

12thMan

2024 | VOLUME 29, NO. 2

FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES
IN SUPPORT OF CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS



ANNE & DAVID DUNLAP '83

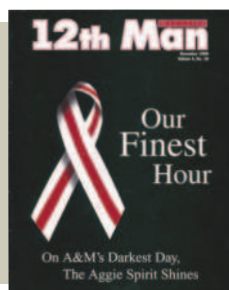
E. KING GILL AWARD HONOREES



1950 2025
75 YEARS

A GAME LIKE NO OTHER

True colors of Aggieland come out for a nation to see



FROM THE 12TH MAN ARCHIVES

Published in the December 1999 issue of 12th Man Magazine, this story recounts the Texas A&M vs. Texas football game following the tragic Aggie Bonfire collapse on November 18, 1999. The article was written by founding editor **Homer Jacobs '87**.

SIX SATURDAYS A YEAR, AGGIES CONGREGATE AT KYLE FIELD not necessarily to take in a Texas A&M win over Run-of-the-Mill U., but to show – en masse – how much their university means to them.

Football games are a stage, a way to show the rest of the outside world that A&M is different; that loyalty and tradition and family really do make up the spirit of Aggieland.

On a picturesque Friday before a state-record football crowd of 86,128, the Texas Aggies took their biggest stage and shined like never before.

Amid a sea of emotion that was unprecedented in this school's history, A&M rallied to beat the Texas Longhorns, 20-16, before the loudest crowd ever assembled in Kyle Field.

It was a day that will forever live on because 12 Aggies died building Bonfire. It was a day to never forget because all we could do was remember.

"We put our hearts and souls into this game, and so did every Aggie in College Station and around the country," said A&M linebacker Brian Gamble, who fell to his knees and looked to the heavens after recovering the game-sealing fumble by Major Applewhite. "I know God and those 12 Aggies were looking down on us. It was unbelievable."

From the candlelight vigil and uplifting yell practice on Thanksgiving, to the stunning halftime tribute by both schools' bands, to the scintillating Aggie comeback, to the deep hugs that engulfed Kyle Field, A&M gripped the state and nation during an amazing 24-hour stretch.

And part of the reason why this was such an unreal setting for a college football game was because everything about the spirit of Aggieland is real. The spirit is not fancy lip service or based purely on football. Where else would you see football players hugging Red Pots and one of the injured Bonfire workers during the glimmering yell practice?

"Playing football takes up a lot of your time, and you don't get to do a lot of the things the other students do," said punter Shane Lechler, who set an NCAA record for career punting average at 44.6 yards per kick. "Sometimes you lose the whole perspective of what Texas A&M is all about. When this tragedy happened, and we were able to go out there and help, it brought this team back into that perspective, which is that this place is the most special school in the country."

Against the Longhorns, the Aggies held their rivals to zero second-half points. A pair of college roommates connected on the winning touchdown pass. Texas had to drive out of the north end zone, of all

places, before pure bedlam.

The Wrecking Crew had to stare down a sickly Major Applewhite on the game's final drive, just like last year. Only this time, on this special day, the Aggies came up with the big fumble recovery to set off a celebration of victory and a celebration of being part of something as grand as the Aggie experience.

It was, as coach R.C. Slocum said, only fitting.

"I thought it was so right that we won," Slocum said. "All that the A&M family had gone through, it just needed to come out that way."

In a sense, the 12 Aggies who lost their lives became the ultimate 12th Man. They sacrificed to better their school in an unimaginable way.

I can assure you Aggies everywhere are now tighter and closer than they ever have been. And, with the spotlight burning so brightly on a football game, the national media spread the word about A&M as best it could.

The Aggies could win national titles every other year, and it couldn't match the interest in this school after what happened at Bonfire. Indeed, the nation's best kept secret that is Aggieland was discovered through the unspeakable tragedy.

One can only surmise what writers from the Washington Post and New York Times thought about their first experience at an Aggie Football game.

"The 12th Man is the best thing in college football," said linebacker Jason Glenn. "People who aren't Aggies just can't understand what this is all about."

For three-plus hours on a heaven-sent Friday afternoon, what it was all about was something we have never seen before and won't see again.

It was Aggies and Longhorns shedding mutual tears. It was two gutty football teams playing as hard as they could under incredible circumstances.

It was the state of Texas coming together in a football stadium to smile and cry, to high-five and choke up.

It was a day that could only unfold at Texas A&M University.

"I'm very sorry for what happened to those 12 people," Lechler said. "But it did make us realize Texas A&M is special."

And for that, our fallen Aggies, we owe you so much.

An injured student from the Aggie Bonfire collapse soaks up a special day at Kyle Field.



A candlelight vigil was followed by yell practice in Kyle Field on Thanksgiving 1999.



PHOTOS BY GLEN JOHNSON & KEVIN BARTRAM



CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN



On Aug. 30, 2024, the 12th Man Foundation hosted an event to celebrate Centennial Campaign donors Adam Sinn '00 and Linda & Dennis Clark '68 for their remarkable support of Aggie student-athletes and Texas A&M Athletics. Sinn's lead gift funded the construction of the state-of-the-art Adam C. Sinn '00 Academic & Wellness Center at the Graham Athletic Complex. The Clarks' contribution spearheaded the Linda & Dennis Clark '68 Nutrition Center that is located on the first floor of the Sinn Center.

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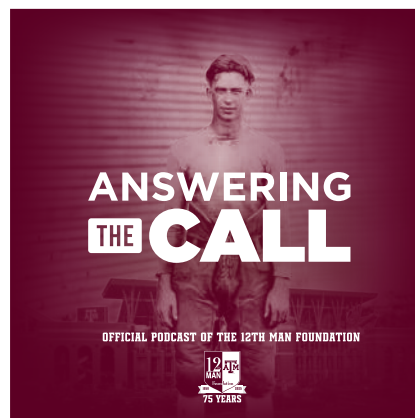
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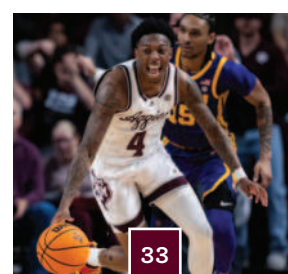
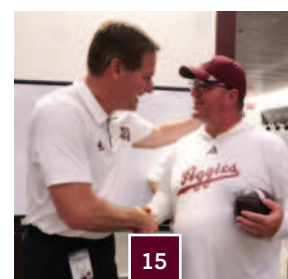
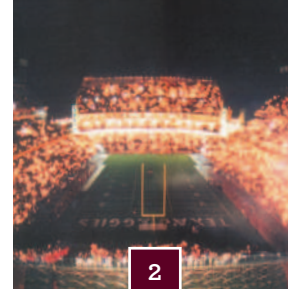


Pierce Bradley '24
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WE LAUNCHED A PODCAST

On Aug. 19, we proudly launched "Answering the Call," the official podcast of the 12th Man Foundation! Visit 12th.info/podcast to join the conversation and listen on your favorite streaming platform.



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12th Man Magazine (ISSN 1091-000X)
Copyright © 2024 is published by the 12th Man Foundation, 756 Houston Street, College Station, TX 77843.

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Subscription rate for 12th Man Magazine is a gift of \$150 or more per year to the 12th Man Foundation. For foreign addresses, contact the 12th Man Foundation at 888-992-4443.

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TAUREAN YORK '27

Aggie Football linebacker defies the odds with unshakable belief

WILL JOHNSON '01

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

spending their 16th birthday in an airport, waiting on a delayed flight to Columbus, Ohio and wondering if their dreams would ever see the light of day.

But that was Taurean York's reality while trying to find a scholarship offer to play college football. He always knew he was good enough. He just could not get others to believe it.

"It was a very lonely time for me," York recalled. "It felt like everybody was taking me for granted."

While York was searching for an opportunity, several programs had zeroed in on his Temple High School teammate.

"We lived in the same neighborhood," York said. "He was getting three to four offers a day. I was getting zero. No follow backs. No interest. No calls. So, it was a hard time."

But here is the thing about York – at no point did the recruiting process erode his confidence. Coaches told him all the reasons he was not the right guy for their program, yet his belief held rock solid and never chipped away.

"Short and lack of speed," York said. "They did not know what my upside would be. I just needed the opportunity. I needed the stage for me to showcase my abilities."

Really, the only school that was ready to give him that chance was Duke University and their head football coach at the time, Mike Elko.

"He was the only one that truly wanted me," York said.

Elko saw what the rest failed to.

"We saw a young man who loved football," the Aggies' head coach recalled. "Not only to play, but to prepare. He gave great effort in everything."

York was set to go to Durham, North Carolina and play for Elko and the Blue Devils, but the Aggies made an offer to York late in the process, most likely because other linebackers had passed on Texas A&M. The bigger stage and opportunity to prove his value was finally available. He took it.

If anyone knows York, he does not mind telling others they were wrong about him. Only, he does it with his actions and not words. He proves it with his play.

Last season, York led all SEC freshmen in tackles for lost yardage. He was on the 2023 SEC All-Freshman team and ESPN named him a 2023 Freshman All-American.

York proved just how worthy he was of the scholarship offer he waited for. All the while, his story earned the respect of his teammates.

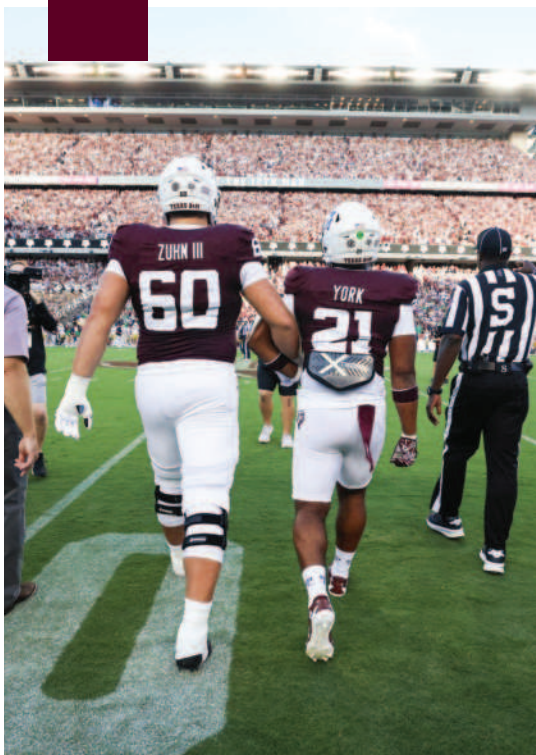
"That is hard work and dedication," said quarterback Conner Weigman. "He came here not expecting anything, and he got everything in return. From day one he worked his tail off. He has done everything and more for this program in such a short amount of time."

During spring ball, York was named a captain for the 2024 season.

Mike Elko explained the attributes of a captain and why York and offensive lineman Trey Zuhn III were given the distinction.

"When you talk about captains and leadership, we





want guys who are going to say and do the things that need to be said and done behind the scenes,” Elko said.

Elko found the right guy in York. Even before earning the captain role, York was already vocal with his teammates.

“He is not only a great communicator, but he has the respect from all of his teammates,” Elko added.

It fits with his future. York would like to coach when his playing days are done. He already knows the first step in that process.

“I want to win a state championship because I never won one as a player,” York said.

He loved his time under the Friday night lights in Temple, and now he is cherishing his time in Kyle Field with the 12th Man. York did not know if he would ever get the chance to play at this level — a chance to realize the opportunity he earned. Now proudly wearing the maroon and white, his future looks brighter than ever.

The offers to play college football came late, but York’s revered impact within the Aggie Football program did not. As difficult as the process was, he did the one thing required to overcome the adversity — he never gave up.

He has earned this stage and has already performed well on it, but rest assured he is not done. In York’s mind there will always be something to prove.

“

THAT IS HARD WORK AND DEDICATION. HE CAME HERE NOT EXPECTING ANYTHING, AND HE GOT EVERYTHING IN RETURN. FROM DAY ONE HE WORKED HIS TAIL OFF. HE HAS DONE EVERYTHING AND MORE FOR THIS PROGRAM IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.

— CONNER WEIGMAN '26



A native of Temple, Texas, Taurean York '27 was named a 2024 season-long captain. Starting all 13 games his freshman year, the Aggie Football linebacker finished his debut season with 74 tackles, ranking third among all league freshmen. York’s performance earned him ESPN Freshman All-America and SEC All-Freshman Team accolades.

TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS / CRAIG BISACRE (TOP LEFT) / WESLEY BOWERS (TOP RIGHT) / ETHAN MITO (BOTTOM RIGHT)

YOUR FRONT-ROW SEAT TO THE STORIES BEHIND AGGIE ATHLETICS



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THE LEDNICKY LEGACY

Father-daughter duo shares unique bond as Aggie athletes

BY CAMRYN GARNER '21

FOR KYLE LEDNICKY '98, THE JOURNEY TO TEXAS A&M AND earning a spot on the Aggie Football team began with a dream and a VHS tape.

Kyle's Aggie roots, which span multiple generations, fueled his desire to attend college in Aggieland and continue a proud legacy.

"My family is full of Aggies," he said. "My dad was class of '62, my granddad was class of '37 and I had two sisters that went to A&M, so I was wearing maroon before I could walk."

As an undersized offensive lineman from Houston's Stratford High School, Kyle's chances of playing football for Texas A&M seemed like a long shot.

"If they had stars back then, I maybe would have been a half-star or one-star," he said with a chuckle.

Kyle's father, Benjamin J. Lednický Jr. '62, thought otherwise of his son's athletic potential. On a whim, he sent Kyle's football highlight VHS tapes to the Texas A&M coaching staff. It was a last-minute decision that would eventually pay dividends for his son.

"Coach Cassidy called and offered me a preferred

walk-on spot," Kyle recalled. "He said, 'We are not giving you any money, but we will give you a locker and a uniform and see what happens.'"

That phone call would set the stage for a remarkable college career as a deep snapper.

The Houston native seized the opportunity and never looked back. Kyle's hard work and dedication on the field paid off when he earned an athletic scholarship in February 1996, a turning point that brought significant relief to his family.

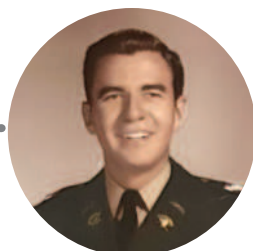
"It was a big deal," he said. "I come from a family of five kids, so it alleviated some of that financial burden. I was able to come out of school without a whole lot of debt to pay back."

Over four seasons, Kyle executed more than 500 deep snaps without committing a single error – a remarkable achievement that often goes unnoticed. His unwavering commitment and precision, though rarely in the spotlight, played an essential role in the Aggies' success on the gridiron.

Kyle's time in Aggieland proved life-changing in



Benjamin J. Lednický Sr.
Class of '37



Benjamin J. Lednický Jr.
Class of '62



Kyle Lednický
Class of '98



Logan Lednický
Class of '26



more ways than one. As a student-athlete, he met his future wife, Leigh '97, who worked in the Aggie Football office at the time.

Now two decades later, the Lednický legacy at Texas A&M continues on with Kyle and Leigh's daughter. Logan '26 forged her own path to Aggieland, driven by inherited talent, determination and a deep-rooted love for the university. As a standout opposite hitter on the Texas A&M Volleyball team, Logan's path to becoming a student-athlete was quite different from her father's, but she had the same inherent desire to be an Aggie.

"I played every sport you can think of growing up as a kid," she said. "I played my first year of club volleyball when I was 12 years old, and I never thought I would go play at A&M. It was always my dream because I am a fourth-generation Aggie and that is where my dad played football, but realistically I did not think I could do it."

Despite her initial doubts, Logan's athletic prowess eventually caught the attention of college recruiters. Though she had strong ties to Aggieland, her path to Texas A&M was not predetermined.

"I definitely wanted to keep my options open," she said. "I had not received an offer from Texas A&M and you never know what the coaches are thinking. I took all the visits I could."

Her parents supported her decision-making process without adding any pressure.

"We tried to be very objective," Kyle said. "We wanted her to make her own decision."

In the end, Logan's heart led her to College Station.

A fourth-generation Aggie and standout opposite hitter on the Texas A&M Volleyball team, Logan Lednický '26 is proudly following in the footsteps of her father Kyle Lednický '98, a former deep snapper for Aggie Football.



“

IT IS COOL TO SEE PEOPLE SO INVESTED IN TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS. THEY JUST WANT WHAT IS BEST FOR US AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO DO WHAT WE LOVE.

— LOGAN LEDNICKÝ '26



“

WHEN LOGAN IS FINISHED AT A&M, I HOPE THAT SHE HELPED CHANGE THIS PROGRAM AND THAT IT IS HEADED FOR GREAT THINGS. I JUST WANT HER TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY AND WILL SUPPORT WHATEVER PATH THAT MAY LEAD TO.

— KYLE LEDNICKY '98



She is now experiencing firsthand the extensive resources available to student-athletes while living out her own Aggie story and achieving success on and off the court.

“I would put our resources up against any other school in the country,” she said. “We have access to anything we could possibly need.”

From training and academic support to facilities, Kyle believes Texas A&M Athletics has done a great job of staying at the forefront of providing resources to student-athletes.

“The financial support provided is huge when you are trying to take care of these athletes,” he said.

Like her father, Logan’s appreciation for her athletic scholarship and the generous support provided by 12th Man Foundation donors is evident.

“I cannot thank them enough for supporting me and helping to fund my scholarship,” she said. “It is cool to see people so invested in Texas A&M Athletics. They just want what is best for us and make it possible for us to do what we love.”

Logan’s exceptional performances on the court have made a huge impact on Texas A&M Volleyball and earned her numerous accolades, including All-SEC and AVCA South Region honors, along with a spot on the 2024 United

States Collegiate National Team. Looking ahead, she has big aspirations for her future.

“As long as I can keep playing volleyball, I will,” she said. “With professional volleyball starting and growing in the U.S., I think it would be really cool to go out and be able to do that for as long as possible. My overarching goal is to play in the Olympics.”

Kyle’s hopes for his daughter’s future are both ambitious and grounded.

“When Logan is finished at A&M, I hope that she helped change this program and that it is headed for great things,” he said. “I just want her to be happy and healthy and will support whatever path that may lead to. I try to give her perspective on something that may seem like a massive deal today, but in a year from now, or six weeks from now, it is not going to matter. I remind her to not get too wrapped up in the things we cannot control.”

Today, this father-daughter duo bonds over their shared experiences as Aggie athletes. From Kyle’s unheralded journey as a former football walk-on to Logan’s remarkable achievements in volleyball, their story underscores the profound, lasting impact that a single athletic scholarship can have across generations.



TREV ALBERTS

The path that led Texas A&M's Director of Athletics to Aggieland

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

TREV ALBERTS LOVES LINCOLN, NEBRASKA. HE LOVES

the University of Nebraska. It is his alma mater. Alberts expected to spend the rest of his career as the director of athletics for the Cornhuskers.

Then, Texas A&M came calling.

"I told my wife, Angie, 'I will look at Texas A&M, and if this does not happen, I am never going to do this again. We are just going to live here the rest of our lives,' which was kind of our plan," Alberts said. "So, if I am being honest, I was not initially serious. But you start doing a little research, and you very quickly are blown away."

After his interview, Alberts was sold on A&M, and A&M was sold on Alberts. He listened to his head, and now, Alberts' heart belongs to the Aggies.

A&M named Alberts the director of athletics on March 13, 2024, signing him to a five-year deal.

"While we interviewed some exceptional candidates, Trev Alberts was an easy choice," Texas A&M President General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III said. "Trev and his wife Angie are wonderful people and tremendous role models. Trev's professional experiences give him a business-oriented, media-savvy perspective on college athletics that will be invaluable as we deal with the complicated issues emerging in today's environment."

"Trev has always been an Aggie. He just did not know it. We are lucky to have him leading Texas A&M Athletics."

Texas A&M had something Nebraska did not — a president. At the time Alberts left for A&M,

the Cornhuskers did not have a full-time school president after a more than 200-day search. The Aggies have Welsh.

It is Welsh's leadership that convinced Alberts that A&M was the right place at the right time.

"These jobs are hard," Alberts said. "There is a lot of change that is happening in college athletics. Leadership really matters, because at the end of the day, you need to make sure you are aligned with people who have your back. I started watching a lot of videos of Gen. Welsh, back as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I watched him give his Aggie Muster speech in April of 2022. I watched every single video I could find of him, because that is who I report to, and the more I studied him, the more impressed I became. It just kept going to the point I said, 'I think this is an opportunity that I would really be unwise not to pursue.'"

"So, I got comfortable very quickly with who Mark Welsh was as a man and as a leader and was very confident in the commitment from those under his leadership that we would have an opportunity to do some special things together."

A BRIGHT FUTURE

In May, Aggie Women's Tennis secured Texas A&M's first national title in seven years, while Adela Cernousek '25 became the first NCAA individual women's golf champion in program history.

During the 2023-24 athletic year, every Aggie



Raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa, Alberts is a College Football Hall of Famer, former football analyst and veteran athletics administrator. Prior to his time in Aggieland, Alberts was the University of Nebraska's athletics director and led the Cornhuskers to back-to-back top 30 finishes in the Learfield Directors' Cup for the first time in a decade.

team reached the postseason for the first time since 2015-16.

The future of Texas A&M is indeed very bright, with the head coaches, athletics director, university president and affiliate organizations all in alignment. The school appears perfectly positioned to navigate the transformational changes in college athletics.

"It is imperative the AD has the business skill set required to lead us through what is coming," said Jay Graham, member of The A&M System Board of Regents. "Trev showed at Nebraska-Omaha and Nebraska-Lincoln that he has the ability to navigate business issues, and I have full confidence he can lead us in the new age of name, image and likeness (NIL), revenue sharing and all that comes with that."

AN UNEXPECTED CAREER

Alberts never had director of athletics on his list of career choices. The job found him only after careers in football, banking and broadcasting.

In 1993, Alberts had one of the greatest seasons ever for a defensive player in college football. He totaled 15 sacks, 21 tackles for loss and 38 quarterback hurries while leading Nebraska to the national title game. He won the Dick Butkus Award and Jack Lambert Award as the top college linebacker and was a consensus All-American.

The Colts made him the fifth overall selection in the 1994 NFL draft. Alberts missed 20 games in three seasons with a dislocated right elbow, a concussion, a partially dislocated left shoulder and a hamstring injury. He retired after three years, at the age of 26, having played 29 games

with seven starts. The Colts announced his retirement a day after he declined to undergo reconstructive shoulder surgery.

"After my concussion, my wife asked, 'Is there something else you can do?'" Alberts said, laughing. "I said to her, 'Well, actually, no, honey, I do not think there is.' It just was not a great experience for me. That is not anything against the Colts. It was just so frustrating from a physical standpoint. Now, at 54, I can promise you I am grateful I only played three years."

RUNNING TOWARD THE FIRE

Alberts moved back to Lincoln after his playing career ended, and he briefly worked in institutional investments at a local bank. He then served as a football analyst for more than a decade for CNN/Sports Illustrated, ESPN, CBS and Westwood One before starting a search for something more fulfilling.

After turning down overtures from his alma mater to work in athletic administration, Alberts received a call from the University of Nebraska at Omaha about its director of athletics job. He took over a program that faced an overall structural deficit of \$3 million and annual operating deficits of \$1.8 million, explaining he tends to "run toward the fire."

Alberts stayed there 12 years before returning to his alma mater for three.

During his time at Nebraska-Omaha, he made the decision to eliminate football and wrestling and add men's soccer and men's golf. It was part of his plan that took UNO to The Summit League, an NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic conference. At Nebraska-Lincoln, he

oversaw a multi-year fundraising campaign dubbed GO BIG. The school opened a \$165 million state-of-the-art training center last year and continues to push for \$450 million to renovate Memorial Stadium.

“Trev looks at projects as understanding where you are first and dealing with those issues before charting the direction going forward,” said David Scott, an Omaha businessman and Alberts’ best friend and confidant. “Or as my father would tell us, ‘If you do not know your starting point, you cannot map out a realistic path to your desired destination.’ Trev will spend a lot of his time figuring out where the program is currently before setting the course forward. But when you are working with universities, one has to deal with the politics, the hurdles and barriers, and that is the difficult part.”

HOME IN AGGIELAND AT LAST

Now at Texas A&M, the Aggies have welcomed Alberts with open arms. So, what is A&M getting in Alberts?

“More than you deserve,” Scott said. “It is the truth. More than you deserve. He is a unique individual who has an undaunting desire to make a real difference in whatever he takes on. He runs at a high speed, so you better keep up.”

And that is already proving true in Aggieland.

“When Trev arrived here as athletics director, he provided some real leadership and brought everyone to the table,” said 12th Man Foundation President & CEO Travis Dabney. “It was really the first time that had been done. He should be recognized for some quality work, leadership and for pointing all toward the same goal. I am incredibly optimistic about his leadership of the athletics department.”



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TODAY’S ENVIRONMENT.**

– GENERAL (RET.) MARK A. WELSH III



ANNE & DAVID DUNLAP '83

2023 E. King Gill Award Honorees

BY IVY ROBINSON '20

ON A COOL, WINTRY NIGHT IN NEW ORLEANS, DAVID Dunlap '83 prepared for a New Year's Eve reunion with friends.

The young petroleum engineering major had endured a strenuous first semester in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets and was back home for a hard-earned holiday.

Following in the footsteps of his father and uncle before him, David had chosen to attend Texas A&M University with unwavering certainty. The Louisiana native felt the pride of continuing a family legacy each time he donned his Corps uniform and played in the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band. The Corps' rigid discipline he had grown accustomed to now stood in stark contrast to the laid-back rhythms of the Big Easy.

"It was New Years Eve 1979," David recalled with an infectious grin. "Everybody else had dates, but I had been out of town and out of touch for a while, so I did not have a date."

Luckily, one of David's good friends was a charismatic matchmaker and stepped in to help the single Aggie cadet. This friend was also the big brother of Anne Capella.

"My brother said, 'You need to go with us because the group is going on dates this year,'" Anne said. "So, it was a blind date. Dave was like a knight on a white horse — an incredible gentleman who was kind, quiet, serious and smart."

"I remember she was beautiful, fun, smart and outgoing," David said. "We laughed a lot."

The rest is history.

Two months later, David had returned to Aggieland and the normal routines of life on the Quad. However, a portion of his heart remained in Louisiana.

"January and February are hard months in the Corps," David said. "I just remember being lonely and here comes Valentine's Day, so I decided to send her a card in the mail."

“

DAVE WAS LIKE A KNIGHT ON A WHITE HORSE — AN INCREDIBLE GENTLEMAN WHO WAS KIND, QUIET, SERIOUS AND SMART.

— ANNE DUNLAP



Anne, who at the time was finishing her senior year of high school at Mount Carmel Academy, learned about the Valentine's card from her mother.

"She called me while I was at school to tell me and she was all giddy," Anne recalled. "Even that one little card, I thought, 'Oh my gosh, how sweet.' It was all foreshadowing a planner, a thoughtful man and a purposeful man."

THE BELT LOOP

The couple started dating that summer. Though 454 miles kept them apart, they were determined to make the long distance work.

Anne's first visit to Aggieland came during David's senior year at A&M, where under a star-filled Texas sky, she experienced one of the Corps of Cadets' most sacred traditions — Midnight Yell Practice.

"Back then, the band would form behind Duncan Dining Hall to march over to Yell Practice," David said. "There were 300 people in the band and 300 dates, so 600 people were just standing around about to make their way to Kyle Field and it is dark, of course.

"I said to Anne, 'This is going to be a bit chaotic, so the best thing for you to do is hold on to my belt loop. When the drum major blows the whistle, I am stepping off and I do not want to lose you.'"

"I told him, 'I think I will be okay,'" Anne said,

recalling her initial reluctance.

However, Anne quickly took David's advice upon the abrupt lunge of Aggie Band members responding to the drum major's command.

"I now tell everybody that I will hold on to his belt loop all the way through life," she said.

BUILDING A LIFE TOGETHER

David graduated from A&M with his petroleum engineering degree in 1983, and Anne earned her history degree from Tulane University in 1984. The couple married in 1985, just two years after David began his very first role with BJ Services in southeast Louisiana, a leading worldwide provider of pressure pumping and oilfield services for the petroleum industry. It marked the beginning of a 25-year journey that would take him from the marshes of Louisiana to the heights of corporate leadership.

"We gained a very clear understanding early on that it could be a great career path and life for us," David said. "But there would be sacrifice that goes along with it."

Those sacrifices became apparent during David's 12-year tenure as president of BJ Services' international division. Though based in Houston, his responsibilities spanned across the globe, requiring him to spend an average of 120 nights

Anne grew up in a large family with nine brothers and sisters, and her father was a professor at Tulane University. David was influenced to attend Texas A&M at an early age by his father and uncle, who were both Aggie civil engineers.



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– DAVID DUNLAP '83

per year outside the United States for work.

Meanwhile, Anne remained busy back home with raising their six children: Maggie, Emily, Grace, John, and twins Mary and Tess.

“We played very well together, and we made a great team,” Anne said.

The sight of David rushing from international flights to soccer fields in Houston became a regular occurrence, often leaving him no choice but to appear at their kids’ events in business attire and trench coats.

“There was always a lot of chatter from the other children, and they would ask our kids, ‘Is your dad in the CIA?’” Anne said with a laugh.

“When I was home, I was dug into being a dad and doing those things like chasing kids around and taking them to the soccer games,” David added.

In 2010, David entered a new era of his career as president and CEO of Superior Energy Services, a position he would hold until 2021. Amid his expansion of professional responsibilities, his commitment to family and service never wavered.

David’s continued service to his alma mater through various leadership roles, including positions on the 12th Man Foundation’s Board of Trustees, the College of Engineering’s Advisory Council and the President’s Board of Visitors for the Corps of Cadets, earned him recognition as both a member of the A&M Petroleum Engineering Academy of Distinguished Graduates in 2017 and a Texas A&M Distinguished Alumnus in 2024. The couple’s contributions toward the John D. White ’70





As football and men's basketball season ticket holders and 12th Man Foundation donors, the Dunlaps are loyal supporters of Aggie student-athletes. Their philanthropic journey at Texas A&M began with one phone call to the 12th Man Foundation in 1990 when David was looking to purchase football season tickets.

– Robert L. Walker '58 Music Activities Center led to the naming of the Dunlap Drill Field, a perfect one-to-one replica of Kyle Field that serves as the practice drill field for the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band.

Additionally, David has served on advisory boards for The Woodlands Children's Museum and the National Petroleum Council. Today, he is president of Crystal Beach Oil & Gas, LLC.

The Dunlaps remain deeply engaged with Texas A&M through their extraordinary service and support of the 12th Man Foundation, David's lifetime membership in the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets Association and his service on the Texas A&M Foundation Board of Trustees, College of Engineering's Advisory Council and the President's Board of Visitors for the Corps of Cadets.

THE GATEWAY BACK HOME

The Dunlaps' strong affinity for Texas A&M University began with one phone call in 1990 when the couple moved to The Woodlands. At that time, David reached out to the 12th Man Foundation in search of four Aggie Football season tickets.

"It was really the catalyst for my reconnection back to Texas A&M," David recalled. "We had been away for some years while working and raising our family, but that initial phone call to the 12th Man Foundation opened up a whole new chapter for us."

David discovered what many have come to realize — athletics provides a natural pathway back to Aggieland.

"I think for a lot of people, their first opportunity to reconnect is through buying tickets," David said. "As a young professional, athletics gives you that opportunity and reason to go back to the university, reengage and support."

As Diamond Champions Council members, the Dunlaps have generously contributed to multiple capital projects, including a lead gift for the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field and the recently completed \$120 million Centennial Campaign. But perhaps their most significant contribution came during an unprecedented and challenging time for Texas A&M Athletics. David's steady leadership as Chair of the Board of Trustees in 2020 helped the 12th Man Foundation and Texas A&M Athletics successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was the worst year in 12th Man Foundation history, yet it was the best year," David recalled. "None of us knew what was going to happen when we had the lockdown. The entire athletics department is significantly powered by football season ticket revenue, and we had already completed football season ticket renewals."

“

I THINK FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE, THEIR FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO RECONNECT IS THROUGH BUYING TICKETS. AS A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL, ATHLETICS GIVES YOU THAT OPPORTUNITY AND REASON TO GO BACK TO THE UNIVERSITY, REENGAGE AND SUPPORT.

— DAVID DUNLAP '83

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“We offered season ticket holders a refund yet made a plea for people to transition that money into a donation to keep Texas A&M Athletics afloat and operating. It was a critical moment when we needed Aggies to stand up and that they did.”

Resulting from the collective efforts of the 12th Man Foundation staff, Board of Trustees and the remarkable generosity of donors and season ticket holders, \$50.1 million of \$64.7 million was retained to help sustain Texas A&M Athletics throughout the reduced stadium capacity athletic year. Without this remarkable support, the COVID-19 pandemic would have been detrimental to Texas A&M Athletics.

“It was such incredible teamwork and camaraderie,” David said. “We all had to pull together, and we really found out just how special our donors are.”

While they would never admit it, the Dunlaps are a prime example of those special donors who loyally answer the call to support.

THE SURPRISE

On a peaceful, November night in College Station, the Dunlaps made their way to Midnight Yell Practice after attending the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Gala at Reed Arena. Dressed in their black-tie attire, the couple looked forward to enjoying the rest of the night through the cherished Aggie tradition that sparked their love story.

As the two entered their Founders suite at Kyle Field, a crowd of colleagues, friends and family members took them by surprise with shouts of celebration and congratulations. Travis Dabney '96 and Jacob Green '80 then followed by presenting the couple the 2023 E. King Gill Award.

“Anne and David Dunlap represent the best of Texas A&M,” said Dabney, 12th Man Foundation president & CEO. “Their servant leadership to our institution is so appreciated by all of us, and we are a better organization because of them.”



12TH MAN FOUNDATION / BRIAN DAVIS (RIGHT) | PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE & DAVID DUNLAP (LEFT)



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. Epwright '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
2021	Robyn '89 & Alan Roberts '78
2022	Becky '76 & Monty '77 Davis
2023	Anne & David Dunlap '83

“

**ANNE AND DAVID DUNLAP
REPRESENT THE BEST
OF TEXAS A&M. THEIR
SERVANT LEADERSHIP
TO OUR INSTITUTION IS
SO APPRECIATED BY ALL
OF US, AND WE ARE A
BETTER ORGANIZATION
BECAUSE OF THEM.**

- TRAVIS DABNEY '96

“They are just good people,” added Green, 12th Man Foundation vice president of principal gifts. “If you look at all the core values of Texas A&M and what defines an Aggie, that is what they live by.”

The Dunlaps’ decades of service and philanthropy culminated in that moment.

“It was truly surreal,” Anne said.

And for the former cadet, the recognition meant the world.

“I think what is special to me about this award is when reflecting on the man and legend E. King Gill, it is all about standing up and being ready to serve,” David said. “Recipients of the E. King Gill Award are not one dimensional with their investment at Texas A&M. They have served the 12th Man Foundation and the university holistically. To be included in that company is the most incredible honor.”





12TH MAN FOUNDATION / BRIAN DAVIS (TOP, MIDDLE RIGHT, BOTTOM LEFT) | JP BEATO III (MIDDLE LEFT)
BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE & DAVID DUNLAP

POWER OF A SCHOLARSHIP

RICHMOND WEBB '93

From scholarship opportunity to offensive tackle career:
Aggie Football letterman paves the way for family

BY OLIN BUCHANAN

A RARE COMBINATION OF INTELLIGENCE, AGILITY AND size guaranteed Richmond Webb '93 a place in Texas A&M's starting lineup.

But the starting lineup was not the only start. Webb's scholarship to Texas A&M assured he started more than football games. It started an education. It started a career. It started a proud family tradition of Texas A&M graduates that continued with two younger brothers and now includes his daughter, Madison, who graduated in May 2024.

Those opportunities were realized because of the dreams and sacrifices of Richmond Sr. and Bobbie Webb. After graduating from Pemberton High School in Marshall, they married and moved to Dallas for more employment opportunities.

The couple always emphasized the value of education to the four children they raised. Their first child, daughter Angela, attended Prairie View A&M University.

Two years later, Richmond went to Texas A&M. His two brothers, James and Joseph, would follow him to Aggieland.

"Mom always stressed education," said Webb, who later found success in real estate and investing. "It was more important than sports. If you did not keep your grades up, you did not play.

"That was what she preached, and I am glad she did. She said you can only play sports for so long, but



12TH MAN FOUNDATION / IVY ROBINSON (TOP) | TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (BOTTOM)

a degree will last longer than sports. She was right.

“You always want your kids to do better and go further in life. I had amazing parents. They are no longer here, but the stuff they instilled in me and my siblings was priceless.”

Richmond excelled academically as much as he did in athletics at Roosevelt High School in Dallas. He was an honor roll student. He was even the recipient of an engineering scholarship which was presented by Dallas-area engineers, but he could not accept it. In those days, the NCAA would not allow students to accept other scholarships if they were on an athletic scholarship.

There was no doubt Webb would get a football scholarship. He was smart and athletic, and by the time he was 18 years old, he had grown to 6-foot-6 and 245 pounds.

“The good thing back then about being able to play sports exceptionally well is it allowed an opportunity for me to go to school,” Webb said. “I probably would have gone to school anyway, but to get a full ride took a tremendous burden off my parents.”

R.C. Slocum, who was A&M’s defensive coordinator at the time, vividly remembers recruiting Webb.

“I recruited him for a long time,” Slocum said. “I watched him play football. I watched him play

basketball. I remember sitting in his home one Sunday afternoon during an in-home visit. The family was watching a pro football game.

“I said to his mother, ‘One of these days you will be sitting here watching Richmond play like that.’ She said, ‘Coach Slocum, you think my little baby one day will play pro football?’

“I said, ‘Yes, ma’am. Your little baby will play pro football for a long time.’”

Following a stellar career at A&M, Webb was the ninth player selected in the 1990 NFL draft. He played 13 seasons at left tackle for the Miami Dolphins and Cincinnati Bengals.

Webb was a seven-time Pro Bowl selection, four-time All Pro and was named to the NFL’s All-Decade team of the 1990s. His omission from the Pro Football Hall of Fame is a mystery, but many NFL observers think it is inevitable Webb will eventually get the call from Canton, Ohio.

Texas A&M played a major role in that success.

Webb likely would have experienced a successful career wherever he chose to play college football.

But at A&M, he shifted from the defensive line to offensive tackle where he earned All-Southwest Conference acclaim.

“He played defense, but we needed an offensive tackle,” Slocum recalled. “We moved him over there, and he turned out to be a great offensive tackle.”

Webb helped lead Aggie Football to Southwest Conference Championships in 1986 and 1987 and to bowl games all four seasons at A&M. He lettered from 1986-89, earning All-SWC honors as a senior and the Aggie Heart Award, which is the highest honor for a football player at Texas A&M.



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— RICHMOND WEBB '93



One scholarship opportunity made possible by 12th Man Foundation donors helped open doors for the Webb family's legacy. Madison Webb '24, Richmond's daughter, received her Aggie Ring in November 2023 and earned her A&M degree in May 2024.

That move may have changed Webb's life. Yet, it was just one of many life-changing events he experienced at Texas A&M.

The greatest, of course, is he met his wife, Chandra Williams '90, who was also a Texas A&M student at the time.

Further, Webb earned a degree in industrial distribution. His mother, seemingly, was prouder of that than anything her son had accomplished on the football field.

"When I got my ring, that was big for me," Webb recalled. "I had to start playing pro football, so I came back and finished my degree. At the time, I was not going to walk. My mom said, 'No, you have got to walk across the stage.' Thank God I listened to my mom."

"To hear President Mobley call my name and for me to walk across that stage and get a degree from Texas A&M — that was a defining moment for me."

Another defining moment for Webb was when his daughter received her own Aggie Ring. Indeed, she said her father often has his own way of recruiting for A&M.

"He is going to talk about Texas A&M eventually," Madison said. "He will tell you how great a school it is and why you should send your kids there."

"Being an Aggie runs deep for my parents. When I was getting my ring, he was telling everybody about it."

Just like her father, Madison knows the value of an A&M education is priceless.

"Texas A&M has really challenged me academically," she said. "It has challenged my leadership skills. I learned how to work with people, how to study and how to handle a lot of adversity. It is definitely worth it. I am glad I made the decision."

Madison's dad shares her pride in choosing to become an Aggie.

"I made the right choice of going to A&M," Webb said. "The core values are what I stand for. The university, the coaches I had and my teammates influenced my life."

It all started with parents who stressed the value of an education and an athletic scholarship that opened the door to invaluable opportunities.

“

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— MADISON WEBB '24



12TH MAN FOUNDATION

AN ENDURING IMPACT

The Noel Devin '04 Memorial Scholarship

BY KATELYN BUYS '14

NOEL DEVIN'S SHARP WIT AND NO-NONSENSE

approach were hallmarks of her tenure at the 12th Man Foundation.

As a dedicated employee in the ticket office, Noel was efficient, direct and unwavering in her commitment to the organization. Her influence extended well beyond her official duties as she became a mentor and role model to countless students who crossed her path, leaving an indelible mark on their lives and careers.

Kirstin Self '16, one of the first recipients of the Noel Devin '04 Memorial Scholarship in 2015, shared a profound connection with Noel.

"Being selected as one of the first recipients was deeply meaningful to me because I had the privilege of knowing Noel personally," Kirstin said.

Through her guidance and support, Noel became instrumental in Kirstin's Aggie story.

"During those overwhelming first weeks at Texas A&M, Noel's reassuring presence made all the difference," Kirstin added. "She showed me that there were people at Texas A&M who truly cared about your success."

That spirit of mentorship inspired Kirstin's own career path. She pursued a master's in curriculum and instruction, driven by a desire to support both students and teachers.

"Noel's generosity and the time she invested in me and other student workers inspires me to take the same approach," Kirstin said. "Her 'doggedly determined spirit' continues to motivate me when I face challenges, and I strive to carry forward that same perseverance in all I do."

Ashlee Shidler '15, a 2017 scholarship recipient, formed a meaningful connection with Noel through her work in the ticket office.

"Getting to know Noel as a student worker was incredibly special," said Ashlee, who currently serves as senior director of ticket operations for the 12th Man Foundation. "She had such genuine care for everyone in the office, particularly her student workers. Having known her personally made receiving the memorial scholarship even more meaningful."

Today, Ashlee continues Noel's legacy, working full-time in the same office where they first met.

"Each day, I strive to serve this organization with the same dedication Noel showed — tackling every task, big or small, with unwavering commitment," she added.

Both women embody different aspects of Noel's lasting influence. Kirstin dedicates herself to education while Ashlee carries forward Noel's commitment to service at the 12th Man Foundation.

"My goal is to make a lasting difference

through continuous learning and personal growth," Ashlee said. "Like Noel, I want to leave things better than I found them, knowing that even small contributions can create meaningful change."

Since 2015, the Noel Devin '04 Memorial Scholarship has awarded right under \$50,000 to 25 deserving recipients. This scholarship stands as a testament to Noel's legacy, ensuring that her dedication to service and commitment to excellence will continue to shape the lives of future generations.

To contribute to this scholarship and help honor Noel's memory, visit 12th.info/noeldevin or call the 12th Man Foundation at 888-992-4443. Your support will help make a difference in the lives of Aggie students, just as Noel did.





12TH MAN FOUNDATION

NATHALIE '23 & KEVIN MCDONALD '89

Saluting a legacy of selfless service, dedication and commitment

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

AT THE HEART OF TEXAS A&M'S SUCCESS IS

a dedicated community of supporters like Nathalie '23 and Kevin McDonald '89, whose decades of commitment through the 12th Man Foundation have made a profound impact on Aggie Athletics.

Their contributions extend beyond financial support. They have devoted their time and leadership to ensuring that Aggie student-athletes thrive both in competition and in the classroom.

Kevin, a third-generation Aggie, was born in California but moved to College Station as a child when his father joined the faculty at Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Texas A&M has always been a part of my life," Kevin said, noting how the values instilled by his family shaped his connection to the university. "Some of my earliest memories are attending Aggie football games with my family."

When he was in fifth grade, Kevin's family relocated to West Texas, where he lived on a cattle and sheep ranch. His involvement in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) led to him earning a scholarship from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, which brought him back to College Station to pursue a degree at Texas A&M.

"At that time, the scholarship required

you to major in agriculture, and I chose agricultural economics," he said. "I was a country boy, so it seemed like a good fit."

While at Texas A&M, Kevin's life took a transformative turn during an animal science trip to Washington, D.C. It was there that he met Fred McClure, an influential Aggie who was serving as President Ronald Reagan's legislative affairs director. After an internship on Capitol Hill, Kevin was inspired to pursue a career in law.

"I don't know if I should give Fred the credit or the blame," Kevin said with a laugh, "but I went home thinking I wanted to become a lawyer. I thought, 'I'm going to do what Fred does.'"

Kevin's connection to the 12th Man Foundation began during his first job as a trial attorney when he was recruited by Arno Krebs, a past president of the 12th Man Foundation's Executive Committee.

"Arno is like a second father to me," Kevin said. "He's been a close mentor and friend ever since, influencing my professional career and my involvement with the 12th Man Foundation."

As Kevin's career flourished — he has held leadership roles at multiple corporations — his dedication to Texas A&M grew stronger. Together with Nathalie, whom he met at church in Houston, they have remained

steadfast in their support of the university and its athletics department.

The McDonalds are season ticket holders for football, men's and women's basketball and baseball and have made significant contributions to Texas A&M Athletics. Beyond financial support, they have devoted their time and talents to the 12th Man Foundation, helping shape the future of Aggie sports through their leadership and selfless service.

Their involvement with the 12th Man Foundation has been particularly impactful through their work on the Board of Trustees, where Kevin served as chair in 2023.

"Serving on the board has been a tremendous honor," Kevin said. "It's an opportunity to give back to the university that has given me so much and to play a part in ensuring the success of our athletic programs."

As a trustee and member of the legal committee, Kevin has been involved in initiatives aimed at enhancing the student-athlete experience and ensuring Texas A&M remains competitive nationally.

"Kevin has dedicated so many hours and so much of his time and talents ever since he has been on the board," said Joe Wright '82, the 2024 chair of the Board of Trustees. "He has set a great example of selfless service."

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATHALIE MCDONALD

During the first Board of Trustees meeting in 2023, Kevin emphasized two initiatives where he believed the board could make a lasting impact: supporting student-athletes in navigating Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) opportunities and improving facilities critical to Texas A&M Athletics.

“Kevin’s leadership and legal expertise have been instrumental in helping Texas A&M and the 12th Man Foundation navigate the evolving landscape of collegiate athletics,” said Travis Dabney ’96, 12th Man Foundation president and CEO.

Nathalie grew up 80 miles from Aggieland in Temple, Texas. After graduating from high school, she followed in her family’s footsteps by attending Abilene Christian University. Though she did not initially attend Texas A&M, Nathalie has always embraced the Aggie spirit wholeheartedly.

In 2023, she made her mark on Aggieland by earning a master’s degree in public administration.

“Earning a degree from A&M and getting my Aggie Ring meant a lot to me,” she said. “Now we get a lot of interesting looks when people see Kevin ’89 and Nathalie ’23 on our name tags at Aggie events. I can attest that I’m not really 34 years younger than my husband!”

Beyond their service with the 12th Man Foundation, the McDonalds have made a significant impact through their work with Arms of Hope, a nonprofit organization that supports disadvantaged children and families. Kevin served as president and CEO for several years, while Nathalie continues to work with the organization as chief

development officer.

“Our work with Arms of Hope has been incredibly rewarding,” Kevin said. “It’s given us the chance to help people in need while staying connected to our values of selfless service.”

The McDonalds’ journey has not been without challenges. In August 2011, during Nathalie’s pregnancy with their third child, Marlie Ruth, they received devastating news. An ultrasound revealed that their unborn daughter had a golf ball-sized mass in her brain.

Determined to find the best treatment, Kevin sent MRI results to pediatric cancer hospitals nationwide. Within days, Texas Children’s Hospital invited the McDonalds to tour their facility.

“They told us that’s where we needed to be,” Kevin recalled.

Marlie was born on Sept. 22, 2011, and just four days later, she underwent a seven-hour surgery to remove the tumor, followed by two years of intense chemotherapy. Despite the challenges, the McDonalds found solace in their faith and the support from the Aggie community.

In August 2017, the McDonalds received the news they had prayed for. Marlie was declared a cancer survivor. The following spring, she became the Mutton Bustin’ Champion at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, following in her father’s footsteps as a rodeo winner.

“She’s a fighter who battled for her life against brain cancer,” Nathalie said. “It was a triumphant testimony of a remarkable child.”

The McDonalds are also proud parents

of their oldest daughter, Maycie ’25, and their son, Coleman ’28. Maycie, a senior majoring in political science, and Coleman, a freshman majoring in financial planning, are upholding the family tradition as fourth-generation Aggies.

“Maycie loves being the first in our family to serve in the Corps of Cadets since her great-great-grandfather,” Nathalie said, referring to Kevin’s great-grandfather, William Reed ’14, who was a member of the Corps from 1910 to 1914. “She’s proud to continue that legacy and earn the right to carry his saber.”

Through their generosity and tireless efforts, the McDonalds have made a lasting difference in the lives of many, from disadvantaged children to Aggie student-athletes.

“We are so grateful for the opportunities we’ve had to give back to Texas A&M,” Kevin says. “The 12th Man Foundation plays a critical role in supporting our athletic programs, and we’re honored to be a part of that. It’s a privilege to support the university and the student-athletes who work so hard to represent the Aggie family.”

Nathalie and Kevin’s story is one of service, loyalty and a commitment to making a positive impact. As they continue to support Texas A&M Athletics, the McDonalds hope they inspire others to do the same.

“Nathalie and Kevin exemplify the spirit of the 12th Man,” Dabney said. “We are sincerely grateful for their leadership, service and commitment in support of Texas A&M University and Texas A&M Athletics.”





WADE TAYLOR IV '25

Aggie Basketball guard reflects on journey to Texas A&M and shares gratitude for supporters who made it possible

BY OLIN BUCHANAN

HARD WORK, DEDICATION AND GRATITUDE — THESE are the values that drive Texas A&M basketball standout Wade Taylor IV on and off the court.

For Taylor, hard work is a family legacy. His father, Wade Taylor III, a retired parole officer, and his mother, Sheila, a physical education teacher, instilled the importance of a strong work ethic from an early age.

"Seeing my mom and dad get ready for work every day and handle their responsibilities so that my sisters and I could have everything we wanted really meant a lot to me," Taylor said. "That has always stayed with me.

"Now, it's my turn. It's time for me to wake up and take care of my business every day."

Taylor has worked tirelessly to achieve his goals at Texas A&M, from earning a college scholarship to becoming one of the premier players in the Southeastern Conference.

While leading A&M to back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances in 2023 and 2024, Taylor became the only student-athlete in program history to earn All-SEC first-team honors twice.

The Dallas native entered the 2024-25 season holding 13 season school records with more than 30 career school and SEC Tournament records within reach. Over the past two seasons, he's been the only DI player with 500 or more points, 100 or more assists and 60 or more steals.

"I would say I am a hard worker," Taylor said. "I try to be the best I can every day. I just want to be the person everybody can rely on."

Taylor's commitment is not confined to the basketball court. In May 2024, he earned his

communication degree from Texas A&M after just three years on campus. Now, he's pursuing a master's in recreation and youth development, with an ambitious goal of completing it in just one year, all while competing at the highest level of college basketball.

"Balancing academics, athletics and the demands of being a student-athlete is not easy, but it is truly fulfilling," Taylor said. "My drive to excel both academically and athletically is what pushes me to take on these challenges."

Basketball is a tradition for the Taylor family. Sheila played collegiately at West Texas State, and Taylor's older sister, Kennedy, set the Sun Belt Conference career assists record at Texas State University. Watching his sister succeed set a high standard that helped fuel Taylor's own drive to excel.

"He has loved to compete ever since he was very young," said Wade Taylor III, who played football at Midwestern State University. "A lot of that, I have to give credit to his sister. With her being three years older than him, he just watched what she did, and he wanted to be better than her. To be better than her, there were certain standards to live up to. He was always in the gym because she was always in the gym."

Following an outstanding career at Lancaster High School, the only question about Taylor was which college gym would become his next home.

SMU recruited him heavily. So did Iowa State and Virginia Tech. Texas A&M, though, always had an advantage. His grandmother lives in Madisonville, Texas, so throughout his youth there were frequent trips to Aggieland just 40 minutes down the road.

Taylor had already seen enough of Texas A&M to know Reed Arena was the gym for him.

“This was always the spot for me,” Taylor said. “I fell in love with the traditions, the family values and what it means to be an Aggie. My granny is right up the street. My family is right up the street. They can always come see me play. It has been the best decision I have made in my life.”

While he could have excelled anywhere, Taylor knows his scholarship to Texas A&M has been life-changing. At the 12th Man Foundation’s Cheers to 75 Years event in August 2024, Taylor shared his gratitude with many of the loyal supporters who help make it all possible.

“Having the opportunity to be on a scholarship here, come to a great facility to play basketball and also have great academics — there is nothing else I could ask for,” Taylor said. “The support 12th Man Foundation donors give us on a daily basis is truly appreciated.”

NIL opportunities have also made a meaningful impact on Taylor’s life — and on the lives of those around him.

“One of the most meaningful impacts of NIL has been on my family,” Taylor said. “Thanks to my NIL opportunities, I have been able to help support their travel expenses and ensure they can attend every single game for my final season at Texas A&M. Their presence at Reed Arena fuels my performance and reminds me why I work so hard.”

Taylor has made the most of his opportunities and his platform to give back through the 4 Wade Taylor Foundation. He founded the nonprofit organization to empower youth through programs focused on mental health, leadership development, and financial literacy. In July 2024, the foundation hosted its second annual backpack drive in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of the Brazos Valley.

“It has always been my dream to make a positive impact on the community in a meaningful way,” Taylor said. “Thanks in large part to the funds I’ve received through NIL, we were able to provide 120 kids with new backpacks, along with gift cards, laptops and tablets. Seeing the excitement on those kids’ faces is a feeling I will never forget. It’s incredibly rewarding to see how NIL can have a positive impact beyond just my own life.”

On the court, Taylor remains driven by hard work, dedication and gratitude as he strives to finish his remarkable college career on a high note.

“We have some unfinished business on the court,” he said. “I came back for my senior year because I love this game, I love this team and I love this school. I could not be more excited to compete with these guys one last time.”



“

HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ON A SCHOLARSHIP HERE, COME TO A GREAT FACILITY TO PLAY BASKETBALL AND ALSO HAVE GREAT ACADEMICS, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE I COULD ASK FOR. THE SUPPORT 12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS GIVE US ON A DAILY BASIS IS TRULY APPRECIATED.

— WADE TAYLOR IV '25



During his junior season, Taylor earned first-team All-SEC honors and SEC All-Tournament honors for the second straight year. The Dallas native was the first Aggie to earn All-Tournament honors in consecutive years since 2009.

ALEXIS ORTIZ '24

Former A&M Equestrian student-athlete embraces opportunity at 12th Man Foundation



ABOUT ALEXIS

- » GRADUATED FROM TEXAS A&M IN MAY 2024 WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY
- » JOINED THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION STAFF IN AUGUST 2024
- » AT THE 2024 LEGACY AWARDS, SHE WAS NAMED RECIPIENT OF THE DISTINGUISHED LETTERMAN AWARD
- » HER FAVORITE MOVIE IS "THE PRESTIGE"

Can you share about your journey to Texas A&M University?

I grew up in Hoffman Estates, a suburb of Chicago, and have been riding horses competitively since I was 6 years old. I attended high school online to better accommodate my extensive travel schedule for competitions. When I discovered collegiate equestrian around age 12, I started working toward riding on an NCAA Division I equestrian team. I visited various schools, but Texas A&M always felt like home. Committing to the Texas A&M Equestrian team is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

What are your internship responsibilities?

I primarily work within the stewardship department to help plan events and fulfill donor benefits. I also serve as the liaison between the stewardship department and Collegiate Council, our student ambassador group, as well as Texas Aggies United. Additionally, I try to observe, learn and assist other departments when I can to gain a holistic understanding of the 12th Man Foundation.

How is the role benefiting your education and professional skills?

I am studying nonprofit management as part of my master's program. It has been very insightful to learn about the theory of philanthropic giving as well as nonprofit management strategies in the classroom and simultaneously see those lessons play out in a practical setting at work. I know that I am developing professionally as I face new challenges each day. Additionally, my time around other passionate and driven individuals at the 12th Man Foundation has helped me grow personally and professionally. I have been able to network with numerous individuals who have inspired me in my pursuit of future career goals.

As a former student-athlete, what is it like being on the development side of collegiate athletics?

It has been eye-opening to see the amount of effort put in by so many individuals to help ensure the success of our athletics department. As a spectator or a student-athlete, it is easy to take

things for granted, as everything just seems to fall into place on gameday or meet day. What many do not realize is that every event takes months, or even years, of planning and coordination by numerous contributors.

What does 12th Man Foundation donor support mean to you?

I realized early on as a student-athlete that every single resource provided to me and my teammates was made possible by the 12th Man Foundation. This understanding inspired me to get involved with the organization as a way to give back to those who had given so much to me. The amount of support that is provided by 12th Man Foundation donors is truly overwhelming, and I know that my experience as a student-athlete was greatly enhanced because of it.

What are your future career goals?

I am currently pursuing a master's degree in public service and administration with a concentration in nonprofit management at the Bush School of Government & Public Service. Upon graduation, I plan to work in the nonprofit sector. In the future, I aspire to pursue a dual JD/MBA degree, with the goal of working in the legal field. Ultimately, I hope to transition back into the nonprofit sector. I am also deeply passionate about collegiate athletics and envision myself staying involved with the 12th Man Foundation in some capacity.





J.T. HIGGINS

Hall of Fame coach channels his championship mindset
to drive NIL success for Texas Aggies United

BRIAN DAVIS '01

AS J.T. HIGGINS REFLECTS ON HIS JOURNEY FROM THREE decades in coaching to leading Texas Aggies United, one thing is clear — his love for Texas A&M runs deep.

A Hall of Fame men's golf coach, Higgins led the Aggies to 17 NCAA tournaments in 19 seasons and guided the program to its first national championship in 2009. Higgins was inducted into the Golf Coaches Association of America Hall of Fame in 2015.

Following 31 years in coaching, culminating in a three-year stint at USC, Higgins decided to pursue a new opportunity back in Aggieland. Now, as president and CEO of Texas Aggies United, he is driven by a desire to support Texas A&M and ensure Aggie student-athletes succeed in a rapidly changing landscape dominated by name, image and likeness (NIL).

"I love this university, and I wanted to help," said Higgins of accepting his new role at the helm of Texas Aggies United. "I'm here to help provide NIL opportunities for all Aggie athletes, ensuring that every program can compete for SEC and national championships."

Unlike many other NIL collectives around the country, Texas Aggies United operates as an LLC, allowing individuals to buy shares and invest directly in the organization. This unique approach has proven successful for Texas A&M, with more than 150 Aggie student-athletes now under contract.

"We sign the athletes to contracts, and then we go out and market their NIL for them," Higgins explained. "While football may be the biggest draw,

we work with every sport, from basketball and baseball to tennis and golf."

A key factor in Texas Aggies United's growth and success, according to Higgins, has been the strong collaboration with Texas A&M and the 12th Man Foundation — a partnership that has flourished under the leadership of Trev Alberts, Texas A&M's Director of Athletics. This close relationship has paved the way for more supporters to invest in NIL opportunities for Aggie student-athletes.

"We have a lot of help within the community," Higgins said. "We are fortunate to have the support that we have from the university, the athletics department and the 12th Man Foundation."

That support, combined with an innovative approach to NIL, has helped Texas A&M become a key player in the collegiate athletics landscape. However, Higgins recognizes that there is still a critical need to change the narrative around supporting NIL.

"We have to get more Aggies to understand this is a positive for our university and our student-athletes," Higgins stated. "This is a space where we can compete with anybody in the country. Whether you agree with NIL or not, it is a major component of having a winning program. Along with facilities, coaching staffs and resources like nutrition and mental health, NIL is 100 percent part of the program."

In his role, Higgins witnesses the positive impact of NIL opportunities on Aggie student-athletes each and every day.

“The best thing I’ve seen with NIL is how many athletes are getting their education paid for,” he said, noting the high levels of student loan debt many graduates face after college. “Additionally, athletes are providing support for their families and giving back to their communities. It’s incredible to see these young athletes making such an impact.”

As Texas Aggies United continues to grow, one of Higgins’ main goals is to establish sustainable revenue streams to ensure long-term success. This stability will allow Texas A&M Athletics to continue providing opportunities for athletes to compete at the highest level.

Though the future is uncertain due to pending court rulings and evolving regulations, Higgins remains confident in Texas A&M’s ability to be a leader in NIL.

“We’ve positioned ourselves well,” Higgins said, “and we have the right people in place — from President Welsh and Director of Athletics Trev Alberts to the entire coaching staff.”

Higgins is dedicated to ensuring that Texas Aggies United continues to embody the spirit of Texas A&M with its commitment to excellence, support for one another and a belief in the power of community.

“This is a space where we can compete with anyone in the country,” he said. “We just need more Aggies to get on board and understand this is a positive force for our future.”

In a world where NIL is reshaping college athletics, Higgins and Texas Aggies United are helping ensure that Texas A&M continues to lead the charge, providing opportunities for athletes to thrive both in competition and in life.

“J.T. is the absolute perfect fit to lead Texas Aggies United in this new era of NIL,” said Travis Dabney, president and CEO of the 12th Man Foundation. “We are supportive of NIL opportunities for our student-athletes, and we’re going to help J.T. and Texas Aggies United in any way that we can.”

“
**ATHLETES ARE PROVIDING
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AND GIVING BACK TO THEIR
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TO SEE THESE YOUNG ATHLETES
MAKING SUCH AN IMPACT.**

– J.T. HIGGINS



Inducted in the Golf Coaches Association of America (GCAA) Hall of Fame in 2015, Higgins led the Aggies to 17 NCAA tournaments in 19 seasons and guided the program to its first national championship in 2009.

Now president & CEO of Texas Aggies United, Higgins has led the organization to contract with more than 150 Aggie student-athletes to support their NIL opportunities.





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