVE SHE’S GOING TO DO A FANTASTIC JOB IN HER NEW ROLE AND WILL TAKE OUR TICKETING OPERATIONS TO EVEN GREATER HEIGHTS.

— CAROLE DOLLINS



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