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THE GUIDON



Feature Story:

THE CLAY FAMILY BUILDING GRAND OPENING

4

A New Home for the CCA

CLAY FAMILY BUILDING AND BOOT LOAN ANNEX OPENS IN BRYAN

BY **CINDY HESS '89**

On August 28, more than 325 members and friends of the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets Association gathered in Bryan—despite extreme heat and the threat of rain—to celebrate a milestone more than 30 years in the making: the grand opening of the CCA's new headquarters consisting of the Clay Family CCA Headquarters and Boot Loan Annex.

The celebration began with a flag-raising by members of the Ross Volunteers as the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band played "Texas, Our Texas." CCA President and CEO Bruce Hamilton '78 welcomed distinguished guests, including Texas A&M System Regent Sam Torn '70, Texas A&M President Susan Ballabina, Corps of Cadets Commandant LtGen James Bierman, the mayors of Bryan and College Station, Miss Reveille X, and the many donors and community members who helped make the new headquarters possible.



PHOTOS BY BAYLEE GRIFFIN '21

Sponsors in attendance to celebrate the opening of the Boot Loan Annex are L-R: Sheli & Robert Dennis '83, Elizabeth Kallus '91, Mary Kallus, & the Annex mural's creator, Benjamin Knox '90

Hamilton recognized two of the five founding Board members in attendance—Lt Col Ed Beckcom '65 and Executive Director Emeritus Col Don Crawford '64— and announced that each of the five founders will be honored with commemorative bricks that will be placed in the sidewalk in front of the Clay Family Headquarters.

The ceremony continued with the unveiling of a large-scale mural depicting a senior boot line, installed at the entrance to the Boot Loan Annex.

CCA Chairman of the Board Wade Seidel '73 reflected on the Association's humble beginnings in 1993 and its journey through several locations. "Our staff have worked from home, from rented office space, and for the past 15 years from a repurposed bus station on Finfeather Road," Seidel says. He noted that as the CCA continued to grow, the aging facility's limited space and configuration could no longer meet the organization's needs or adequately accommodate the Boot Loan Program.

Bryan Mayor Bobby Gutierrez and Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce President Glen Brewer also welcomed the CCA to its new home, recognizing its contributions to the community and its mission of developing leaders through the Corps of Cadets.

The grand opening culminated in a ribbon cutting featuring Torn, Ballabina, Hamilton, Seidel, Al Clay '65, Gutierrez, Bierman, Corps Commander Mackenzie Cronin '27, Miss Reveille X and her handler, Trent Ford '29. The Fightin' Texas Aggie Band concluded the ceremony with "The Spirit of Aggieland," followed by refreshments and tours of the new facility led by CCA Cadet Ambassadors.



CCA Cadet Ambassadors unveil the large-scale mural created by Benjamin Knox '90.

FROM AN IDEA TO A NEW HOME

The journey to the new headquarters began in 2024, when Hamilton hired Corey Keniston '92 as project manager for the CCA Renovation Project. Initially, the plan was to renovate the existing headquarters on Finfeather Avenue. A feasibility study revealed that a new location would better serve the Association's long-term needs.

CCA Vice President of Development Jill Bright '91 led the effort to raise funds for the project. Nearly 350 donors ultimately contributed more than $1.2 million to the campaign. "I was overwhelmed with the response," Bright says. "Within the first week of the campaign, I received a call from the Clay family wanting to be the primary donor. That was really a gamechanger and helped us to raise the rest of the funding for the facility."

Thanks to the generosity of CCA members and supporters—and proceeds from the sale of the previous headquarters—the building was paid for in just six months. Importantly, no funds designated to support the Corps or its cadets were diverted to the project.

BUILT TO SERVE

The new headquarters provides three times the climate-controlled office space of the previous facility, along with a spacious boardroom for meetings, luncheons, and gatherings that previously required rented space. Eliminating rental costs provides ongoing savings that can be directed toward the CCA's mission.

The Boot Loan Annex provides a home for more than 1,000 pairs of donated senior boots in the Boot Loan Program, giving cadets a convenient place to borrow the boots they need.

The event reflected the generosity of its members, Texas A&M personnel, community partners, city and county employees, local businesses and countless volunteers. "People gave their time, resources and support because they believe in what the Corps represents and the role the CCA plays in developing leaders for tomorrow," Grand Opening coordinator Nancy Norris '01 says.

The new headquarters is more than a building. It is a home for the CCA's next chapter—and a place from which its commitment to the Corps and its cadets can continue for generations to come.