

THE TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION MAGAZINE | FALL 2022

# SPIRIT



## Pet Project

Introducing Texas A&M University's Next-Generation Small Animal Teaching Hospital



# And To All, A Good Night



No matter what, how or with whom we celebrate, to some extent, we all experience a similar lead-up to the holidays: "Jingle Bells" playing in the grocery store, lights twinkling across town and a universal encouragement to gather with those we love.

These annual rituals and traditions we use to celebrate faith and family have the unintended effect of providing a landmark for our lives, reminding us that one year is about to pass and another will soon begin. Every Christmas, I notice how much has changed and how much hasn't. My wife, Christi '98, and I reflect on how much our daughters have grown and how much we have, too, and we feel even more compelled to invest our time and effort into helping build the world we want them to inherit.

Though Texas A&M University is known for its storied past, I've come to especially cherish Aggies' passionate, proactive optimism for the future. As much as our current and former students care about how things are or how they used to be, they care even more about how things should be and what they can do to improve themselves and help those around them. Our core value of selfless service, our community's defining trait, encourages us not only toward charitable works but also calls us to appreciate the power we hold to change lives around us every day.

The holidays, with all their opportunities to give back, bring that power into sharp focus. Those of us fortunate enough to celebrate in warm and loving homes with our friends and family would do well to remember those who, for whatever reason, cannot. As cheerful as the Yuletide season may be for many, it can also be stressful or even painful for others. Whether they're grappling with poverty, loneliness or the quiet struggle of managing family expectations, there are plenty of people in dire need of simple kindness.

That's why I was delighted to read our story about the Maroon Santa program in the Don & Ellie Knauss Veteran Resource & Support Center, which you'll find on this issue's inside back cover. Seeing current students find ways to help their veteran peers grew my already-overflowing pride in the Aggie community. As we look back each year and make plans for the next, let us take after their example and remember to include others in our intentions. Through prayer, our words and, most importantly, our actions, we can positively impact others in meaningful ways. We'll all need someone's kindness someday; why not lead the charge today?

Thanks for all you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyson Voelkel '96". The signature is stylized and fluid.

*Tyson Voelkel '96*

PRESIDENT & CEO, TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION

Ready to get started on your legacy in Aggieland? Download our free Giving Guide using this QR code or learn how you can support the campus initiatives in this issue of Spirit at [give.am/Fall2022](https://give.am/Fall2022).



# Good Bull



Dr. E. King Gill '24 is a household name to most Aggies, but few know about his life after he was called to be the 12th Man in 1922. Recently, Doug Vorpahl '80 donated several documents and photos to Cushing Memorial Library and Archives that give Aggies a glimpse into the legend's later years and tell a story of two best friends who became family.

Doug's father, Lucky Vorpahl, entered Gill's life in 1941 while Gill was serving as a surgeon at Majors Army Airfield in Greenville, Texas. Though Lucky had no medical training, Gill made it a point to keep him in his medical detachment, even promoting him so the Army wouldn't transfer him to another base. The reason? He wanted Lucky, an excellent athlete in his own right, to play on his intersquad sports teams, especially basketball.

After Gill retired from the Army, the two remained close even as Lucky started a family and Gill focused on his medical practice in Corpus Christi, specializing in eye, ear, nose and throat care. Gill served as pseudo-grandfather for the six Vorpahl children, Doug included, though he never had kids himself.

Gill was always humble despite his campus fame, never demanding recognition but still enjoying the tradition his actions created. "He just thought it was something any Aggie would have done," Doug said.

*Do you have a Good Bull story to share? Send your submission to our editor, Dunaë Reader '15, at [dreader@examfoundation.com](mailto:dreader@examfoundation.com).*

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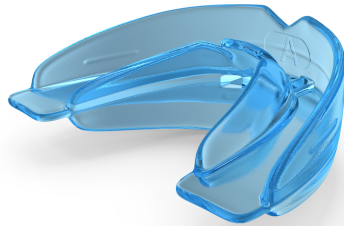
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Read online at [spirit.txamfoundation.com](http://spirit.txamfoundation.com).

COVER FEATURE

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Introducing Texas A&M University's Next-Generation Small Animal Teaching Hospital

"We have faculty, staff and students who work extraordinarily hard and deserve to have the very best facility in which to do their great work."

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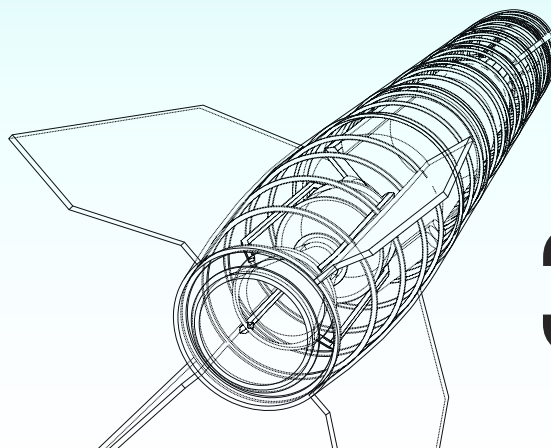


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CONTRIBUTORS

- Editor  
Dunae Reader '15
- Managing Editor  
Lydia Hill '21
- Art Direction & Design  
Geer Design, Inc.
- Photography/Illustration  
Amazon (p. 3, top; 32-35)  
Robert Carter (p. 48)  
Cushing Memorial Library and Archives (p. 5; 42)  
Carole Henaff (p. 46)  
Alvaro Tapia Hidalgo (p. 30)  
Josh Huskin (p. 8, bottom)  
Leighton Jack '14 (p. 6-7, center; 11; 16-19; 38; 41)  
Igor Kraguljac '08 (p. 8, top)  
Joe McKendry (p. 3, center; 36-37)  
NASA (back cover)  
Bill Sallans (p. 12)  
Tonya Schabacker (cover; p. 2-3, center; 20; 23-24; 27-28)  
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- Printing  
Mittera Houston

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# Mailbox



Where was your favorite campus hangout as a student and why?

Share your answer with our managing editor, Lydia Hill '21, at [lydiabill@txamfoundation.com](mailto:lydiabill@txamfoundation.com).

Readers write in:

## Were you involved in mascot hijinks during your days at Texas A&M University?

Read more responses online at [give.am/Mascots](http://give.am/Mascots).

### Clemson Tall "Tail"

In fall 1974, the Aggies defeated the Clemson Tigers 24-0 in the season's first football game. As the final seconds ticked down, those of us in the fish class of Hellcat 9 were on a mission: We had been "instructed" by one of our seniors to steal the tail of the Tigers' mascot.

As mayhem ensued on the field, we ran to the mascot on the visitor's side. One classmate ripped off the tail, and we all "hightailed" it out the east side of Kyle Field with the campus cops, the mascot, the Clemson cheerleaders and some of their football players in hot pursuit. As they caught up on our way to

Fearing reprisal from just about everyone, we kept that furry little item stowed away until Final Review at the end of the following semester. There, we proudly marched around O.R. Simpson Drill Field with the tail tied to the end of our outfit guidon, alongside the Gen. George F. Moore Outstanding Unit Award banner given for being selected the best Corps outfit.

—TERRY STANISLAV '78  
Boerne, Texas

—GARY SAATHOFF '78  
Devine, Texas

### Mischief and More

**Editor's Note:** This account of stealing the Baylor University bear cub in fall 1950 was pieced together through recollections from Dr. Roger "Jake" Landers Jr. '54, Dr. Ralph Bledsoe '54 and a written account from the late Gordon Porter '54.

Growing up in Waco, Texas, Ralph Bledsoe '54 lived three blocks away from the Baylor University bears' den and had become familiar with it while playing on the campus as a child and later holding his first job at Baylor. While he didn't engage in stealing a cub one fateful night before the Texas A&M vs. Baylor game



the Quad, several of us ran interference as two kept going with the prize, one of them ultimately disappearing into the Quad dorms.

One of the greatest of all mascot heists took place on Nov. 12, 1963, when a group of cadets borrowed Bevo ahead of the Aggies' traditional Thanksgiving Day football game against The University of Texas. Below: Two Baylor bear mascot cubs, Ruff and Tuff, pose with their trainer.



in fall 1950, he described the bear cages to the six or so members of the Fish Band who took up the prank.

The group took three cars to Waco. One 60–70-pound cub was loaded in the Ford Coupe of Ernie “Scat” Boehler ’54, and the parade headed toward Aggieland, aided by Bledsoe’s instructions of the best route to quickly escape Waco. By the time they returned to campus, Scat’s car had taken a beating, its interior full of bear mess and its upholstery and headliner shredded.

Later that night, realizing that the feisty cub was more trouble than he was worth, the perpetrators tied him to a pole on the side of the road. Baylor was ultimately notified of its location, and the cub returned safely home. The participants were not so lucky: They were grounded on campus every weekend until Christmas, and the senior Fish Band captain

lost his rank and position. To top it off, Baylor badly outscored the Aggies in the football game, the perpetrators having been accused of firing up their team.

### “Mascot Borrowing”

In Texas A&M lore, the fish members of the Class of 1967 hold the unofficial record for “mascot borrowing.” There were five Southwest Conference mascots stolen in fall 1963 and one “almost.”

The highlight was the visit by Bevo, who was led around the Quad in the wee hours of the morning. A group of Silver Spurs who showed up to see if anyone knew the location of their lost mascot ended up taking a bath in the Fish Pond with the assistance of our fish class.

Peruna, SMU’s Shetland pony, found his way to Aggieland and got

a fish haircut on his mane and tail, forcing him to wear a false tail when the Mustangs played the Aggies.

Other mascots that visited Aggieland included Texas Tech’s mare that reportedly fell in love with another four-legged animal at the veterinary school; a horned frog that unfortunately did not survive the trip and was mailed back in a small maroon coffin; and a six-foot plastic Rice University owl that arrived on campus in the middle of the night strapped to the top of a Volkswagen.

Only the Baylor Bear got away. The caravan of vehicles heading to Waco was met by a convoy of Texas Highway patrolmen as they progressed to Baylor’s campus. So, the only thing left to do was hold a yell practice on the side of the road before heading back to Aggieland.

—MICKEY BATSELL ’67  
Georgetown, Texas

### Horse Rustling

In fall 1963, three other sophomores (Don Davis ’66, Jim Foster ’66 and Burt Richards ’66) and I successfully stole Peruna, SMU’s Shetland pony. It all began when Michael Schlegel ’67, a fish in our company, connected us to Dr. T.K. Hardy, a Lewisville veterinarian who cared for Peruna in his equine practice. The doc agreed to help us.

We hooked on my one-horse trailer and headed to Lewisville,

where Dr. Hardy drew us a map of the barn, location of the lights and tack room, and Peruna’s exact stall. As we rolled up to the gate of the Circle K Stable after midnight, we entered the barn’s hall, switched on the lights, retrieved the halter, got Peruna loaded and were out the door in five minutes.

Upon retuning to Dorm 17, we could hardly wait to show our first sergeant our prize. With one of us on each side, we escorted Peruna up four flights of stairs to Jerry Kischnick ’64 and took a photo with him on Peruna. It was easy going up those stairs, but it was hell to get Peruna to go down.

We had planned to get Peruna under the stands at the stadium and run him out in front of the football team at halftime. We thought the Yell Leaders might help, but instead, they instantly reported us. Early Saturday morning, we each received a hand-delivered letter from the chancellor saying that we would be expelled immediately if we did not deliver Peruna to the proper authorities at the veterinary school. We didn’t want to jeopardize Jim Foster’s chances of attending veterinary school, so we ultimately ended the whole ordeal by turning Peruna in.

—JEFF SMITH ’66  
Lubbock, Texas



# Campus



“We want all of Texas A&M to look and feel good.”

## Making Spirits Bright

Jordan Maywald '22 has a heartfelt reason for holiday decor: to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Maywald has worked on his family's 3.5-acre Christmas light display in south Austin since he was 9 years old but realized it was getting big in 2015 when countless visitors began stopping by. The attention prompted the Maywalds to encourage their 15,000-plus annual visitors to make on-site donations to fund wishes.

As of July 2022, the Maywald family had raised more than \$200,000 and granted 27 wishes for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Whenever another wish is granted, a new reindeer joins Santa's sleigh in their display. “Make-A-Wish is such a great organization,” Maywald said. “The families send us pictures and stories of the kids we grant wishes for. Some even come out the following year, and we get to meet the kids and show them the lights.”

Maywald's first-place win on ABC's “The Great Christmas Light Fight” in 2019 further cemented his Clark Griswold-level decorating fame. A May 2022 construction science graduate, he plans to turn his passion for festive lighting into a full-time job for residential and commercial customers. But don't worry: He's still committed to orchestrating the 250,000 twinkling lights at his family's home that got him into the Christmas business.



## Strengthening the Corps

Earlier this spring, Texas A&M University announced an ambitious March to 3,000 initiative to grow the Corps of Cadets' enrollment to 3,000 members.

The Corps had 2,107 members as of fall 2022, making it the largest uniformed student body in the nation aside from the military academies. Cadets boast high grades and a commitment to the armed forces, with 71% earning a 3.0 GPA or higher in spring 2022 and more than 90% gaining

● **Mike Teal '96** is three years into overseeing an ongoing tree maintenance and restoration project on Texas A&M's campus that aims to document Aggieland's more than 15,000 trees, which cover a wide variety of species and ages. To date, about 5,000 trees have been evaluated and recorded. This survey will help arborists preserve the health of older trees and ensure that new trees planted as part of this project will thrive.

### How does Aggies Read supplement classroom learning?

*With only a few hours every other week in the classroom, Aggies Read can't solve illiteracy. We're there to give local children more confidence in their reading skills. It might seem the time we spend in classrooms is most important, but it's really about all the hours we aren't in schools. We try to get kids fired up about reading so they'll do it independently.*

**What does a week look like for Aggies Read?** *We're currently working with three elementary schools and one high school. During our visits, we bring short stories so we can read the entire text and discuss the story with the kids afterward, which helps with reading comprehension.*

**Does everyone in Aggies Read want to be a teacher?** *Not at all. Most of our members don't plan on entering careers in education. We just love volunteering with the community and instilling a lifelong love of reading in children.*

**What's your favorite part?** *On school visits, I rotate among three groups of kids. When we arrive, they say, “Mr. Ethan's here!” and get excited to read with me in the hallway. That has been my highlight.*

employment or commissioning into the military at May 2022 graduation ceremonies.

"We have a duty to our state and nation to continue developing leaders of character," said Texas A&M President Dr. M. Katherine Banks. "I fully support expanding the opportunities the Corps provides our students."

To increase recruitment and retention, two new university-funded scholarships will be available to deserving students: the ROTC Patriot Scholarship Program for ROTC scholarship cadets and the Maj. Gen. Raymond L. Murray Scholarship for out-



of-state cadets. Two new additional Corps dorms are scheduled for completion by the 2027-28 academic year to accommodate increased enrollment.

## classnotes



**Texas A&M Judo took home a national collegiate team championship**, the first in its 60-year history. At the National Collegiate Judo Association's 2022 Championship, the Aggie men earned first place. The men's novice team also placed first, while the women's novice and senior teams both took home second place.

Before meeting a patient or engaging in clinicals, **nursing students at Texas A&M are preparing for real-world challenges by using virtual reality technology.** Professors at the School of Nursing develop simulations to help students practice their nursing skills and build confidence.

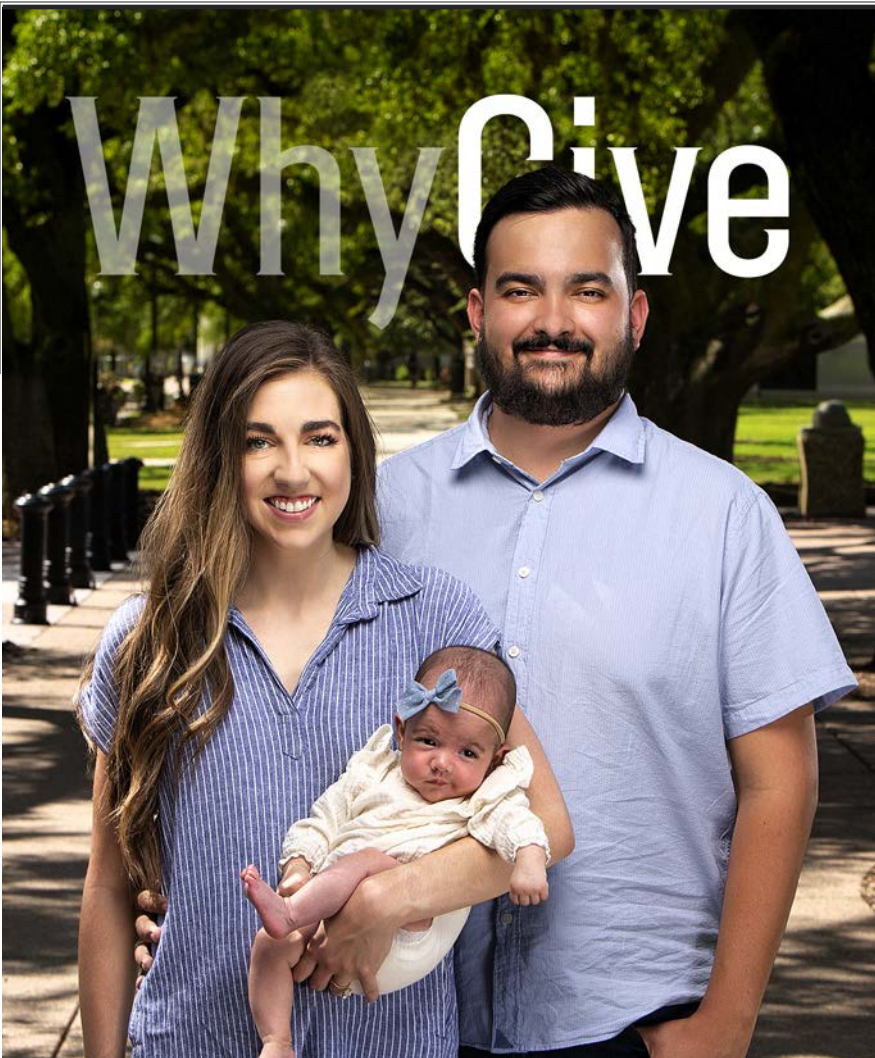


Texas A&M University ranks among the nation's top 10 universities for the number of graduate degrees awarded to Hispanic/Latino students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, according to Hispanic Outlook on Education Magazine. The ranking uses the number of graduate degrees awarded to Hispanics/Latinos in eight STEM fields.



WITH ETHAN DEVOE '23

## Student Org Spotlight: Aggies Read



## Because an Aggie doctor safely delivered our daughter.

When Lexie '17 and Trey Yates '17 woke up on Feb. 2, 2022, the expecting couple thought they had another two months before bringing their daughter into the world. An emergency helicopter flight and cesarean delivery later, a healthy Ashby Yates '44 was delivered 10 weeks prematurely thanks to Dr. Bethany Kolb '87.

When Dr. Kolb approached a nervous and fearful Trey to share the news of a successful surgery, she immediately noticed Trey's Aggie ring. Discovering his daughter and wife were in the hands of an Aggie all along, Trey breathed a sigh of relief. "I wish I would've known before the surgery," he shared. "I would've been much more at peace knowing my daughter and wife were being cared for by an Aggie!"

After Ashby's delivery, Dr. Kolb provided comfort to the couple and even stitched a small patch with Ashby's future class year on it. To honor the Aggie who delivered their daughter, the proud parents created the Dr. Bethany L. Kolb '87 Endowed Scholarship to support future doctors. "To us, she went above and beyond to ensure Ashby was delivered safely," Trey said. "We hope our gift encourages other Aggies to enter the medical field and make the world a better place like Dr. Kolb has."

## Because we need more cybersecurity professionals.

By uncovering a vulnerability in a cryptocurrency company's software through a bug hunter program, Addison Crump '21 won a \$200,000 award. A recent computer science graduate, he credits his achievement to one student organization: the Texas A&M University Cybersecurity Club.

In an incredible act of generosity, Crump gave \$150,000 of his earnings to create an endowment that will support the club's members as they pursue professional development activities and cybersecurity certifications or attend conferences. With the remaining \$50,000, he hopes to fund a new Texas A&M course that will teach students the same software testing techniques that helped him discover the software bug in a more formal classroom learning environment.

As a high school computer science teacher in Spring, Texas, Crump's gift is a testament to his passion for education and cybersecurity. "When I received the money, I considered improving my life in the short term," he shared, "but that option didn't compare to helping cybersecurity education become available to as many students as possible. I learned the techniques I used to find the bug during my time in the club. The money was never mine; it belongs to the place that gave me a chance to become the cybersecurity professional I am today."



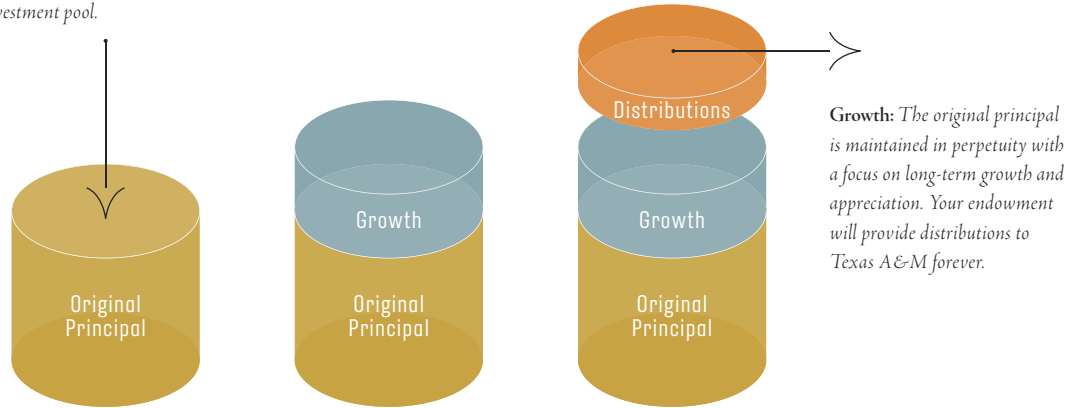
## Discover how this philanthropic tool enhances Texas A&M University's future.

### HOW ENDOWMENTS WORK

**Establish:** You create an endowment with a \$25,000 gift known as the original principal. This is added to the Foundation's long-term investment pool.

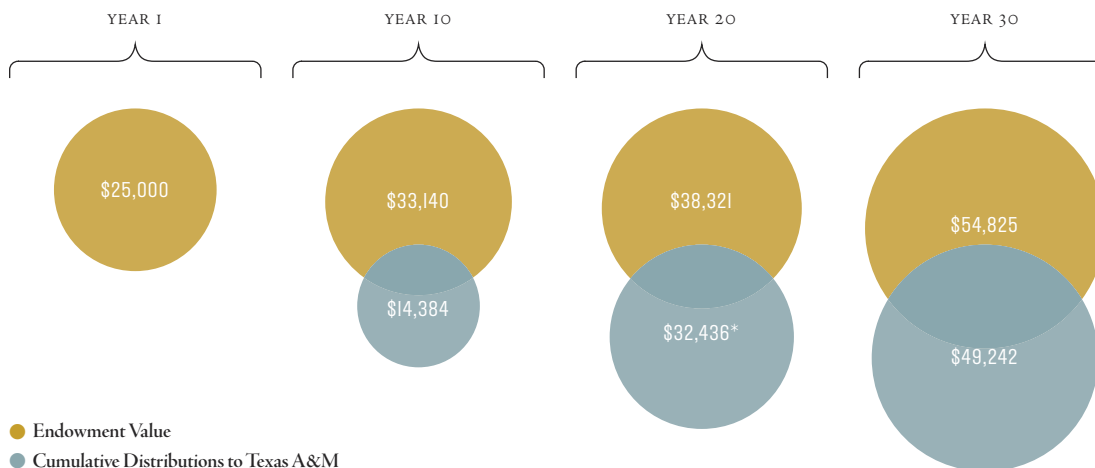
**Invest:** The original principal is invested and changes in value with a focus on growth.

**Distribute:** Distributions are made annually to support the Texas A&M area you designated.



**Growth:** The original principal is maintained in perpetuity with a focus on long-term growth and appreciation. Your endowment will provide distributions to Texas A&M forever.

### IMPACT OF A \$25,000 ENDOWMENT (1992–2022)



● Endowment Value  
● Cumulative Distributions to Texas A&M

\* The cumulative distributions have eclipsed the initial gift value.

\*\* Past performance is no guarantee of future performance.

By utilizing an endowment—a permanent fund that the Texas A&M Foundation invests for the benefit of Texas A&M University—Addison Crump '21 and Lexie '17 and Trey Yates '17 ensured their gifts will make a lasting campus impact.

Creating an endowment is straightforward and comes with the freedom to direct your gift for a specific purpose based on your passions at Texas A&M. For example, you may choose to fund an endowed scholarship for students from Harris County, Texas, who are studying petroleum engineering. Aside from scholarships, many donors create endowments to advance faculty endeavors or enhance student programs or Aggie traditions. A signed gift agreement with the Foundation will document your wishes in full. You can also specify the fund's name: in your name, in honor of a relative or after a favorite professor, for example.

When you create an endowment, the Foundation takes your gift—known as the “original principal”—and permanently invests it in its long-term investment pool (LTIP), a highly diversified portfolio with a current value of nearly \$2.6 billion. Each year, a portion of the LTIP is paid out to the university as an annual distribution to fund the purposes designated by donors. This annual payout rate is what supports your passions in Aggieland, while the original principal of your gift will always remain, ensuring a dependable source of funding for the area you choose even in a market downturn.

While \$25,000 is the minimum amount required to create an endowment, you can contribute gifts over the course of up to five years. As more individuals contribute endowments to the Foundation's portfolio, financial support for Texas A&M continues to increase.

# Endowments

By DORIAN MARTIN '06

## Military Might

The Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program has provided more than \$18 million to Aggie cadets in the last decade.

A team of Aggies—and 20 timely pushups—were the driving force behind the creation of the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP). Established by the Texas Legislature in 2009, this initiative provides annual scholarships up to \$10,000 for outstanding Texas college students who commit to military service after graduation.

The overall vision for TASSP emerged during Dr. Bob Gates' Texas A&M University presidency and mirrored a plan conceived by Chancellor John Sharp '72 when he was Texas comptroller. "I wanted to find a way to significantly reduce the cost of attending Texas A&M for people interested in the Corps of Cadets or being a commissioned officer," Gates said. "A scholarship program like this would be a big recruiting asset for the Corps while doing a good thing for the country."

Gates introduced the idea to Neal Adams '68, then serving as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's vice chair. After researching the idea, Adams became

a key advocate. "It was Neal's persistence that made TASSP a reality because the proposal first failed several times to get approval in the Texas Legislature," Gates said.

Adams' championing finally paid off, thanks in large part to two other Aggies. When the proposal seemed destined to stall again, then-Representative Dan Gattis '90 asked House colleagues what they needed to vote the bill out of committee. Someone replied, "Drop and give me 20"—and the former Corps of Cadets member immediately complied in the Texas Capitol committee room. From there, then-Senator Steve Ogden '87, who is also a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, successfully moved the bill through the Senate. The legislation passed, and TASSP funding began in 2011.

Recipients are nominated by the Texas governor, lieutenant governor, a state senator or a state representative. Since its inception, 3,275 TASSP scholarships worth \$25 million have been awarded across the state; of those, Texas A&M students

received 2,411 scholarships totaling \$18.8 million.

Many Aggie recipients combine TASSP funds with Corps of Cadets scholarships to substantially reduce—and, in some cases, totally defray—college costs. However, if a recipient fails to meet TASSP's requirements, the scholarship transitions into a loan for repayment.

Not surprisingly, most Aggie TASSP recipients honor their military commitment, which upholds its visionaries' initial intent for the program. "When you look at Texas and especially Texas A&M and the Corps of Cadets, young people have made a huge impact in serving our country," Gattis said. "It makes sense to have a program that rewards and encourages that kind of service." ©

TO SUPPORT CADETS THROUGH YOUR OWN SCHOLARSHIP, CONTACT:

MATT JENNINGS '95  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 979.845.7604  
MJENNINGS@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM

*Spangler credits his commitment to public service to his father, a police officer, and his participation in his church's community service projects.*

*Two older brothers, both Aggies and members of the Corps of Cadets, influenced their younger sibling's college choice. Spangler initially considered The University of Texas but changed his mind after seeing why his brothers loved Aggieland.*

*What would Aristotle do? Spangler's philosophy classes and conversations with faculty and doctoral students have taught him to challenge his assumptions. He's applying his learning in many areas, including leadership and mentorship. "Philosophy doesn't give you answers, but it does ask more questions," he said. "That appeals to me."*

20

Years since Texas A&M was designated the Military College of Texas

73.6

Percentage of TASSP recipients statewide who have been Aggies

\$10K

Maximum annual scholarship amount allocated to TASSP recipients

\$18.8

Millions of dollars awarded to Texas A&M's TASSP recipients since 2011

## Stepping Into Command: Wyatt Spangler '23

Wyatt Spangler '23 was selected to receive the Texas Armed Services Scholarship by Texas State Senator Charles Schwertner (R-Senate District 5). The Liberty Hill, Texas, native is the 1st Wing Major Unit Commander in the Corps of Cadets and a member of the Ross Volunteer Company. He is also active in Texas A&M's Pre-Law Society. Spangler will join the U.S. Air Force after graduation.



## TheQuad

*Drawn to challenges, Spangler engages in physical activities that push him and encourage him to grow. He loves going on 4- to 6-mile runs, especially during the heat of the day, and recently took up boxing.*

*Spangler's college costs are covered thanks to support from the TASSP, the Patti & Weldon D. Kruger '53 General Rudder Scholarship, the Jesse Jones Endowed Military Scholarship and the Dudley Evans Baker Scholarship. These funds have prevented Spangler and his family from worrying about student loan debt.*

*After completing his military service, Spangler wants to spend part of his career assisting unions, which he believes serve as a counterbalance to help protect against employer abuse. He is also considering becoming a public defense attorney.*

# Legacy

Whether 33 or 92, Aggies and folks who love Aggieland are finding unique ways to give back to the people and areas they care about.

Meet Mr. Ross Doan. At 92 years old, this Michigan native-turned-Texan now resides in Nashville, has a mind like a steel trap and can tell plenty of interesting stories about being the youngest of four brothers who grew up during the Great Depression. At 33 years young, Torii '11 and Cole Kapavik '11 live in Fort Collins, Colorado, with their two dogs and cat, where Torii works in fundraising for Colorado State University and Cole is a web developer. Despite being far from Aggieland and separated by generations, these perfect strangers share a common denominator: They've both planned meaningful gifts to support their passions at Texas A&M University after their lifetimes.

## What are your thoughts on estate planning?

**Ross Doan (RD):** Estate planning has always been part of our lives. My late wife, Sally, and I used company pensions, social security and savings along the way to plan for our future.

**Torii '11 and Cole Kapavik '11 (TCK):** Estate planning is essential no matter your age. Unfortunately, terrible things happen, and many people don't plan when they're young because they expect to live a long time. Once you have assets, you should plan for what happens if you're not here to manage them.

## Do you have any estate planning advice?

**RD:** Overrate your future needs. I'm 92 and have been retired for 32 years. I never expected that!

**TCK:** Review your beneficiaries annually. It's so simple! Also, think beyond primary beneficiaries. For contingent beneficiaries, think more broadly than just the next family member. Who or what organization could you help? For young people: Think about what you would want if something happened to you today. You can always make changes later if your priorities shift.

## What planned giving method did you choose and why?

**RD:** I chose two charitable gift annuities because they supplement my annual income. I made my initial gifts and now receive a fixed amount of income for the rest of my life. I didn't have to make any changes in my will for this—it's set up separately and stops when I die. A charitable gift annuity makes your money work for you!

**TCK:** We named the Texas A&M Foundation as the contingent beneficiary of our life insurance policy and retirement accounts because

this method allows us the flexibility to make an impactful future gift while using our assets during our lifetimes, and our gift can change in the future if our circumstances do. This also allows us to give our retirement assets to the Foundation tax-free, whereas family members would be taxed.

*“Overrate your future needs. I'm 92 and have been retired for 32 years. I never expected that!”*

—ROSS DOAN





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### What inspired your planned gift?

**RD:** It was a way to honor Sally while supplementing my annual income. I chose to support Texas A&M because our daughter and grandson are both graduates. While our daughter was in school, we saw that Aggies were different, and—even as outsiders—we could feel the Aggie Spirit. I think we forced my grandson to choose Texas A&M!

**TCK:** We were naming beneficiaries for life insurance policies and retirement accounts and had each other listed, but we needed a con-

tingent beneficiary, and we don't have children. Naming a charity as our contingent beneficiary made sense, and Texas A&M seemed like the natural choice since supporting future Aggies is important to both of us.

---

### Which Texas A&M passions will your gift support?

**RD:** My gift will support future nursing students. I volunteered at St. David's Hospital in Austin and was very impressed by how caring and efficient nurses can be.

**TCK:** Study abroad and veterinary residents in internal medicine. Nei-

“Naming a charity as our contingent beneficiary made sense, and Texas A&M seemed like the natural choice since supporting future Aggies is important to both of us.”

—TORIE '11 AND COLE KAPAVIK '11

ther of us studied abroad for financial reasons, but we don't want that to prevent someone else from leaving the country to expand their mind and experience different cul-

tures. For the vet school, our dog Sully was a patient at Texas A&M's Small Animal Hospital for years and wouldn't have been in our lives as long if not for the fantastic care they provided.

---

### How does your gift fit into the legacy you wish to be remembered for?

**RD:** My legacy isn't important—my wife's is. Sally had a charitable heart, and I think she would be very pleased with my decision to make this gift.

**TCK:** I think if we could make an impact on just one person's life, that would be worth our investment. ©

*There are many ways to plan a legacy of support for the next generation of Aggies, and many methods present financial benefits to you or your loved ones in addition to the university. To get started, download our free estate planning kit by scanning the QR code below or contact:*

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KELLY CORCORAN '95  
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF  
PLANNED GIVING  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 979.845.8161  
PLANNEDGIVING@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM



# did you know

By DORIAN MARTIN '06

a new West Campus building will soon welcome Mays Business School students?

Mays Business School is committed to becoming the preeminent public business school in the nation—and its new Business Education Complex (BEC) is a key part of that effort. In addition to the Wehner Building, the complex will include a new state-of-the-art building and inviting outdoor spaces.

“We want Mays to be the best public business school in the country, and that requires the best faculty, students and facilities on top of the culture that makes Texas A&M great,” said Wayne Roberts '85, who committed \$7.5 million as the lead donor for the new building. “The new building is designed for the 21st century and advanced learning models. It will be beautiful aesthetically and architecturally, and it will be a prominent part of campus.”

Following its recent October groundbreaking ceremony, the new building is projected to open in 2025. Readily visible from Olsen Boulevard, it will serve as the business school's welcoming front porch for current and former students, faculty, staff and business executives, as well as a hub for West Campus. “The new building will have a high degree of energy in its interior and exterior spaces with a focus on connectivity, creativity and collabora-

tion among students, faculty and executives,” said William Peel Jr. '74, executive director of innovation and strategic planning for Mays Business School. “It will be an epicenter of activity on West Campus, attracting students from various colleges and encouraging interdisciplinary educational experiences.”

Construction is being financed through a mix of funds from the Office of the President and the Office of the Provost, as well as significant private contributions through the Texas A&M Foundation. The existing Wehner Building will still be used for business educational activities but will undergo further renovations in future years to gain consistency with the new building.

Check out five features to love about the future home of business education in Aggieland.

## ! Collaboration Inside and Out

The focus on engagement and exchange will start in the complex's Collaboration Plaza. The area's covered outdoor seating will offer a comfortable spot for studying, meeting and relaxing between classes. “The complex will have spaces between buildings carefully planned and articulated to support Mays' three-part mission of being a vibrant learning organization, creating impactful knowledge and developing transformational leaders,” Peel explained.



Numerous naming opportunities still exist in the new Business Education Complex. To support the project, contact:

TRUE BROWN  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 979.862.4531  
TBROWN@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM

Give online at [give.am/BECFund](https://give.am/BECFund).

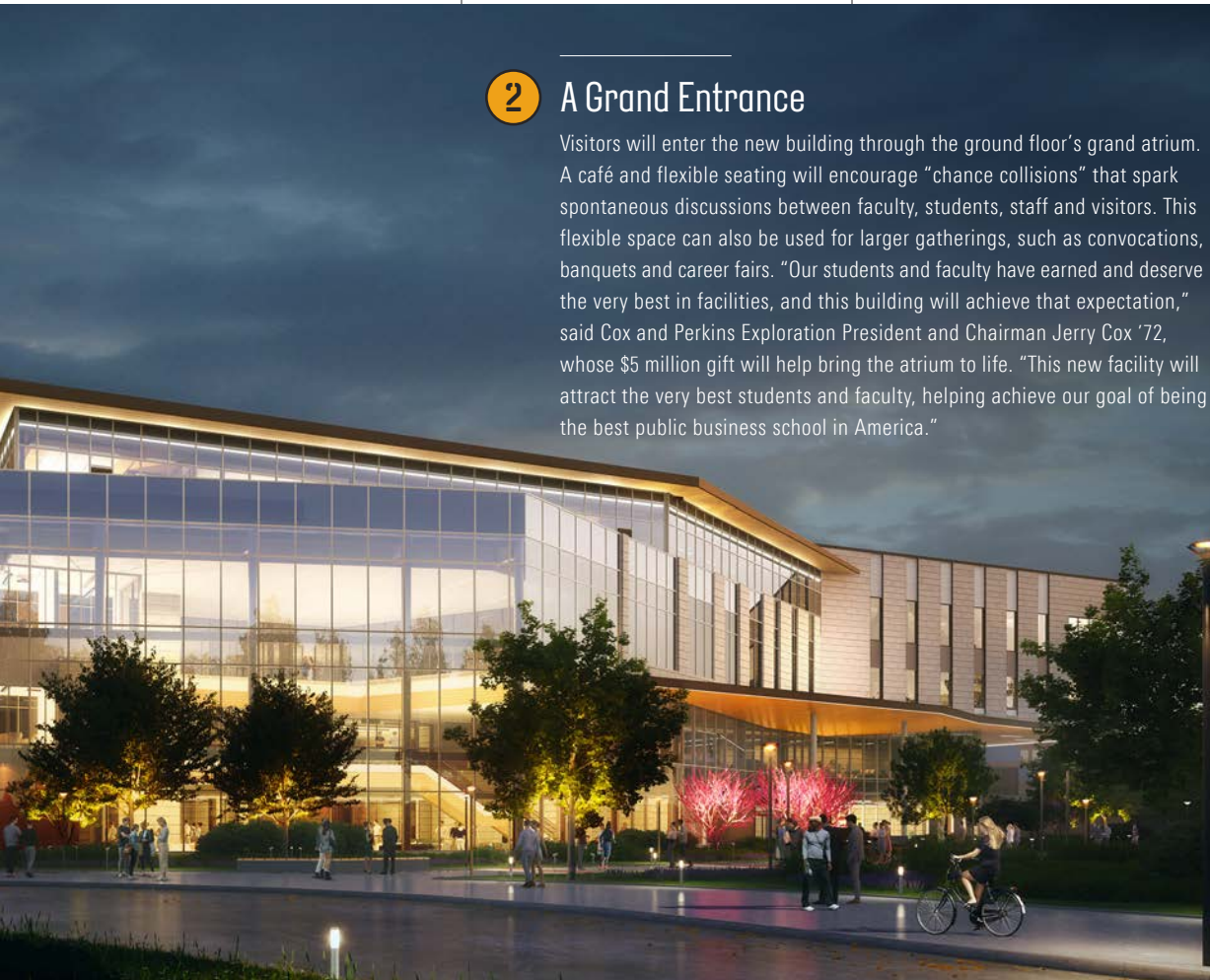


### 3 Huddle Hubs

The new building will create opportunities for networking and innovation through an array of collaboration spaces, each of which can serve up to six individuals. Additionally, free-form huddle spaces throughout the building will enable students, faculty and staff to pull chairs together to meet, study or visit. “These relaxed, open spaces will promote social community within the school,” Cox said, “creating one of the nation’s most innovative and creative business school environments.”

### 2 A Grand Entrance

Visitors will enter the new building through the ground floor’s grand atrium. A café and flexible seating will encourage “chance collisions” that spark spontaneous discussions between faculty, students, staff and visitors. This flexible space can also be used for larger gatherings, such as convocations, banquets and career fairs. “Our students and faculty have earned and deserve the very best in facilities, and this building will achieve that expectation,” said Cox and Perkins Exploration President and Chairman Jerry Cox ’72, whose \$5 million gift will help bring the atrium to life. “This new facility will attract the very best students and faculty, helping achieve our goal of being the best public business school in America.”



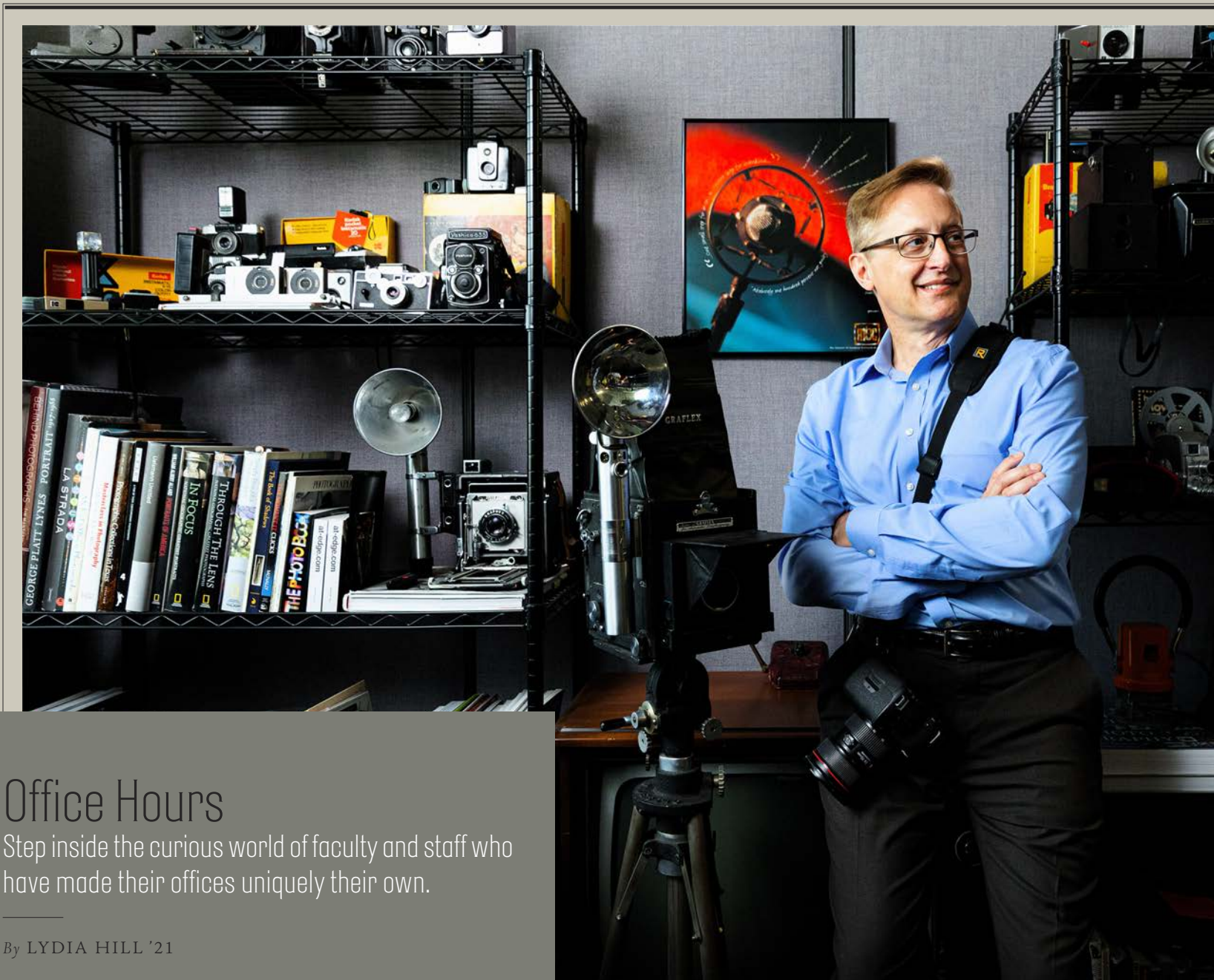
### 5 Executive Environment

The new building’s top floor will house one of Mays’ premier assets, the Center for Executive Development, which offers services and support to executives from organizations across the globe. “The new building will offer high-impact lifelong learning experiences for organizations seeking the acceleration and advancement of leading-edge business initiatives,” Peel noted.

### 4 Cutting-Edge Classrooms

New active learning studios designed as high-energy, flexible classroom spaces will include the latest technologies, allowing faculty members to create engaging instructional environments through teaming and hybrid learning experiences. “The new building will help students become more active learners and ultimately shape their passion to become lifelong learners,” said Mays Family Foundation President Kathy Mays Johnson, daughter of the business school’s late namesake, Lowry Mays ’57. The Mays Foundation committed \$15 million as the lead donor toward the collective BEC. “It’s all about developing transformational leadership, inspiring students to excel and creating a better future for everyone,” Johnson added.





## Office Hours

Step inside the curious world of faculty and staff who have made their offices uniquely their own.

By LYDIA HILL '21



### Jeremy Brett

*Science Fiction and Fantasy Collection Curator,  
Cushing Memorial Library and Archives  
Theme: Science fiction and fantasy  
Favorite sci-fi franchise: Currently the Marvel  
Cinematic Universe, but it changes*

Filled floor-to-ceiling with posters and figurines of superheroes, warriors and space travelers, Jeremy Brett's office provides daily inspiration for his job. "We like to emphasize that our special collections are for everybody and have items that interest people generally," he explained, "and I think my office reflects that." Collected from comic conventions or job connections, much of the memorabilia represents women in science fiction or reflects items in Cushing's sci-fi collection, like paintings of Daenerys Targaryen from "Game of Thrones" or a cyborg from "The Murderbot Diaries" series by Martha Wells '86.

## Glen Vigus '05

Director of Operations, School of Performance,  
Visualization and Fine Arts  
Theme: Vintage cameras  
Favorite camera: 1940s Graflex Super D

Stepping into Glen Vigus's office is like visiting a photography museum. The former news cameraman and photographer has given a home to old film and video cameras since he was a kid, and his current collection ranges from the early 1900s to the present. "Cameras are like small time machines that preserve moments of time," he observed. "I like to think about the memories and special moments they might have captured." With everything still in working order, the cameras also serve as photography teaching tools and show students how technology has evolved.

## Amy Loyd

Assistant Director, Student Activities  
Theme: Hello Kitty  
Continents represented by Hello Kitty items: 5

For Amy Loyd, forming lifelong connections with students is the best part of the job, so it's only fitting that her office is brimming with a feline focused on friendship. From the "Hello Kitty for President" sign that a student found on a Washington, D.C., trip to the massive Hello Kitty Fish Camp flag made by Camp Loyd students, many items remind her of the former students who gave them and help break the ice with new Aggies. "My office shows that you don't need to fit into a mold," Loyd shared. "Whatever you like, this is a safe space of acceptance."



## Dr. Kenneth Anderson Taylor

Assistant Professor of Practice and Director of  
Outreach and Professional Development for  
the Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy  
Theme: Cultural art  
Time to complete Matthew Gaines quilt:  
2 months

Dr. Kenneth Anderson Taylor's art comes from various sources: a local Black folk artist, international travels and even his mother. "Having art in my office provides inspiration," he said. "Without art, I wouldn't feel whole." Each piece is an extension of himself and his heritage, and he's always on the lookout for the next work to add to his collection. An artist himself, Taylor learned his mother's quilting skills eight years ago, and his fabric portrait of Sen. Matthew Gaines (center) has been displayed at two Texas A&M exhibits.



## Angela Degelman '22

Graduate Programs Recruitment and Admissions Coordinator, School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences  
Theme: Harry Potter  
Hogwarts house: Ravenclaw

When Angela Degelman first opened a "Harry Potter" book, she fell into a world of adventure, magic and wonder. Visitors experience the same world when they step into her office. Filled with posters, wands and other magical items, Degelman's collection proclaims her love for the series and her desire to share it with others. Through the years, she has introduced family members and students to the Wizarding World by reading them the first chapter. "There's something in 'Harry Potter' for everyone," she enthused. "I hope people walk away from my office with a little bit of magic."



## Dr. Detlef Hallermann '89

Clinical Professor and Director of the Reliant Trading Center and the Trading, Risk & Investments Program  
Theme: Animal mounts  
Largest kill: A 1,500-pound elk

Each mount in Dr. Detlef Hallermann's office has a story behind it, like the white-tailed deer he spent six days stalking or the blackbuck antelope he shot on a friend's ranch. But collectively, they also tell the story of a lifelong love of hunting and the connections the hobby can bring. "There's a certain bonding that happens in the field," he said. "It gives you a relationship you wouldn't have otherwise." His decorations have attracted students to stop by simply to share hunting stories, while Hallermann's passion has also led to hunting trips with university officials and former students like the late Clayton Williams Jr. '54.





### Dr. Stephen McDaniel '71 '72

Senior Professor and Regents Professor Emeritus  
of Marketing

Theme: Coca-Cola

Favorite Coke flavor: Cherry

Dr. Stephen McDaniel has always enjoyed drinking Coca-Cola, but when he brought back a Coke can with a Hebrew label from a trip to Israel in 1989, he didn't plan to start a collection. Thanks to gifts of gratitude from Aggies, though, that one Coke has grown into 500 from around the world, including Italy, Thailand, China and the United Arab Emirates. "It humbles me every time," McDaniel expressed. "My collection is a wonderful example of students' selfless service and how generous Aggies are."



### Dr. Alice Blue-McLendon '85 '87 '89

Clinical Associate Professor and Director  
of the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center

Theme: Animals

Favorite animal: Elephants

Ostrich eggs in Dr. Alice Blue-McLendon's office proudly symbolize the two things she loves most about her job: her students and the animals she teaches them to look after. Aggies painted most of the hollowed eggs for fundraisers or as gifts. Other items, like peacock and ostrich feathers, porcupine quills and antler buttons from the world's first cloned white-tailed deer, also serve an educational purpose. "They help students appreciate how amazing animals are and how they are all different," she said.



### Dr. Poppy Capehart '75

Advisor, Department of Food Science and  
Technology

Theme: Mickey Mouse

Disney World visits: 5 (and 5 Disney cruises!)

It started with a few students bringing Mickey Mouse toys to Dr. Poppy Capehart for his daughters. Today, his office is a trove of more than 900 items bearing the famous mouse. Each item accrued over the past 30 years reveals a student's story who gave it to express their appreciation for Capehart's impact on their life. "There's a certain gratitude at Texas A&M that has played out in this delightful way in my life," he marveled. "These things would be meaningless to most people, but to me, they're of great value because they're gifts that remind me of all the Aggies who've come through my door."





Introducing Texas A&M University's Next-Generation  
Small Animal Teaching Hospital

BY JEANNIE  
RALSTON

SOMETHING WAS WRONG IN THE DENTAL SERVICE AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY'S SMALL ANIMAL TEACHING HOSPITAL.

A large golden-colored dog lay on a padded, metal table as a veterinary technician and a student performed a routine teeth cleaning; one handled the brushing device while the other monitored a screen showing the dog's vital statistics. Two other students looked on, one taking notes. On a screen to one side of the room, a camera displayed a close-up of the dog's mouth—all pink gums and white strips, jagged like keys.

Directly under the elbow of one of the students sat another technician, concentrating on a computer screen as he typed, trying to block out the hubbub around him.

Overseeing the group's activity was Dr. Bert Dodd '78 '79, a clinical professor of dentistry in the School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, who bluntly assessed the problem. "See how cramped we are in here?" Dodd asked, shaking his head. "You put a few more students in here doing rounds, and it gets plain claustrophobic. We need something at least twice as big."

This was one day in one room of the hospital, the state's premier animal care facility and one of the country's best. But it could have played out anywhere in the 40-year-old building on any given day, because it is a known fact that the hospital has long outgrown its home. While this isn't a problem that impacts the quality of care animals receive or students' overall education, it is a problem of potential.

"Unfortunately," said Dr. John August, the Carl B. King Dean of Veterinary Medicine, "our current facility doesn't reflect the excellence we want the world to see." That is about to change with the proposed Next-Generation Small Animal Teaching Hospital.

## the Original

When it opened in 1981, the current Small Animal Teaching Hospital was considered state-of-the-art and abundantly spacious. "One of my favorite stories about this facility is from Phil Hobson, a former chief of small animal surgery, who was largely responsible for this building," shared Dr. Stacy Eckman '01, associate dean for hospital operations. She stood in a hallway lined with a piece of operating equipment under a tarp, a cart of clean scrubs, a file cabinet and a step stool. "He said that he was roundly criticized for how big it was."

Since then, much has changed in veterinary medicine and at the school. Nationally, demand for veterinary medicine is booming, with pet care expenditures due to triple by 2030. Procedures and treatments have become more precise and complex, requiring more sophisticated equipment, training and staff.

Since the hospital's opening, the number of services offered has expanded from two to 16, including ophthalmology and cardiology. The caseload has jumped from 6,000 per year in 1981 to more than 23,000 annually today. In the same timeframe, the class size has grown from 73 to 180, the number of first-year veterinary students who entered in fall 2022. Clinical and research trials have grown as well. The only things that seemingly haven't increased are the size and sophistication of the space.

Still, the school's reputation continues to soar, ranking fourth in the nation by U.S. News and World Report.

### furry fact:

A DOG'S NORMAL TEMPERATURE USUALLY HOVERS AROUND 101° FAHRENHEIT. WHEN THEIR BODY TEMPERATURE RISES, DOGS COOL DOWN THROUGH A COMBINATION OF SWEATING AND PANTING. PANTING HELPS COOL BLOOD IN THE VEINS AND CAPILLARIES OF THE DOG'S TONGUE, WHICH PASSES ON THROUGH THE CIRCULATORY SYSTEM TO LOWER BODY HEAT.

# 101°





SOPHIE



Just two weeks after Kristie Ikels '13 '21 studied canine nasal tumors in her third year of veterinary school, she woke up to find that her 8-year-old mixed-breed dog, Sophie, was bleeding from her nose. She had learned enough to know this wasn't good.

"Being very emotional and the vet student I was, I quickly jumped to the worst scenario—cancer," she shared. Sadly, after her local veterinarian referred her to the Texas A&M Small Animal Hospital, a CT scan revealed she was correct.

"I started sobbing as I got the news," she said. "Even though I'd known it was likely cancer, it's hard to hear when it's your baby."

Ikels felt even worse when she got the next bit of news. Treatment would be costly—more expensive than a student could afford. But the hospital staff found a solution.

A grant the oncology service had received from Petco Love covered half the bills, while Ikels worked extra hours at her part-time job and sought help from her family for the other half. In February 2020, Sophie received an experimental treatment of radiation and surgery, which was repeated later that year when another tumor appeared. The treatment is expected to add four years to her life.

Two years later, Sophie is healthy and rambunctious, and Ikels, who now practices in College Station, believes she may be a better veterinarian for having gone through the experience. "It has made me care about where people are coming from—emotionally and financially. What can I do to help them out? Because I would never want the roles reversed if I can help it." •



Tigger often wears a purple bow collar around her neck that matches the purple stroller she sits in when her parents take her outside. Because Tigger is a rescued feral cat, Trish Fetter '18 and Phillip Tinner '18 want her to have the chance to be outdoors "but without all the dangers," Trish said.

But last spring, Tigger's safe world turned upside down. When Phillip or Trish tried to rub her belly, something she normally loved, she cried out and growled. After a trip to the local emergency veterinary hospital in Houston, they learned that Tigger had a kidney stone lodged in her ureter between her kidneys and bladder. Unable to perform the necessary surgery, the local hospital referred them to the Small Animal Teaching Hospital.

The hospital's reputation soothed the couple's nerves a bit, and Texas A&M's veterinarians did not waste time. The kidney stone's location called for a complicated surgery in which they cut out the blockage and put in a ureteral stent to help the ureter heal properly.

The surgery was successful, but Tigger took a turn for the worse during recovery. "Afterward, the doctor told us she was afraid Tigger wasn't going to make it, but they were doing everything they could," Phillip reported. But happily, Tigger made a miraculous turn-around and was home within a week.

"She's such a little fighter," Trish said. "I think her stray instincts came out. Everyone at the hospital was so happy for her and us. It's obvious how much they care." •



### furry fact:

AMONG DOMESTIC ANIMALS, CAT HEARING IS AMONG THE BEST. NOT ONLY CAN THEIR EARS EACH ROTATE UP TO 180°, ALLOWING THEM TO SWIVEL TO PINPOINT SOUNDS, BUT THEIR RANGE IS APPROXIMATELY 45HZ TO 64KHZ. HUMAN HEARING IS USUALLY PEGGED AT 20HZ TO 20KHZ.

# 64 kHz



“In the end, it’s the people who make the difference. Through their expertise and compassion, they work miracles in a facility that is not 100% of what we would expect,” said August. “But the new hospital will round out the reputation of our school. We have faculty, staff and students who work extraordinarily hard and deserve to have the very best facility in which to do their great work.”

## the Vision

What should a top-tier small animal teaching hospital look like? That’s the question the school’s leaders have been seriously contemplating ever since Texas A&M and the state legislature put funds and encouragement behind a \$200 million project for a new hospital.

Plans are being drawn up now with input from faculty and staff, with construction expected to break ground in 24 to 36 months. The school’s priorities will help shape the design, layout and amenities. First and foremost, the facility is a teaching hospital; therefore, the building will be designed to create the best environment for learning. It will be a place where innovation blends with compassionate patient care. The school’s administration envisions a facility that promotes a “one health” approach to veterinary medicine since much of its research is translatable to human beings. That approach also nurtures interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues in other schools and

colleges on campus, as well as with academic medical research facilities in Texas and beyond.

In essence, the physical representation of the college will align more closely with its national reputation. Or as Dr. Karen Cornell, associate dean for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Professional Program, put it: “The building will match the abilities of the people within it.”

Six key design features will solve salient problems that the current space presents.

**from:**

### **no breathing room to “aaaaah!”**

“This is our neurology surgical area,” said Dr. Jonathan Levine, professor and holder of the Helen McWhorther Chair in Small Animal Clinical Sciences, pointing into a room dominated by a light green machine with an arcing arm. “It’s packed with equipment because they need a surgical microscope, an infrared unit and certain aspirators for brain surgery, but you can hardly fit any people.”

The current hospital’s size, or lack thereof, is a source of much frustration. It measures 84,000 square feet—40% smaller than small animal hospitals at peer institutions across the country. “We’ve made use of every nook and cranny we possibly can,” said Eckman, who dreams of something closer to 60 exam rooms compared to the current 15.

The hospital’s new design is not set, so square footage is still being determined. But there will be spacious areas for surgery, radiology, rehabilitation and rounds rooms (where students gather and discuss) incorporated into spaces for specialties ranging from dermatology to oncology. The emergency room will be expanded from what Eckman called “a strip of real estate” that sees about a fifth of the cases that come through the hospital daily to something more suitable for the traffic flow.

**from:**

**inflexibility to a design that keeps up with technology**

Importantly, size is only one factor in the overall design considerations. “It’s not just a matter of building a bigger version of our hospital,” August said. “We need a building design that can change with time because we just don’t know what veterinary medicine will look like 30 years from now.”

The current hospital has been notably resistant to remodeling. “We’ve tried to modify and make better use of the space we have,” Eckman said. “But there’s only so much you can do with this footprint.” The rooms that once housed the radiology department exemplify the building’s constraints. “They were still hand-processing x-rays when they built this,” Eckman said. “These are lead-lined walls. You can’t just knock them down.”

The staff and administration anticipate that surgical robots are the future of medicine, which means operating rooms must be sized to accommodate state-of-the-art equipment. The dean hopes the new teaching hospital will be the country’s first to house computer-integrated interventional medicine. “And so,” he said, “we need to make sure we think about space assignments for those kinds of things.”

**from:**

**a less-than-ideal teaching environment to room for real-world learning**

Students in the veterinary school get a first-class education, there’s no doubt. But clearly, it’s not as smooth as it could be. “There aren’t enough learning areas, computers and break rooms,” reported Vanessa Wilkins ’23, a fourth-year student who will receive her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in May. “Oftentimes, there are lines for computers or sitting areas if we bring our own computer, and staff break areas are doubling as student areas and rounds rooms.” Wilkins emphasized, however, that patient care is never compromised.

The new facility will aim to make real-world, hands-on learning more accessible. For example, taking place of space-starved operating rooms designed in the ’70s will be modern operating theaters that will allow students to witness the scope of procedures rather than needing to crane necks or stand on tiptoes.

While the hospital is renowned for its innovations in specialty fields, the new facility will ensure that students are truly prepared to be general practitioners, which is the field most graduates pursue. “We want to create an environment where students can develop skills needed to enter private practice,” August said. “This should be a place where we can carefully and holistically assess student competencies.”

**from:**

**thwarted growth to space for important initiatives**

The wish list is long and includes kidney dialysis, 3D printed prostheses and other advancements in biomedical engineering. These are specialties, technologies and services the hospital would like to formally offer but hasn’t been able to.

“We’re at a ceiling as far as some of the services we want to offer,” said Eckman, “because we would need more people to expand into them, and you have to have the place to put them.”

The proposed facility will showcase new developments in veterinary medicine and allow the college to address other priorities. For instance, August would like the hospital to focus on telehealth. “I’m interested in how we can





Molly and Cadbury are both 10-year-old rescued Labrador retrievers, but they have strikingly different personalities, according to their parents, Linda and Dennis Clark '68. Molly, a yellow lab, is a princess. "The joke around the house is that Molly gets up in the morning and puts on her tutu and crown," Linda said. On the other hand, Cadbury, a chocolate lab, has the temperament of an old professor. "He loves to lie under a tree in the yard and study the birds."

What the dogs share, besides their parents' devotion, is undergoing tibial plateau leveling osteotomy surgery at the Small Animal Teaching Hospital (twice for Molly). Dennis described the surgery as "basically the canine version of a knee replacement."

Though the Clarks live north of Fort Worth, they didn't hesitate to bring their dogs to College Station. They are enthusiastic fans of the veterinary school, so much so that they've endowed two faculty chairs at the school. One is in the equine department, while the other is held by Dr. Brian Saunders '98 '01 '05, an associate professor and orthopedic surgeon at the Small Animal Teaching Hospital.

Fittingly, it was Saunders who operated on both dogs. "It was exciting to get to know Brian through the surgeries," Dennis said. "What you've got at Texas A&M are very qualified individuals at every level and people who actually help develop some of the techniques in modern animal care."

The Clarks are thrilled that a new hospital will allow more people to benefit from the school's expertise. "The hospital and the people who work there are fine ambassadors for Texas A&M," Dennis added. •

900<sup>m</sup>

furry fact:

DOGS ENJOY A FEW ADVANTAGES OVER HUMANS WHEN IT COMES TO NIGHT VISION. THEY HAVE LARGER PUPILS, ALLOWING MORE LIGHT TO ENTER THE EYE, WHILE THEIR RETINAS ARE DOMINATED BY RODS, ENHANCING THEIR ABILITY TO DETECT MOTION AS FAR AS 900 METERS AWAY.



Andrea Streicher knew that Texas A&M's mascot was a dog and that several kids in her Austin neighborhood attended college there, but that was the extent of her Aggie knowledge until Werner, her 2-year-old "double doodle"—half golden-doodle and half labradoodle—started having seizures in 2018. After an MRI showed Werner had a rare skull bone tumor, her local veterinarian suggested he be put down.

When Streicher contacted Texas A&M, she intended to give his body to the college for study. She received a surprise instead. Having never seen this type of cancer in a young dog, doctors said, "We're going to try to take it out."

"That's the thing about Texas A&M vets—their first answer is yes and not no," Streicher said.

During a 12-hour surgery, doctors successfully removed the tumor, but with it they had to take out a large part of Werner's skull, including one eye. To fill the gap, a replacement skull—created by a 3D printer—was implanted. For two years, Werner thrived.

When an infection later required the artificial skull to be removed, Streicher and her doctor came up with another idea—a helmet that he could wear externally to protect his brain, rather than put him through surgery again to insert another implant.

Texas A&M veterinarians fitted a custom 3D-printed helmet to fit his head securely that he now comfortably wears during the day. Streicher removes it at night.

Through social media and in-person appearances, Werner (now nicknamed "Werner the Wonder Dog") has become an inspiration to individuals with disabilities. "He has great empathy. But he wouldn't be here if it weren't for Texas A&M not giving up," Streicher said. •



### furry fact:

DOGS POSSESS A SENSE OF SMELL POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DETECT SUBSTANCES AT CONCENTRATIONS OF ONE PART PER TRILLION—A SINGLE DROP OF LIQUID IN 20 OLYMPIC-SIZE SWIMMING POOLS. THIS ABILITY IS IN PART OWED TO HAVING UP TO 300 MILLION OLFACTORY RECEPTORS COMPARED TO SIX MILLION IN HUMANS.

# 300<sup>M</sup>

from:

### ho-hum first impression to face of the university

The new hospital's features will make it a prestigious and welcoming part of campus. "It will be wonderful for us because of its prominence," said August. "We'll be one of the main features people see when entering the university."

Because the hospital offers a public-facing service, it is often the primary interaction those outside the Aggie community have with Texas A&M. New clients come to the hospital from all over the state and country, often on referral from their local veterinarians. Many of these clients come from state-of-the-art hospitals—some of which may resemble spas, a staff member pointed out—and expect much more from a top-rated animal hospital.

"We've had visitors from the outside comment on the facilities," said Levine. "People come here, and they're a little shocked."

First impressions matter, and not just for clients. "The new facility will allow us to continue to recruit the best faculty and students," Cornell added. The next-generation hospital will attract people who will keep the school at the top of the rankings and continue to make innovations in veterinary medicine.

Once the new hospital is built, it will be more than just a physical gateway to Aggeland. As one of the university's most prestigious and well-known schools, it will symbolize the sense of service and warmth ingrained in the Aggie character. "Our hospital of the future," August said, "will offer the world a window into Texas A&M." ©

*You can support the school's mission through endowed funds for research, faculty and student scholarships. Additionally, naming opportunities starting at \$25,000 abound in the new facility, and spaces can be named in memory or honor of a special person or pet. If you'd like to help veterinary medicine ascend to new heights at Texas A&M, contact:*

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LARRY WALKER '97  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
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utilize telehealth to help veterinarians who don't have convenient access to specialists, particularly in the Rio Grande Valley."

from:

### added stress to calmness and healing

Hospitals are chiefly stressful places, whether they serve human beings or animals. Life and death are often on the line, and staff and clients are subject to a wide range of emotions, from anxiety and grief to hope and joy. The current facility does little to alleviate that kind of stress. "It's an impersonal space that provides few comforts for people who work here," August shared. "The new facility will be designed to promote well-being and wellness. It's imperative that it create a calming effect for stressed patients, employees and students."

"I'm looking forward to what the new building does for morale," Cornell added. "It will be so much better than coming to work in a cinderblock building."

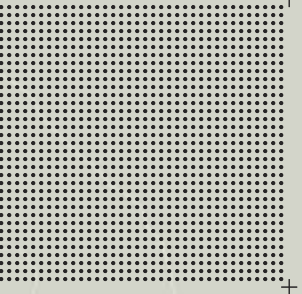
August hopes a healing garden can also be worked into the design. Mostly, he wants clients who bring animals to College Station to know the hospital is a caring facility. "We understand that pets are part of the family and people are going to be worried when they come here," he said, "and we want to ensure they feel welcome."

THROUGH FUTURISTIC TECH AND  
VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AT AMAZON,  
DR. KEN WASHINGTON '82 '83 '86  
IS CREATING THE WORLD  
OF TOMORROW.

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by Chrystal Houston





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little girl is playing with a new toy while talking to her grandma on a screen. “Astro, follow me,” the child says as she pulls the toy around the room. The screen, mounted on a small, cute robot the size of a housecat, follows her with smart technology. The conversation continues as if the grandparent were in the room while the pair play together.

Astro’s ability to interact naturally with people helps make it even more useful in customers’ homes. Astro can tell when an obstacle is a person and make decisions about how to interact appropriately.



A man is at a party when he gets a notification on his phone that something has activated the security alarm at his house. He sends Astro to check it out and smiles in relief as Astro’s camera reveals the disturbance was only a mischievous raccoon.

An older man is in his kitchen, preparing a snack. Astro rolls up with a cheerful expression on-screen. “Message from Ed,” Astro says pleasantly. “Don’t forget to eat something green today, Dad.” Happy to comply, the man takes a bite of pistachio ice cream.

This is the world that Dr. Ken Washington ‘82 ‘83 ‘86 is creating: A world where personal robots enhance the quality of life for people everywhere by providing convenience, connection and peace of mind. More than simply imagining this future, Washington is working to realize it. He is the vice president and general manager of consumer robotics at Amazon, where he leads the team behind Astro, Amazon’s first household robot. The position is the latest in a distinguished career in future-focused innovation, as he’s worked on everything from nuclear safety and space technology to autonomous vehicles.

Tackling compound problems with no clear solution is the kind of work that excites Washington. From his student days at Texas A&M University to his positions of progressive leadership across a broad swath of the tech industry, he has honed

his skill at deconstructing a project, understanding its component parts and finding a way to make everything work together successfully. More than that, he knows how to communicate effectively with technical and non-technical people to get a job done well.

Astro is just the tip of the iceberg, said Washington. Right now, he explained, you may be thinking, “A personal robot? What would I do with that?” But soon, people will ask, “What would I do without it?” As with smartphones, this technology will rapidly become an integral and ubiquitous part of our lives. “We are at the beginning of the home robot revolution,” he said. “In five years, where we’re at with robots will be unrecognizable. I want to say I was part of what made that happen.”

## SEEING THE FUTURE

Washington has always been a restless tinkerer with the kind of mind that can’t sit still. Growing up in Chicago’s southside in the 1960s, he was your typical science nerd, building things with his Erector set and taking apart the family television to understand how it worked. By age 12, he knew his future would eventually include earning a Ph.D. That was the year his father finished his own doctoral studies and the family moved to the Milwaukee suburbs, where the newly minted Dr. Washington began teaching at Marquette University.

“It was not lost on me that the quality of our life changed drastically from when my dad was an inner-city schoolteacher,” he recalled. “I watched him become a professor at a relatively large university, and our lifestyle changed. I could put two and two together. I did the math and thought, ‘Okay, good education means good career means better quality of life.’”



By middle school, the family relocated to Texas. The gas shortages and political unrest of the 1970s energy crisis informed Washington's path as he considered college. "Nuclear energy seemed like it could be an important part of the answer to energy independence," he said. At that time, the only place in Texas with a dedicated nuclear engineering department with a top-rated graduate school was Texas A&M. It was an easy decision.

He attended Texas A&M for eight years, obtaining three degrees in nuclear engineering and maintaining a nearly perfect 4.0. (His one B was in a nuclear experimentation class, a recollection that still galls him 40 years later.) He kept his nose to the grindstone, but he also "had the full Aggie experience," he said, including football, friends and Northgate on a Friday night. "I had a great experience at Texas A&M. It seemed like I was there forever when I was young and in my 20s, but now it's like a blip on the timeline," he said.

As a student, Washington learned how to approach complicated problems without a clear solution. "Some of those problems in classes were so hard. I had no way of knowing how to solve them," he said. "There was no recipe, only trial and error and building relationships with other people who might have new approaches." What he learned was not information but a process.

This strategy served him well throughout his career. When you're building the technology of the future, there's no playbook—only collaboration, persistence and a readiness to creatively engage with the problem for as long as it takes to move forward. "No matter what the challenge is, I've got the method of how to go about it, how to build relationships with others and how to do the research," he added.

One of Washington's most formative relationships at Texas A&M was forged not in the classroom but on a porch. A student who lived in his building often sat on the stoop, strumming a guitar. Washington thought he might like to learn to play, so he struck up a friendship with the man, named Dave. In addition to music, Washington learned he and Dave had another shared interest: computers. They each had a Commodore 64, one of the first widely available personal computers. Dave taught him some songs on the guitar as well as how to program a computer.

"I just fell in love with tinkering with this computer thing. I was hooked...by the time I finished my Ph.D., I had become a full-fledged computer geek," he said. His self-taught software development skills and nuclear expertise led to his first job after graduation creating nuclear safety software for Sandia National Laboratories. "It was a dream," he said. "I loved it. It allowed me to jump in and be successful."

## SUPERCOMPUTERS AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Washington's gift is seeing three steps ahead, predicting possible problems and then troubleshooting to ensure the best possible outcome. This was a fundamental part of his job at Sandia, as developing computers used to test the status of nuclear weapons is a tricky business. He created computer architectures used to certify the safety and performance of the national nuclear stockpile—a process that required a tremendous amount of computing power. Previously, scientists would have used custom-built supercomputers costing hundreds of millions of dollars. Instead, Washington's team was the first in the world to figure out how to make off-the-shelf PCs link together to work like a supercomputer.

"When we put it all together, it was the fifth-fastest computer in the world at just a fraction of the cost. That was cool," he said. "This proved to the world that you can build a fast, viable computer for scientific purposes using relatively low-cost components." Knowing that every major corporation from Google to Facebook now uses this same strategy, well, "That's very satisfying," he said.

After a few years at Sandia, he had to adopt a new skillset as he was rapidly promoted from manager to director to leading the distributed computing group at the Sandia California site and, eventually, to chief information officer. "I wasn't even 30 years old when I became a manager. I was managing people who were more senior than I was," he recalled. "I learned to lead by being humble about what works and what doesn't and by listening to feedback from my team."

Accustomed to being among the brightest and most capable people in a room, it

was tough for him to sit back and let others try things. “I learned that when you’re leading a team, their success is more important than yours,” he said. “Before becoming a manager, the most important thing was me having the answer and knowing how to get something done. I had to learn to motivate others to solve the problem rather than doing it myself, even if it took longer for them to solve it. They needed to know I had their back more than they needed to know I was smart.”

In the long run, the strategy pays big dividends. “Leadership is all about getting the best out of others at scale. It doesn’t scale if you do everything yourself,” he said. Just like building a supercomputer out of thousands of individual PCs, Washington learned how to unite a team with a vision and equip them to communicate efficiently to create an impact much larger than the sum of the parts.

He went on to work for Lockheed Martin, the aerospace and defense firm, where he specialized in the new frontier of cybersecurity in the internet’s early days as the organization’s first chief privacy officer. As he moved up the corporate food

chain, he built new skills once again. No longer a player-coach, he started managing managers. He learned to skate above the details of each group or project and inspire teams with ideas that ignited passion. His gift for seeing the bigger picture and translating technology to external audiences enabled him to provide his teams with what they needed to be successful.

Washington is as good at solving equations as he is at working a room. He’s intense and incredibly intelligent but has a joyful, infectious energy that puts people at ease while firing them up to do great work. He’s also a gifted communicator, a trait he credits to his mother. She would often ask about what he was learning at Texas A&M. He found that if he could explain his technical work in a way she could comprehend, then he had mastered it.

“It drives me crazy when I hear someone explain something in technical terms to a non-technical audience, and I know they don’t get it,” he said. He passed this lesson on to his employees. “If you can’t explain this in a way that your mom would get it, then you don’t have all the details right yet.”

## CREATING THE CREATORS OF TOMORROW

Before joining Amazon in 2021, Washington spent eight years at Ford Motor Co., where he led its global research team in developing the next generation of vehicles, including electric and autonomous vehicles. As the vice president of research and advanced engineering and later chief technology officer, his primary assignment at Ford was to shift it from a manufacturing and mechanical company to a technology company. Vehicles today are so much more than a device to get you from place to place. They are platforms for a host of applications, Washington explained.

In that way, vehicles and robots are similar. They’re both platforms that can be built upon to perform diverse functions. Take Amazon’s Astro, for example. Initially, Astro was designed for home monitoring, said Washington, but that was just the beginning. “There are so many things that it will be able to do as we improve it. We are working on software to make Astro capable of much more in the coming years—to be a better companion, interact differently with your kids than it does with you, help care for a pet, or give you peace of mind if you have a parent at home who wants to age in place. We can do so many things with this robot now that we have the platform upon which to build and innovate.”

The passion in his voice is apparent as he brainstorms about the future of personal robotics. He truly believes in this work and in making the world a better place through this first-of-its-kind device. If that weren’t the case, he wouldn’t have made the move to Amazon. His career has been diverse, but there are a few common threads, he explained. His work must be

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Dr. Ken Washington ’82 ’83 ’86 has been preparing for his job as Amazon’s vice president and general manager of consumer robotics for his entire career.



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**“LEADERSHIP IS ALL ABOUT GETTING THE BEST OUT OF OTHERS AT SCALE. IT DOESN'T SCALE IF YOU DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF.”**

Dr. Ken Washington '82 '83 '86

meaningful for society, something he can learn from and something technically challenging. Finally, he wants to like the people with whom he works. “Life’s too short to work with jerks,” he said with a chuckle.

Developing a first-of-its-kind device brings numerous challenges beyond the technical. There are policy and privacy concerns, as well as the challenge of shaping the customer mindset and creating demand for something new in the marketplace. “We’re dealing with all of that in real time,” Washington said. “That’s where I spend almost all my time: threading the needle of robots we think we can sell that will make people’s lives better, that will meet safety and regulatory requirements and not create privacy or ethical concerns, but still be good enough to be groundbreaking.”

Washington’s extraordinary success has been recognized with election into the National Academy of Engineering and a Black Engineer of the Year Award in Research Leadership. He was also named a Texas A&M University College of Engineering Outstanding Alumnus in 2022. He visited campus to receive his award and enjoyed seeing all the changes to facilities but wished he would have seen more Black students in engineering. When he was a student, there was only one other Black nuclear engineering candidate who eventually left the program. Washington stayed in touch with that student, who later returned to finish his Ph.D. in nuclear engineering, partly inspired by Washington’s success following graduation. There is more diversity in the college now than in his day, but he would like to see it increase.

That desire motivated Washington to touch tomorrow in another way through the



Dr. Kenneth E. Washington '82 Foundation Excellence Award. The endowed scholarship will support Black students in the College of Engineering to help attract greater diversity to the field. “I wanted to be explicit about expressing to young Black men and women that this path has been taken before by a young Black man, and it landed me successfully. I want to help others realize that opportunity, too,” he said.

In his 62 years, Washington has lived through an immense acceleration of technology. It’s easy to underestimate the speed with which things will change, he reflected. He’s shaped much of his career on betting that technology continues to accelerate at a pace that will change our lives. Whether it’s scholarships or robots, Washington is excited to invest his time, talent and treasure in the tomorrow in which he

wants to live. “Whenever I have a chance to take something with a sliver of showing promise that could grow and expand and become something big and important for society, I’ve tried to jump at it because I’ve watched things like that happen over and over again. And it happens faster than you can imagine.” ©

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TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE WITH A GIFT TO THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, CONTACT:

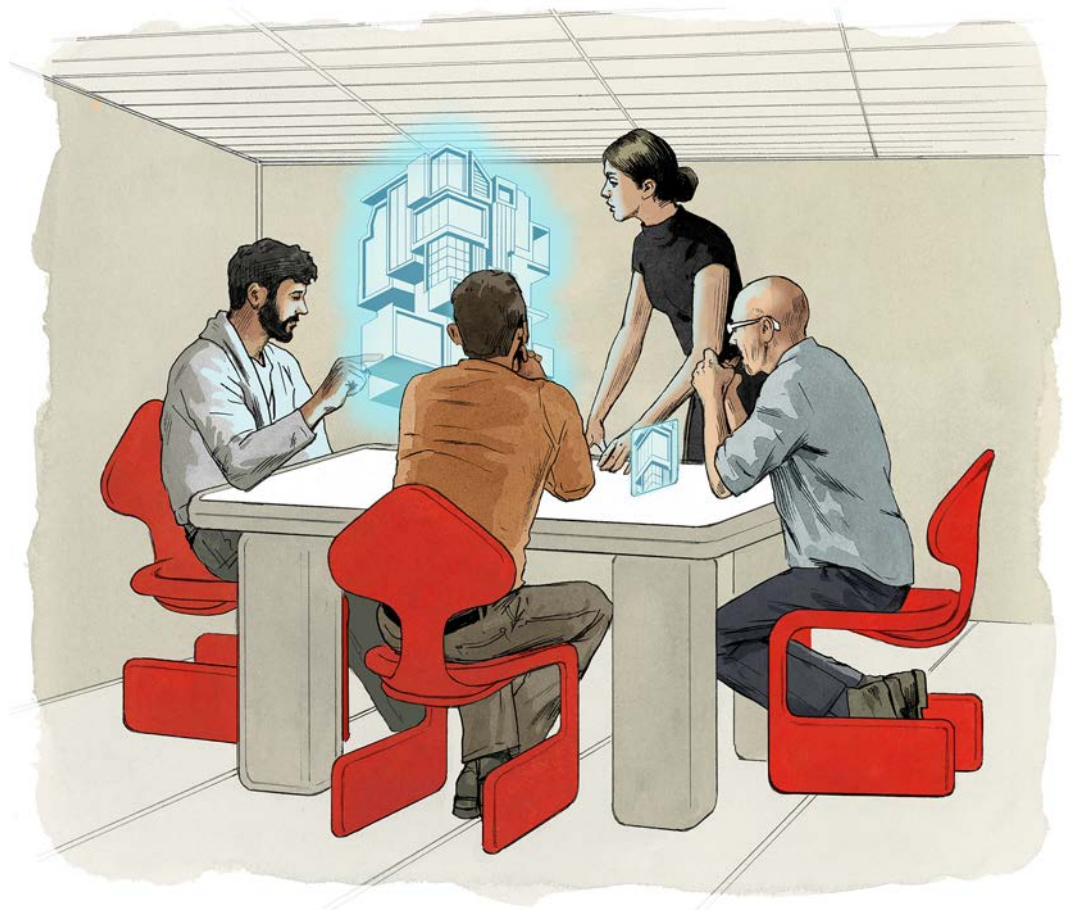
PATRICK WILSON '10  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 979.204.8556  
PWILSON@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM

# What Does the Future of Work Look Like?

*Faculty across disciplines track the socioeconomic trends affecting the workplace today and tomorrow.*

By BAILEY PAYNE '19

Work is one of life's constants, but the way people work has been in constant flux throughout recorded history. As economists, businesses and everyday Americans try to peek into their proverbial crystal balls and predict what the future work environment holds in a post-COVID world and amid recent sociopolitical changes, three faculty from across Texas A&M University offered insights from their own research.





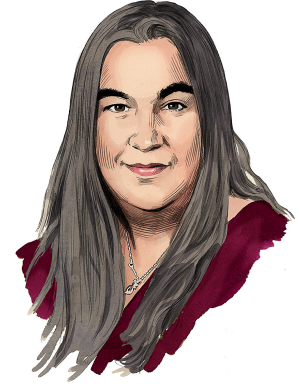
**Dr. Nitya Chawla**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, MANAGEMENT  
MAYS BUSINESS SCHOOL



**Dr. Raymond Robertson**

HELEN AND ROY RYU CHAIR IN ECONOMICS  
AND GOVERNMENT, BUSH SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE



**Dr. Mindy Bergman**

PROFESSOR, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND  
BRAIN SCIENCES, COLLEGE OF ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

## Remote work changes the game.

Remote work has become a heavily debated topic among employees and employers alike since its temporary necessity during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Depending on who you ask, it's either a revolutionary breakthrough for worker autonomy or a managerial nightmare that spurns all oversight and turns every day into Casual Friday. For Dr. Nitya Chawla, it's a little more complicated.

"We should recognize the different reasons employees may want to work from home, how it can enrich their personal lives and how that can positively impact the workplace," she said. For example, working from home allowed Chawla and her husband to care for their newborn together, trading professional and family responsibilities and allowing both to experience precious moments early in their child's life. "There's a popular desire to return to the old normal from before the pandemic, but in doing so, we miss opportunities to improve workers' lives and retain top talent."

Chawla also recognized remote work's limitations. "There are certain types of office work that benefit from being in person, like brainstorming," she said. "And some people just prefer working in the office." She recommended that supervisors approach remote arrangements individually with compassion, flexibility and ingenuity to create a work environment that works for everyone.

## International markets create domestic challenges and opportunities.

It's no secret that the world is getting increasingly interconnected, but many Americans still see a clear separation between the United States and the rest of the world regarding economic policy. Dr. Raymond Robertson, director of the Mosbacher Institute for Trade, Economics, and Public Policy, paints a different picture. "It's more accurate to think of North America as a single market, both in products and labor," Robertson said.

Robertson chiefly studies international labor markets, especially in Latin America, and has researched how post-COVID-19 influxes of migrant workers can create jobs in the restaurant industry rather than directly compete with native citizens as commonly perceived. "More workers allows restaurants to expand, increasing demand for labor across the board," he said.

Though Russia and China have monopolized the spotlight for their impacts on the world economy, he singled out a trend in Europe that could tremendously affect American businesses. "The European Union is pushing to regulate multinational corporations to address perceptions of poor working conditions in developing countries," he stated. These regulations would hold corporations accountable for the factories they buy from, even if they do not own them, creating a global ripple effect on the prices of manufactured goods.

## Employers are increasingly challenged to build welcoming environments.

Routinely, employees and their managers have been advised to cleanly separate their personal and professional lives and avoid discussing sensitive topics on the clock. Recently, though, many organizations have been decked by shifting political winds. Consumers expect stronger stances from organizations on social issues, and workers habitually find themselves enmeshed in conversations about race, gender and politics.

Dr. Mindy Bergman stressed that these issues are too complex to navigate with a one-size-fits-all training alone. "If we could train away racism or sexism the way we train people to use a new computer software, we would have done it by now," she said. While training does communicate clear boundaries, Bergman's research suggests that its potential gains are negated if the organization is not wholly committed to fostering a welcoming environment.

On the ground level, Bergman recommends that employees and supervisors remain mindful of each other's differing perspectives, calmly enforce personal boundaries and apologize when someone tells them they have crossed the line. "That's really hard. But remember that if someone comes up to you and says, 'Hey, that wasn't cool,' that means they see you as someone open and willing to learn."

It was launch day for Texas A&M University's Sounding Rocketry Team (SRT), and as the countdown began, Sarah Kinney '24 held her breath. The rocket they were about to test, dubbed Lazarus, represented more than two years of work from SRT members.

The countdown reached zero, and Lazarus roared to life, its fiery tail shooting it nearly 8,000 feet above the ecstatic group. "It was beautiful," Kinney recalled. "We all teared up a bit as we watched." As the rocket began its descent, however, the tears weren't all joyful. The rocket had split into three pieces rather than the expected two, and the engine plummeted to the ground with no parachute.

Undeterred, Kinney and the team began repairs and improvements. For SRT, problem-solving is all part of the learning process that has strengthened its members' skills and led to the construction of five different rocket frames and hybrid engines in nine years.

Kinney's determination to tackle challenges and reach new heights extends beyond her role with SRT. A President's Endowed scholar and Endowed Opportunity Award scholar, she immerses herself in aerospace engineering academics through classes, research and summer internships while still finding time for SRT and passions outside the engineering field. Discover her personal playbook for success that will continue taking her nowhere but up.

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By LYDIA HILL '21

**Scholarships:**

DOROTHY & LESTER L. JAY '45 PRESIDENT'S ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP; MARIE & JIM GALLOWAY '29 ENDOWED OPPORTUNITY AWARD

**Involvement:**

DYNAMICS SUB-TEAM MEMBER OF SOUNDING ROCKETRY TEAM & FOUNDING MEMBER AND OUTREACH DIRECTOR FOR TEXAS A&M'S CHAPTER OF MOVE TEXAS

**Hobbies:**

ROCK CLIMBING, HAMMOCKING AND PERFECTING GLUTEN-FREE BAKING



GO BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



FIND YOUR PLACE

**3** **When considering her college path,** Kinney's chief concern was finding the right community. "My biggest fear was, 'Will I fit in?'" she recalled. "But I found an Aggie community that supports all I do." This support began with several scholarships, including a prestigious President's Endowed Scholarship created by Dorothy and Lester Jay '45. Lester found his own place in the Aggie community during his time at Texas A&M and participated in the iconic Corregidor Muster in 1946. Inspired by his experiences, the Jays decided to provide the same opportunities to future students.

"Daddy loved Texas A&M so much," said Sally Jay and Judy Green, the Jays' daughters. "We are proud that our parents' legacy lives on in their scholars. Our hearts are full knowing that students like Sarah will remember their names, and we hope Sarah knows they would be proud of her."

Thanks to this generosity, Kinney continues to aim high. "Texas A&M has given me so many opportunities, and my scholarships opened doors I couldn't have imagined," she said.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

**2** **Realizing the importance of civic engagement,** Kinney sought to learn about the politics of her new state when she arrived in Aggieland. She visited her political science professor's office hours twice a week during her first semester to discuss Texas politics. There, she learned about a few students starting a campus chapter of MOVE Texas, a nonpartisan organization encouraging college-age citizens to exercise their civic duty and engage with local politics.

Kinney became the group's outreach director, helping it grow and share its message with students. "Voter turnout for 18- to 25-year-olds is abysmal," Kinney said. "It's important that people my age get involved because it's our future."

**1** **Kinney grew up launching model rockets with her dad,** so when she discovered Texas A&M had an organization that provided hands-on engineering experience through designing, building and launching complex hybrid rockets, she was hooked. Even before arriving on campus, the California native emailed one of SRT's leaders, who encouraged her to apply despite her lack of experience. To her surprise, she landed a spot on the dynamics sub-team and quickly rose to dynamics manager her sophomore year.

In this position, Kinney led the group responsible for modeling their rocket's trajectory, stability and aerodynamics. As a dynamics sub-team member this fall, she is helping design the airframe for the new rocket the team will launch at an intercollegiate rocket competition next year. "I love seeing how every sub-team works together," Kinney said. "No one can be an expert in every area, so we have to trust one another that every subsystem will work. It brings us closer as a team."

Want to help students like Kinney find opportunities in Aggieland? To learn how to create an endowed scholarship, contact:

AL PULLIAM '87  
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APULLIAM@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM

Sarah Kinney '24

This aerospace engineering major shares her personal flight plan for success.

# HOW TO SUCCEED

# A REACHing Hand

Max Gerall's budding friendship with a cafeteria worker inspired him to establish the nonprofit REACH to support and recognize service workers at Texas A&M University.

Many Aggies might know Melissa Martinez as the friendly cashier who worked at Sbisa Dining Hall for several years. In the few seconds it took to swipe a card, she always asked each person, "How are you doing?" Eager for their meal, many students provided short responses. For Max Gerall '18, however, her simple question of well-being became a daily conversation he highly anticipated.

Having just recovered from a grave illness, Gerall's first months at Texas A&M University were difficult. Unsure of himself and yearning for home, he came to consider Martinez as "Momma Mel."

"She was the first person on campus to make me feel welcomed," he said. "She was the beacon of light that got me through school."

As their friendship grew, Martinez opened Gerall's eyes to a population he calls "essential Aggies," the essential workers who cook, clean and maintain Aggieland behind the scenes. In 2016, Martinez introduced Gerall to Maria Hernandez, another Sbisa employee whom he knew only as the woman who cooked delicious omelets. He was shocked to learn that Hernandez and her 10-year-old daughter were homeless. "She was looking after all these Aggies, but no one was watching out for her," he shared. "I knew I needed to do something."

## The Research for REACH

For the next 18 months, Gerall learned as much as he could about essential Aggies. He was disheartened to learn of the immense struggles many faced, and as a young college student, he wondered what he and other Aggies could offer. "We had time, knowledge and a commitment to selfless service," he said. "That's how REACH started."

REACH, which stands for respect, empowerment, aspiration, community and hope, originated in 2017 as a nonprofit with a mission to provide mutually beneficial engagements between college students and the campus service workforce. In 2018, REACH hosted its first pop-up clinics and health and wellness fairs on campus, staffed by students from the Health Science Center.

In its first two years, REACH served more than 400 workers and their immediate families. Supplementing REACH, the student organization AgsREACH was formed and partnered with BUILD, a student organization dedicated to setting up portable medical clinics, to construct a free campus health clinic for service workers. "The selflessness of Aggies has always been evident," Gerall shared. "AgsREACH connects an Aggie's desire to serve with a community that truly deserves help."

## Shared Transformation

Today, REACH has more than 400 student volunteers, interns, and faculty and community partners. With a focus on health and wellness, education and homeownership, REACH aims to end social and financial inequities in college towns across the country.

Through a combined 200,000 service hours at Texas A&M alone, REACH has distributed 400,000 pounds of produce, raised \$165,000 for COVID-19 relief, helped diagnose 65 essential workers with diabetes, started 30 minority-owned businesses and provided 51 homeownership journey kits that have already helped six participants become homeowners. One day, Gerall hopes REACH will create a transitional housing community where families can invest in themselves and have access to integrated health and financial services.

While REACH prioritizes improving the lives of essential campus workers, it also transforms student mindsets. One such student, Logan Miertschin '22, was shy and reserved before getting involved with REACH and had chosen to study chemical engineering to secure a high-paying job. After working with the organization for a year, Miertschin forfeited the high-paying job he had secured after graduation to join the Peace Corps in Ghana.

"REACH trains future leaders to have the mindset of meeting families where they are and allowing those families to drive the solutions we provide," Gerall explained. "Students' eyes are opened to the world. When they graduate, they take their hearts of service with them."

## Valued Voices

As REACH expands, it ensures that its programs reflect the needs of the community it serves through an advisory board composed of essential workers. Cathy Robinson, a board member who oversees custodial teams for all Corps of Cadets' dorms as assistant unit director, met Gerall in 2018 as he was pulling a wagon around campus with oranges and water for workers.

Asking for her input on employees' real needs, Gerall began talking about his desire to build a program to serve essential Aggies. "Max is a guardian angel," Robinson shared. "The fact that he asked what this community needed meant the most. Max has a heart that cares about everyone. He would reach out to help anyone, and he does every day with REACH." ©

*Do you know an Aggie who serves selflessly like Max Gerall '18? Let our editor know at [dreader@txamfoundation.com](mailto:dreader@txamfoundation.com), and they could be featured in a future issue.*



“Max has a heart that cares about everyone. He would reach out to help anyone, and he does every day with REACH.”

—CATHY ROBINSON  
CUSTODIAL SUPERVISOR &  
REACH COMMUNITY ADVISORY  
BOARD MEMBER

## Taking Shape

Though the iconic all-Corps Block T tradition has been held sporadically since 1915, its history speaks to the Corps of Cadets' unity and ingenuity.



After a grueling first half against Auburn in 2021, the halftime whistle ushered the Aggies back to the locker room and set an intricate plan in motion. Within minutes, the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band erupted into "The Aggie War Hymn" as more than 2,200 members of the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets shuffled onto the field to get in position on the visiting sideline and behind the north endzone. Their task was deceptively simple: On cue, find your place and stand still. But the effort and coordination behind forming the iconic Block T on Kyle Field speaks to the unity

and determination that has defined the Corps since its inception.

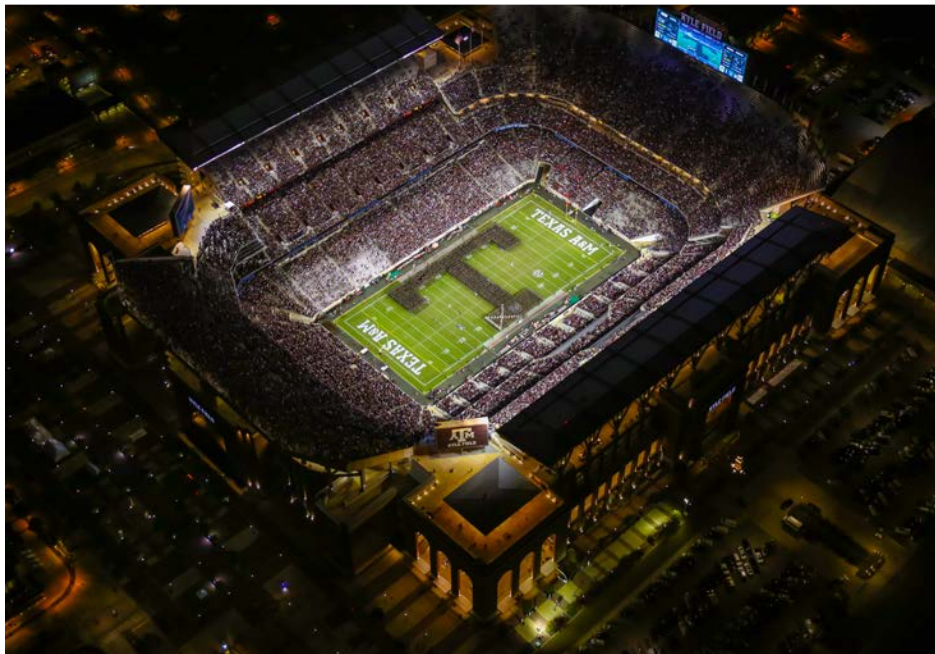
Until 1915, the Texas A&M football team and their rivals, The University of Texas, had faced off in Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio—but never College Station. The campus atmosphere before their first meeting at Kyle Field was electric. According to The Battalion, Head Yell Leader Wrathall "Runt" Hansen '16 led a "pep rally" the evening before the game where cadets rehearsed "snake dance maneuvers," forming "four abreast in three columns and then shifting formation to that of a gigantic 'T.'"

On that fateful day, cadets performed the T at halftime as practiced, and the Aggies prevailed in a 13-0 upset. Two years later, current and former cadets famously branded the score into the Longhorn mascot's hide, purportedly inspiring its name, Bevo. The University of Texas officially disputes this claim.

In the following years, cadets continued forming the Block T with slight changes in method and presentation. The 1922 yearbook describes students marching to "Pop Goes the Weasel" before forming the T and raising colored handkerchiefs to split the letter into alter-

nating maroon and white halves. However, due to postwar circumstances and a lack of coordination, the Corps performed the Block T more sporadically.

By the time the late William Dorsey '57 was appointed Head Yell Leader in 1956, the tradition had been on hiatus throughout his time in College Station. Dorsey, sentimental to Old Army ways, was determined to resurrect it, eventually approaching band director Col. E.V. Adams '29 for permission. Adams agreed on the condition that band members cut their performance short to make time for the forma-



tion. "He also told me the big requirement was permission from 'the Bear,' Coach Paul Bryant," Dorsey later wrote, "and I could tell he believed that might be 'tough' (meaning impossible)."

The band voted yes. Bryant voted no. The day after Dorsey learned of the coach's rejection secondhand, he talked past several athletic staff to convince Bryant in person, rattling off his fervent pitch in Bryant's office. Finally, the legendary coach looked up and said, "Hell, son, if it means that much to you, go ahead." With the Bear's approval, Dorsey called upon his con-

nections with Corps leadership, and the formation went off without a hitch on Nov. 17, 1956. "The spirit of Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets was demonstrated that day and showed clearly what our school is all about and why," Dorsey said.

Despite Dorsey's successful effort, another markedly longer hiatus befell the all-Corps Block T. The tradition lay dormant for 55 years before its revival at the Military Appreciation Game against Kansas on Nov. 19, 2011. The Corps has since formed the Block T during a home game every year except 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Planning typically begins at the onset of the fall semester and involves securing tickets for every cadet, mapping out field entry points and careful practice. Dr. Russell Tipton, senior associate director of bands, described the effort it takes just to chart out where everyone will stand. "With the band, we chart for 350 to 400 cadets," he stated. "Charting for the entire Corps, even just the one formation, requires counting 2,000 to 2,500 positions." When each cadet is assigned their spot, the entire Corps rehearses once at the John D. White '70 – Robert L. Walker '58 Music Activities Cen-

ter and again on Kyle Field a week before the chosen game.

All the planning pays off in an inspiring sight: a small army of cadets from all walks of life gathering together with precision to become a collective greater than themselves. Once in formation, the cadets "hump it" before scattering across the field and back up the stands to rejoin the 12th Man. When the football team returns moments later, the cadets are exactly where they should be—standing together. ©

## A Reason to Smile

The Texas A&M University School of Dentistry's newest clinic is filling a statewide need, setting a national standard and giving plenty of people a reason to smile.

Through the lens of a 4D ultrasound, new parents-to-be Anabel and Javier Mondragon excitedly waited to see their 25-week-old baby. Anabel grew anxious as she learned her Juliana would face the same challenges she experienced growing up: She would be born with a unilateral cleft lip and possible cleft palate. Heartbroken knowing her daughter would likely endure the same cruelty because she looked different from other children, the young mother mentally prepared herself. "I would teach my daughter to have confidence and remind her each day how beautiful she was."

At 5 years old, the name-calling began. "Before I could ask my daughter if she was okay, she immediately said: 'I look different because not all God's masterpieces are the same. I'm beautiful, and there is no other Juliana like me!'"

What Anabel feared for her daughter is the same fear parents around the world experience for children born with special needs. And while bullying is enough to set any parent on edge, they also face a challenge that many don't realize exists: finding quality dental care.

### Patients Losing Patience

A pediatric dental residency at Howard University in Washington, D.C., opened Dr. Dan Burch's eyes to "special care patients," or those who encompass more than just spe-

cial needs. The freshly coated dentist saw patients who were sick or had physical limitations and others who could not maintain their own oral care for various reasons, and he suspected that this population's dental needs were not being fulfilled.

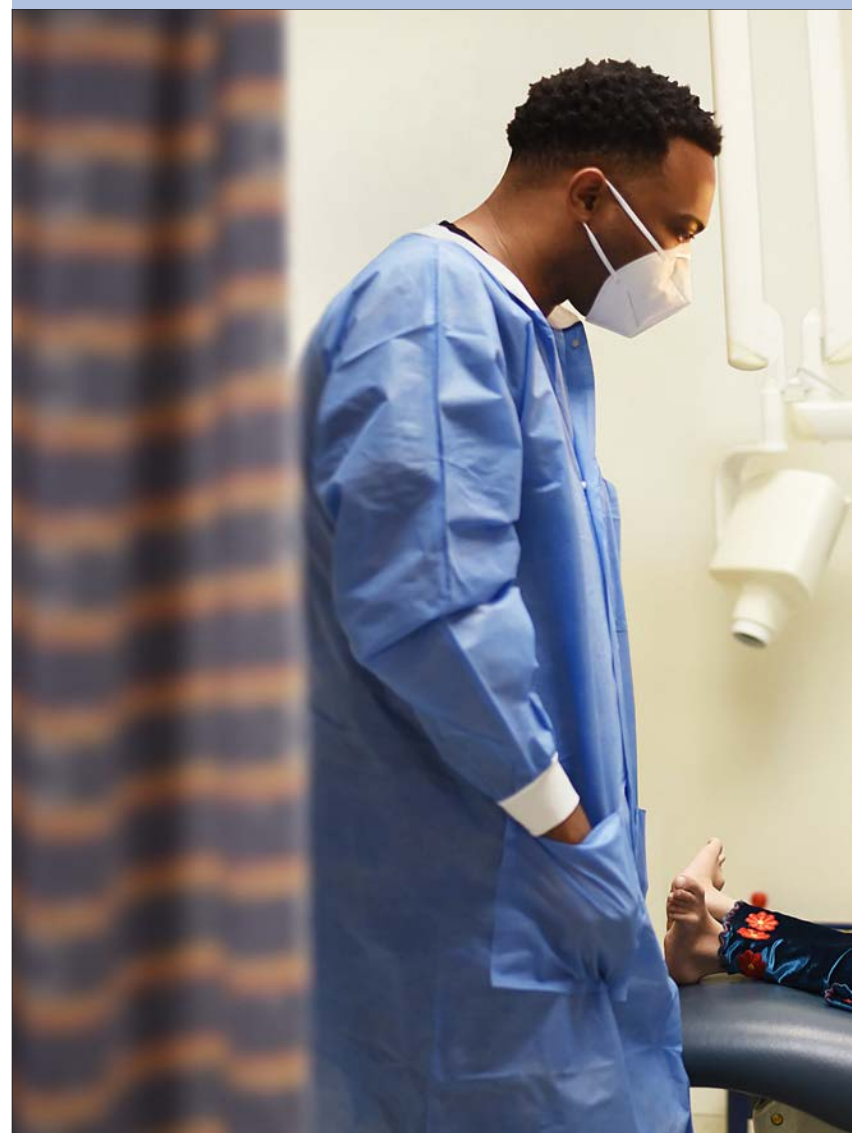
Meeting a new patient in 2017, Burch—then clinical assistant professor at the School of Dentistry's Department of Pediatric Dentistry—confirmed his suspicions. "A patient had cerebral palsy and had to be treated in her wheelchair, but no private practices would do it," he said. "Her mother had been bouncing around dental offices for 10 years trying to find someone to clean her daughter's teeth. I cleaned them and immediately realized that it was our dental school's responsibility to educate students on special care patients as a safety net for the Dallas-Fort Worth area."

Burch was right. Research later proved that only five of Dallas' 3,000 dentists serve this population, and the majority only accept private insurance. "There are about 300,000 people locally with special needs, however, and less than 5% of them have private insurance," Burch noted.

Armed with this knowledge, he got to work. "I presented my cause to my department in 2018 after the school underwent reaccreditation. The Commission on Dental Accreditation was working on a similar accreditation initiative knowing

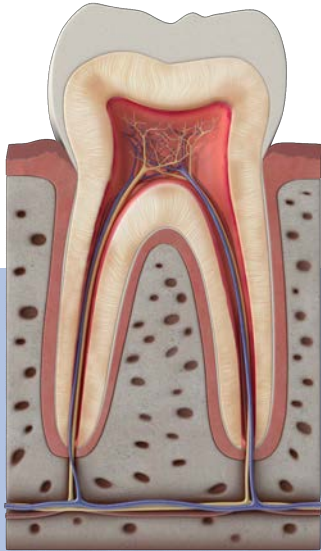
"I'd like us to be known not only as the program that set the national standard for special care dentistry, but also the premier training program in the country."

—DR. DAN BURCH



## What's Next

*After special care dental patients age out of pediatric dental care, the number of general dentists trained to treat them is next to none. As a result, this population often experiences higher rates of cavities, gum issues and tooth loss.*



*Dr. Dan Burch (left) is one of only a handful of dentists in the Dallas-Fort Worth area who treat special care patients, but he's aiming to change that through a new training program at the School of Dentistry.*

it would be a future concern.” The dean assembled a team and asked Burch to find a way to educate students on how to treat special care patients. With a grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, a new special care dentistry fellowship pilot program was born in 2020.

### Aggies Set the Standard

Today's fellowship meets a growing need for children, 99% of whom are Medicaid patients. Dr. Burch, two fellows and a small group of full-time employees rotate to various children's hospitals and clinics because they lack a dedicated patient space. Dr. Lianna Pulliam '21, a fellow, spends 80-90% of her time with special care patients. “I've learned how to treat patients in accommodating spaces and those that offer the bare minimum,” she shared.

To achieve maximum impact, this program needs a central clinic, more staff and a curriculum to educate all Texas A&M dental students, growing an awareness of the need and practitioners to fill it. The Crystal Charity Ball—a nonprofit established in 1952 to aid children's charities in Dallas County—recently committed to working with the dental school to raise \$1.6 million. A generous donation from the Hillcrest Foundation will join these funds to help the program in its goal to become self-sustaining in three

years and exceed 6,000 annual patient visits—a 33% increase in oral care for children with special needs.

Burch now leads the new national postgraduate standard for accreditation in special care dentistry and sees the program's growth and clinic's establishment as opportunities for the School of Dentistry to distinguish itself from its peers. “I'd like us to be known not only as the program that set the national standard for special care dentistry, but also the premier training program in the country,” he said.

Pulliam, who works alongside Burch to treat around 100 special care patients like Juliana per week, believes that awareness will come once dental students are trained. She also works with Anabel, now a dental assistant who shares her own journey to inspire other parents of children with birth defects. “It's humbling to work with these patients,” Pulliam said with tears in her eyes. “Being more inclusive of this population needs to start somewhere. Why not here?” ©

*Want to help the Texas A&M School of Dentistry set a national standard and improve countless children's lives? Learn how you can make a difference by contacting:*

IAN WILSON '13  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 214.828.8156  
IWILSON@TXAMFOUNDATION.COM





The air thick with restless anticipation, I stood surrounded by Aggies next to the 12th Man statue, eager to hear the results of the 2022 student body elections. The crowd's anxious chatter silenced as the election commissioner took the microphone, ready to reveal Texas A&M University's next student leaders.

As the names were called, I experienced a growing sense of suspense and unease. After what felt like an eternity, I finally heard the words, "For the Class of 2024, or junior class president..." Two weeks

of campaigning circled through my mind: Lifelong friendships, priceless conversations, exciting speaking engagements and busy planning had led me to this moment. While I wish I could finish that sentence with "Mamie Hertel," that was not the name spoken that evening.

As my nervous excitement fizzled into disappointment, I went home and allowed myself to feel down for one evening before picking up and moving on. I reminded myself of how much I cherished campaigning and thanked the Aggies who had supported me. A week

later, I unexpectedly received an email from Stephanie Hertzog '96, for whom I had written a brief biography in a Texas A&M Foundation article highlighting successful women in engineering.

*"I saw on LinkedIn that you ran for class president, and I assume from your nod to Christian, you didn't win. I just wanted to let you know I'm so impressed you put yourself out there. I didn't have the courage to run for class office at Texas A&M. I still remember when Brooke (Leslie) Rollins '94 was elected the first female student body president when I was a student. Women so rarely won any kind of elected position when I was there. It's great to see more women running, and eventually, we'll win our share. Life's disappointments shape us—in many ways, more so than our successes. Keep going for it!"*

Despite our interactions being limited to a handful of emails, Stephanie's words are on my bathroom mirror to read every day. Her

advice encourages me to be vulnerable and to know both success and failure. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "[the credit belongs to the man] who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Thank you, Stephanie, for reminding me to put myself in the arena, dare greatly and learn from my failures just as much as my successes. ☺

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mamie Hertel '24 is an agricultural communications and journalism student from Moore, Montana, where she grew up on a farm and ranch. She loves spending time with her miniature dachshund, Winnie, reading Brené Brown books and going for runs even though she despised running the warm-up lap in high school PE class.

# in the arena

One Aggie taught me that life is often shaped more by our failures than successes.



ST-NIC

By LORI FERGUSON

# Yuletide Cheer

Maroon Santa spreads the holiday spirit to student veterans' families.

In 2017, rising senior David Isenhour Jr. '18 was considering ways to give back to Texas A&M University when a family tradition sprang to mind. "My parents always held a big neighborhood party where Santa came and distributed gifts," he recalled. "It was a special time for me as a kid."

Thinking of the university's more than 1,100 student veterans, he brainstormed a concept wherein students could fundraise to pur-

**"The community's support means the world to us. We had a support system in the military, and now we feel like we have family here at Texas A&M."**

—JOSHUA TEAGUE '24, STUDENT VETERAN

chase Christmas wish-list items for student veterans' children and employ Santa to deliver them at an annual event. "Selfless service is one of Texas A&M's core values, and Aggieland has a proud reputation as a veteran-friendly campus," he explained. And with that, the Maroon Santa program was born.

In its fifth year in 2021, Maroon Santa impacted 40 children from 18 veteran families. And if David Jr. has his way, every student veteran on campus will eventually benefit. "We want our student veterans to feel how much they're val-

ued by the entire Aggie community and ensure that every student veteran's child has a great Christmas."

Parents Denise and David Sr. Isenhour were so moved by the event that in October 2021, they pledged a \$25,000 endowment in their son's name to provide permanent support for the program. "David Sr. and I view this endowment as a terrific way to honor our son and serve those who serve us," said Denise, past president of the Austin Aggie Moms' Club. "We love our military families."

Joshua Teague '24, a student veteran whose four children enjoyed the holiday festivities at Maroon Santa last year, is beyond appreciative. "The Aggie community's support means the world to us," he said. "We had a support system in the military, and now we feel like we have family here at Texas A&M."

Director of the Don & Ellie Knauss Veteran Resource & Support Center, Col. Jerry Smith '82 (USMC, Ret.) is grateful for the support offered to student veterans and the increased visibility the event affords the center. "Budgets are tight for our student veteran families, so Maroon Santa is a big help. It also draws student veterans into our center and allows us to highlight other program offerings."

As the program continues, David Jr. hopes more Aggies will

experience the joy of giving back. "Don't underestimate the power of getting involved, in big ways or small, through monetary contributions or by volunteering your time," he urged. "Find something on campus you're passionate about, get involved and stay involved. You'll reap dividends, as will the university." ©

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, MAROON SANTA CAN GROW AND TOUCH THE LIVES OF MORE STUDENT VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES. TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROGRAM'S ENDOWMENT, CONTACT:

DAVID BACOT '90  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
TEXAS A&M FOUNDATION  
800.392.3310 OR 979.473.9065  
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## Hullabaloo on the Moon

“The Aggie War Hymn” resounded higher than ever as the Aggie Spirit reached the moon nearly 50 years ago to wake up the Apollo 17 crew on Dec. 13, 1972.

Gerry Griffin '56, the lead flight director in mission control, selected a Singing Cadets recording of the song as the seventh day's wake-up call to share his maroon and white pride with the team, including

astronaut and mission commander Eugene Cernan (below). The spirit was lost on the Purdue University graduate, who remarked, “I’ve woke up to a lot of pleasant thoughts, but never to an Aggie before.”

Apollo 17 marked the last manned trip to the moon, and Cernan and his two crewmates performed geological surveys and scientific experiments during the 13-day mission. It was not, however, the last

time the notes of Aggieland reached the stars. During his time as the Johnson Space Center director, Griffin played the war hymn in 1983 to wake the STS-7 space shuttle crew each morning. The war hymn and “The Spirit of Aggieland” also served as wake-up calls during space shuttle missions in 2006 and 2008 in honor of mission specialist Col. Michael Fossum '80.

