

12th Man

2020 | VOLUME 25, NO. 2

FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES
IN SUPPORT OF CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS



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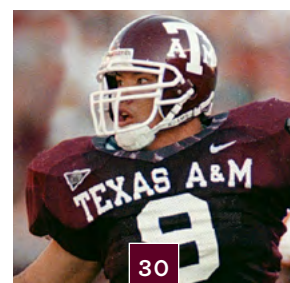


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COVER PHOTO BY CRAIG BISACRE/TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS
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12th Man

2020 | VOLUME 25, NO. 2



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



TO OUR DONORS,

Tough. Flexible. Optimistic. This is a mantra that my fellow longtime staff member Chris Carson coined many years ago for the 12th Man Foundation ticket office, but it seems to hold more weight today than ever before.

Since March, many of us have faced challenges due to the COVID-19 health crisis as well as the unrest in our society. In the midst of current challenges, our staff remains focused

on our commitment to respect, service, accuracy and excellence in every interaction with donors as we continue our journey to be the best.

Our organization is named after a tradition of unity and the willingness of Aggies to serve when called upon. During this time of uncertainty, the donors and season ticket holders who make up the membership of this organization have embodied the spirit of the 12th Man in an extraordinary way. Shining examples of that spirit are the nearly 2,000 donors who have combined to give back over \$5 million of their refunded 2020 football season ticket investment in support of Aggie Athletics.

While our challenges are far from over, it is evident that due to the unwavering passion of 12th Man Foundation donors, Texas A&M Athletics will continue its pursuit of championships. Our incredible donors and the more than 600 Aggie student-athletes they help support make up a team that we are all extremely proud of.

When Aggie football officially kicked off the 2020 season on Sept. 26, it exemplified the tremendous effort by the staffs of the 12th Man Foundation and Texas A&M Athletics over the past seven months, and it is a moment that will forever be ingrained in my memory. Witnessing our student-athletes have the opportunity to represent our university in competition fills me with hope for better days ahead.

Thank you for your generosity and for your understanding as we continue to navigate the challenges surrounding college athletics during this time. As we move forward, our staff will remain committed to our donors, season ticket holders and Chris Carson's mantra – tough, flexible and optimistic.

Gig 'em!



Travis Dabney '96
President & CEO



STAFF UPDATES

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



Christina Webster
Senior Director of Development



Alyssa Zizzo '21
Coordinator of Suites & Clubs

In other staff news, the 12th Man Foundation is proud to announce the promotion of Adrienne Pace to Manager of Donor Services.



REBECCA CREEK DONATES HAND SANITIZER

In response to the COVID-19 health crisis, Rebecca Creek Distillery donated 25 gallons and 60 bottles of Love, Distilled, its alcohol-based hand cleaner to the 12th Man Foundation. Rebecca Creek Distillery shifted their production of ultra-premium spirits to alcohol-based hand cleaners to respond to the national shortage of hand sanitizers and the growing needs of first responders. "We are proud to support our fellow Aggies and want to help them resume to normalcy safely by providing Love, Distilled," said John Morrow, Co-Owner of Rebecca Creek Distillery.

NEW SWIMMING & DIVING FACILITY NAMED

The Anne S. & Henry B. "Hank" Paup '70 Pavilion Texas A&M Swimming & Diving is the name for A&M's new state-of-the-art swimming and diving facility. Paup Pavilion, which broke ground in the fall of 2019, is named for lead donors Anne & Henry B. "Hank" Paup '70. "When I was on the swimming team at Texas A&M (1966-70), I could never have imagined having the opportunity to contribute back to the swimming and diving program with this expansion to our current world-class natatorium," said Hank Paup. "The addition of locker rooms, coaches' offices and training facilities will greatly enhance the resources our student-athletes need to train and compete at the highest level. Anne and I are honored to be in a position to share some of our lifelong blessings in order to lead on this project." The facility is scheduled to be completed this fall, with a grand opening slated for January 2021.



ELDRIDGE NAMED TOP 30 HONOREE FOR NCAA WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Raena Eldridge of the Texas A&M women's swimming and diving team was named a Top 30 honoree for the 2020 NCAA Woman of the Year Award. The Top 30 honorees advanced from a record 605 nominees and include 10 student-athletes from each of the three NCAA divisions who have demonstrated excellence in academics, athletics, community service and leadership. Eldridge graduated from A&M in May with degrees in animal science and genetics, while also earning a business minor. She boasted a 3.979 cumulative GPA through her five years in Aggieland and is currently attending the NC State College of Veterinary Medicine. The Rockwall, Texas, native was named the Arthur Ashe, Jr., Female Sports Scholar of the Year, awarded to one male and one female student-athlete that exhibit academic excellence as well as community activism in addition to their athletic contributions. For the second year in a row, Eldridge was named the Bill Erwin Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

TEBOW NAMED WINNER OF BRAD DAVIS SEC COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Texas A&M equestrian's Ann Elizabeth Tebow was named the winner of the 2019-20 Brad Davis Southeastern Conference Community Service Leader of the Year award. Chosen by a committee of Faculty Athletics Representatives from SEC universities, Tebow received a \$10,000 post-graduate scholarship, provided by the SEC. As president of the Texas A&M Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, Tebow coordinated and orchestrated community projects throughout the Brazos Valley including REVved Up to Reed, Aggies Move, Aggies BUILD and the largest student-athlete run food drive in the nation, Aggies CAN, which funded over 50,000 meals. Following her graduation from A&M in May, Tebow began pursuing her medical doctorate at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in Oklahoma City.



BISHOP TABBED 2020 SEC OUTDOOR SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Distance runner Jon Bishop was voted as the 2020 SEC Outdoor Track and Field Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Bishop was also named the SEC Indoor Scholar-Athlete of the Year during the 2019-20 academic year. The College Station native previously was named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll and was honored with the Classroom Excellence Award for outstanding work in advanced calculus. Bishop held a 3.936 GPA and graduated from Texas A&M in May with a bachelor's degree in applied mathematical sciences with a computational emphasis. Bishop is pursuing a master's of computer science at A&M this fall and plans to compete during the 2021 outdoor season. "I know there is so much more in store for Texas A&M track and field next year," Bishop said.



SYKORA NAMED TO TEXAS SPORTS HALL OF FAME BALLOT

Former Texas A&M volleyball player and Olympic silver medalist Stacy Sykora was named to the Texas Sports Hall of Fame Ballot for the Class of 2021. Sykora was a four-year letter winner for the Texas A&M volleyball team from 1995-98, finishing her 1997 season ranked ninth in the country in digs per game. The two-time All-American joined the United States National Team in 1999, just one month after completing her four-year career at Texas A&M. The Burleson, Texas, native was a three-time Olympian, participating in the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games – the first Texas A&M student-athlete to compete in three Olympic Games. In 2010, Sykora was selected as the USA Volleyball Indoor Female Athlete of the Year. She played professionally for 12 years and was inducted in the Texas A&M Athletics Hall of Fame in 2005. Sykora also lettered in track and basketball while at Texas A&M.





TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

THE B.L.U.E.PRINT

Student-athlete led organization established to provide leadership opportunities and a sense of community

WHILE ATTENDING A BLACK STUDENT-ATHLETE summit in January, Karlina Sample became inspired to create a club at Texas A&M for Black women student-athletes. Following the death of George Floyd in May, Sample decided to expand the idea to include both Black men and women student-athletes.

In August, with the help of four fellow student-athletes and the full support of Director of Athletics Ross Bjork and Deputy Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Experience Kristen Brown, Sample’s vision became a reality with the creation of The B.L.U.E.print – Black Leaders who Undertake Excellence.

The B.L.U.E.print will allow for Black student-athletes to feel comfortable in a space where friendships can be made, experiences can be discussed and concerns can be expressed. The student-athlete led organization will play a large role in the enhancement of a student-athlete’s overall collegiate experience.

“I am really proud of our student-athletes who

have created The B.L.U.E.print organization,” said Bjork, “and I appreciate their leadership and collaboration with our athletics staff and the thoughtful and intentional approach to making our program the best it can be. I also commend this leadership group for developing most of these plans in early 2020, well before the current social strife impacted our nation. This vision will allow this plan to have a long-term impact for current and future Aggies.”

The vision of The B.L.U.E.print is to enhance the overall student-athlete experience for Black men and women. It will aim to teach Black student-athletes self-love, while empowering them to be their authentic selves in predominantly white spaces. It will educate, equip and empower Black student-athletes to understand their value and worth in society.

The B.L.U.E.print will be an all-inclusive organization providing community outreach events, and will also offer exclusive educational sessions on the second Tuesday of every month. ■

Pictured above, left to right, the founding members of The B.L.U.E.print are Chase Lane (Treasurer, Football), Karlina Sample (President, Soccer), Keldrick Carper (Community Relations Coordinator, Football), Jean Jenkins (Social Media Coordinator, Women’s Track & Field) and Ciera Johnson (Vice President, Women’s Basketball).

For more information about The B.L.U.E.print, follow on social media at @blueprinttam (Twitter/Instagram)

RAISING THE BAR

Texas A&M student-athletes complete the best academic year in school history

DESPITE FACING UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES from a global health crisis, Texas A&M student-athletes continue to thrive in the classroom and remarkably recorded the best academic year in Aggie Athletics history in 2019-20, setting records in grade-point averages and Athletics Director’s Honor Roll selections.

The Aggies’ record-breaking spring semester included a 3.4 GPA and 390 student-athletes with AD Honor Roll recognition for receiving a 3.0 GPA or better. For the first time ever, A&M turned in a cumulative GPA above a 3.0.

“We’re incredibly proud of our student-athletes and congratulate them for being part of a new benchmark for academic success,” Director of Athletics Ross Bjork said.

The Aggies produced tremendous success in the classroom last fall, setting a new record for the best GPA for a fall semester in A&M history (2.977). There were 325 student-athletes selected to the AD Honor Roll, which is the second-highest mark for a fall semester.

These amazing academic achievements would not be possible without the support provided by 12th Man Foundation donors. From an award-winning Student-Athlete Services staff to all of the technology and opportunities available at every

“
TO ACCOMPLISH THESE ACCOLADES DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES SPEAKS VOLUMES OF OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES’ CHARACTER AND COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE.

— JOE FIELDS



student-athlete’s fingertips, the resources that donors help provide are the keys to A&M’s success in the classroom and beyond.

“One of our primary objectives is to make sure the student-athlete experience is the best in all of college athletics,” said Bjork, “and equipping students to succeed at a higher level is always a priority.”

The Student-Athlete Services staff logged approximately 32,000 appointments with student-athletes during the 2019-20 academic year including nearly 6,000 virtual appointments in the spring due to COVID-19. The staff, which is led by Senior Athletics Director of Student-Athlete Services Joe Fields, was recognized with the 2020 Advising Team Award by the Texas A&M University Advisors and Counselors.

“We are extremely proud of our student-athletes’ academic accomplishments,” Fields said. “To accomplish these accolades during unprecedented times speaks volumes of our student-athletes’ character and commitment to excellence. We are very fortunate to have outstanding leadership and coaches that support our student-athletes’ academic pursuits.”

The Alice and Erle Nye '59 Academic Center inside the Bright Football Complex houses the Center for Student-Athlete Services which provides academic support to more than 600 Aggie student-athletes in 20 sports.

If you are interested in making a gift to support student-athletes in the classroom, contact the Major Gifts office at 979-260-7595.

Donor Support Makes this Possible

\$28,960



*In-State Tuition, Room, Board,
Fees and Cost of Attendance*

\$5,554



*Athletic Performance
and Nutrition*

\$3,309



*Academic Support and
Student Development*

\$2,248



*Equipment, Gear
and Uniforms*

\$2,100



Sports Medicine

\$42,171

*Average Annual Cost
Per In-State Scholarship
Student-Athlete*

As a 12th Man Foundation donor, you are the backbone of Texas A&M Athletics, and your financial support is essential to providing more than 600 Aggie student-athletes with the resources to be successful.

**WE CAN'T DO WHAT
WE DO WITHOUT YOU**



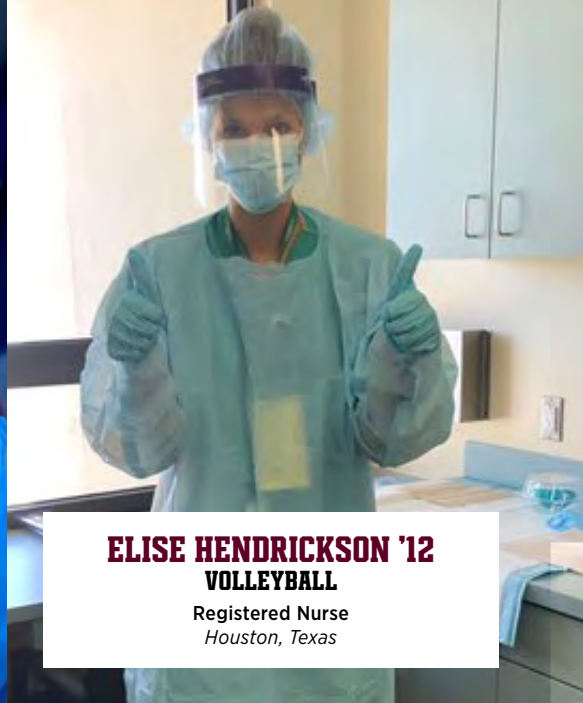
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EQUESTRIAN

Physician Assistant
Houston, Texas



SEDRICK CURRY-ROBINETT '98
FOOTBALL

Fire Department Inspector
Houston, Texas



ELISE HENDRICKSON '12
VOLLEYBALL

Registered Nurse
Houston, Texas



DR. KIP CORRINGTON '87
FOOTBALL

Family Medicine Physician
Oak Ridge, N.C.

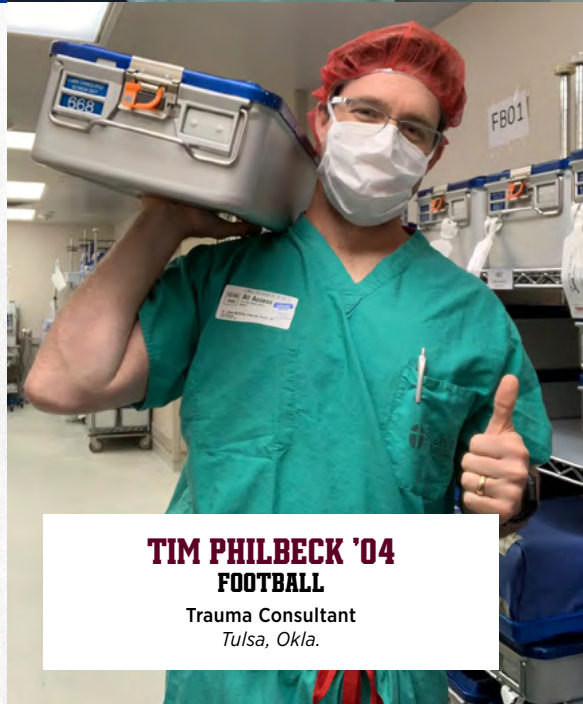
TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

LETTERMEN ON THE FRONT LINE

These former student-athletes represent the many Aggies who are making a difference by helping to keep their communities healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your service!

SEE MORE LETTERMEN ON THE FRONT LINE AT WWW.AGGIELETTERMEN.ORG/FRONTLINELETTERMEN



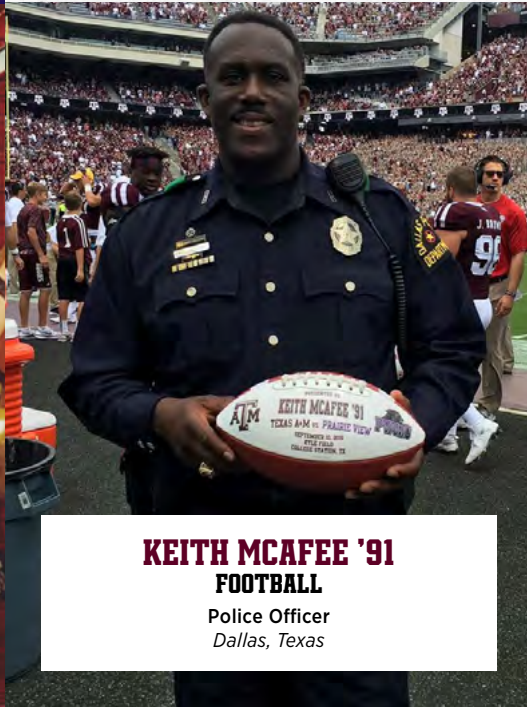
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FOOTBALL

Trauma Consultant
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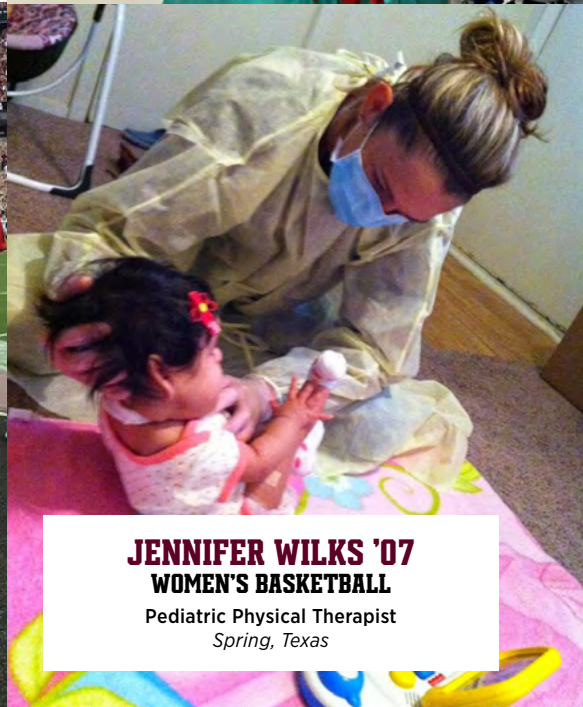
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SOFTBALL

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Huntington Beach, Calif.



KEITH MCAFEE '91
FOOTBALL

Police Officer
Dallas, Texas



JENNIFER WILKS '07
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Pediatric Physical Therapist
Spring, Texas

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Chris Valletta is a prime example of a former A&M student-athlete who is making a difference in a time of need

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

FOOTBALL SEASON TICKET HOLDERS RECEIVED an unexpected package in the mail prior to Texas A&M's 2020 season opener.

Enclosed was a Mission face mask and neck gaiter, both featuring the 12th Man Foundation logo, that were made possible by personal contributions from the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees and the help of Aggie football letterman Chris Valletta '00.

As co-founder and general manager of Mission, Valletta stepped up when called upon to help deliver the high-quality face coverings to season ticket holders in a timely fashion during the busiest period in his company's 12-year history.

"Chris was extremely supportive of our Board of Trustees' initiative to promote a safe environment at Kyle Field with this gift to our loyal season ticket holders," said Travis Dabney, 12th Man Foundation President & CEO. "We are deeply appreciative of Chris and our Trustees for going above and beyond to make this possible."

For Valletta, the decision to help was a no-brainer.

"I'll do anything I can to support Texas A&M Athletics, the 12th Man Foundation and the Lettermen's Association," said Valletta, who spent his offseason at A&M calling donors to raise money for The Zone as a 12th Man Foundation student worker. "I'm all in because I know how important the 12th Man Foundation is in the grand scheme of supporting our athletes not only athletically, but in preparing them for life after sports."

Established in 2008, Mission is a temperature technology company created to provide instant cooling gear to active consumers. Partnering with the likes of superstar athletes Drew Brees, Dwyane Wade and Serena Williams as investors, Mission has sold over 40 million products in the last seven



years through major retailers all over the country.

While the company's neck gaiters have always been a popular item, sales have grown exponentially due to the COVID-19 health crisis.

"We went from selling between 500,000 and one million neck gaiters per year prior to the pandemic to selling one million per week," said Valletta, who proudly serves as a mentor for current Aggie students who are aspiring entrepreneurs.

Mission was fortunate, says Valletta, to have the infrastructure and relationships in place to manage the incredible increase in demand. And like so many former A&M student-athletes, Valletta has gone above and beyond to help others during this unprecedented time.

As one of the athletes who helped remove logs following the Bonfire collapse, Valletta vividly remembers every moment from the tragedy and every play from the Texas game. "I especially remember a moment in the huddle when we were close to the goal line," he said. "I looked down the line and everyone's arms were covered in bloody scratches from carrying those logs. I remember thinking just how bigger this whole thing was than just a game."

A NOTE FROM THE TEXAS A&M LETTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Celebrating the accomplishments of our amazing student-athletes is an immense source of pride for Texas A&M Athletics, the Lettermen's Association and the 12th Man Foundation. Their achievements on the field of competition make headlines and continue to live on in Aggie lore, but what many times goes unseen is the positive impact that these Aggies make far beyond their time as student-athletes on campus.

There are countless and powerful stories of success from former student-athletes who are now improving their communities as leaders, business owners, front-line workers, teachers, coaches and in so many other meaningful ways. I stand especially proud of our front line Aggies who have stepped up to help others during these uniquely challenging times.

The successes of our former athletes stand out as testaments to the transformative nature of a scholarship and the impact that Texas A&M's unrivaled support of student-athletes can make in the life of a young person. It should also stand out as a particular source of pride for 12th Man Foundation donors to see the investment they have made and continue to make in Aggie student-athletes play such an important role in paving the way for a lifetime of success and positive impact.

On behalf of the Texas A&M Lettermen's Association and our student-athletes, past and present, thank you for your support!



CATHY CAPPS
*Assistant Athletics
Director, Texas A&M
Lettermen's Association*

In the company's home community of Westchester County, New York, Mission donated enough money to Feeding Westchester to provide food for over one million people in need.

"Twenty percent of the population doesn't know when or where their next meal is going to come from because of the pandemic," said Valletta. "Over 80,000 of that number are kids under 10 years old."

Mission also recently stepped up in a huge way by providing \$250,000 worth of cooling products to the Gulf Coast region for the people cleaning up from hurricane damage.

"This has been an unfortunate time for a lot of people, but we have found a way to serve through it," Valletta said. "It's been one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my career."

Valletta, who gained notoriety when he appeared on the fourth season of "The Apprentice" in 2005, attributes his remarkable success in life to the skills he sharpened as a student-athlete at Texas A&M.

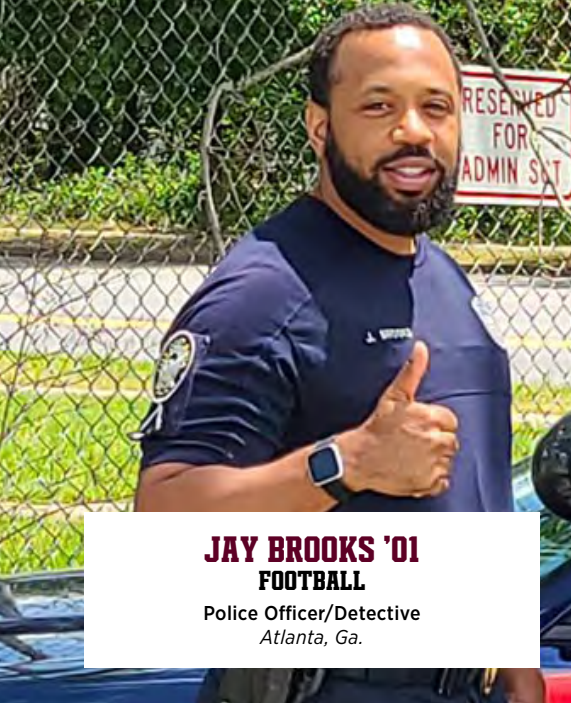
"I want that success for every student-athlete," he said. "I owe a large part of who I am today to the lessons I learned as a student-athlete under R.C. Slocum at A&M. I'm so grateful."

Valletta says that Aggies helping Aggies, particularly during this time, is extremely important.

"This is a unique time, but it's a time to invest in the future leaders of this country," Valletta said. "I believe that athletes can be extraordinary business leaders. I use the skills I learned as an athlete on a daily basis, and it has been the foundation of everything I have done in my professional career. The 12th Man Foundation is the group that enables that to happen in a big way." ■

“
**I USE THE SKILLS I LEARNED AS AN
ATHLETE ON A DAILY BASIS, AND IT HAS
BEEN THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING
I HAVE DONE IN MY PROFESSIONAL
CAREER. THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION
IS THE GROUP THAT ENABLES
THAT TO HAPPEN IN A BIG WAY.**

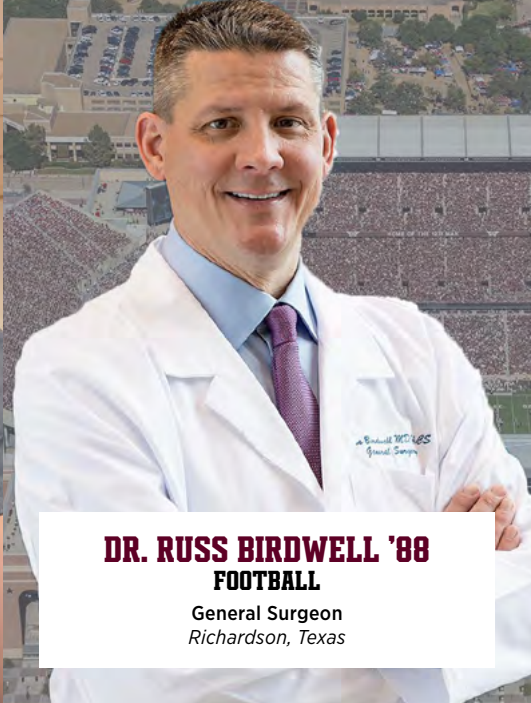
— CHRIS VALLETTA '00



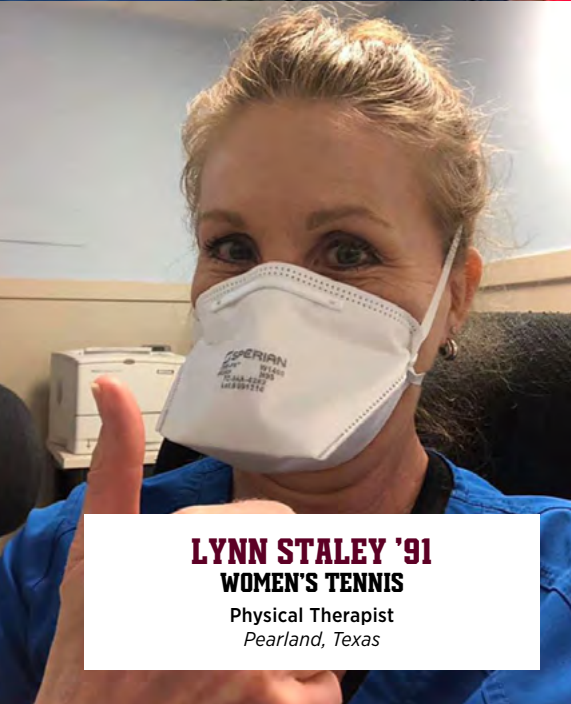
JAY BROOKS '01
FOOTBALL
Police Officer/Detective
Atlanta, Ga.



JESSICA MARTIN '03
SOCCER
Nurse Practitioner
Lewisville, Texas



DR. RUSS BIRDWELL '88
FOOTBALL
General Surgeon
Richardson, Texas



LYNN STALEY '91
WOMEN'S TENNIS
Physical Therapist
Pearland, Texas

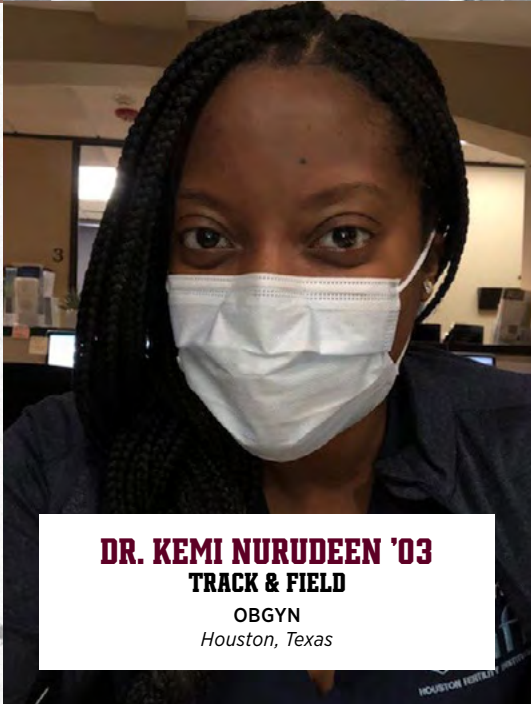
TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

LETTERMEN ON THE FRONT LINE

These former student-athletes represent the many Aggies who are making a difference by helping to keep their communities healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your service!

SEE MORE LETTERMEN ON THE FRONT LINE AT WWW.AGGIELETTERMEN.ORG/FRONTLINELETTERMEN



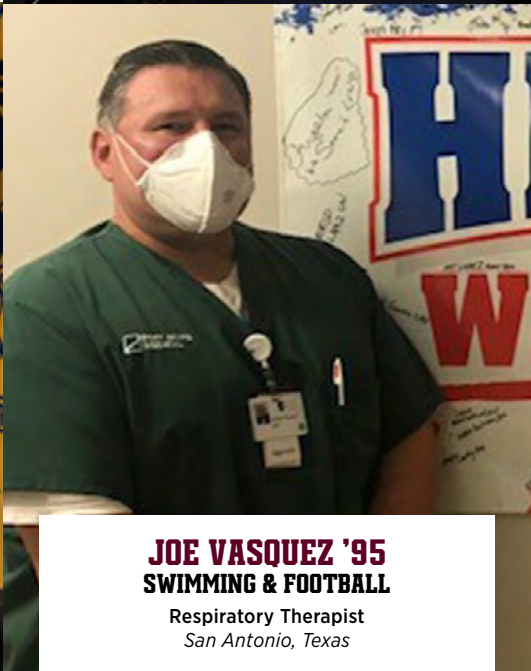
DR. KEMI NURUDEEN '03
TRACK & FIELD
OBGYN
Houston, Texas



ALBERT JONES '91
FOOTBALL
University Police Officer
San Diego, Calif.



DR. ERIN SAUBER-SCHATZ '02
WOMEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING
CDC Team Lead
Atlanta, Ga.



JOE VASQUEZ '95
SWIMMING & FOOTBALL
Respiratory Therapist
San Antonio, Texas

KRIS '81 & BRUCE PETERSEN '83

BY SAMANTHA ATCHLEY '17



Residents of San Antonio, Kris and Bruce Petersen are making a profound impact on Aggie Athletics through their philanthropic support of the 12th Man Foundation as Champions Council members and as Texas A&M football and baseball season ticket holders. The Petersens are excited about expanding their support to Buzz Williams' men's basketball program by becoming season ticket holders this year.

ONCE THEY EXPERIENCED THE SPIRIT OF AGGIELAND, there was no turning back in the eyes of Kris '81 and Bruce Petersen '83. The world-class education, life-long friendships and priceless camaraderie that came from Texas A&M has impacted their lives in countless ways, inspiring them to pay it forward with their generous commitment to the 12th Man Foundation.

A south Texas native, Kris was drawn to Texas A&M at first sight. After being introduced to Aggieland by an influential educator in her life, Kris's first experience on campus sealed the deal. Kris went on to earn a BA in Journalism and a minor in Biology from A&M, which she used in her public relations career in the health industry.

Spending his childhood between the Midwest and Houston, Bruce's decision to attend Texas A&M was partially persuaded by his family settling in the Tomball area. However, once he was close to Aggieland, his connection to A&M grew even deeper than anticipated. Bruce earned his BBA

in Finance from A&M in 1983 and has spent his professional career in investments and real estate. Bruce proudly celebrates 34 years with USAA Real Estate, where he currently serves as Executive Managing Director for the company.

Though Kris and Bruce never crossed paths while in Aggieland, Texas A&M still brought the couple together when they met as young professionals in the San Antonio A&M Club. Soon thereafter, the couple married and permanently settled in the San Antonio area where they raised their twin sons (Bryce '14 and Dane '14) and continued the tradition with their growing Aggie family.

"We started taking our boys to football games when they were pretty young," Bruce recalled. "They grew up wearing maroon and white. I think they became really comfortable with it and ended up going to A&M as well."

Today, the Petersens still reside in San Antonio though they proudly call Aggieland a second home. As Champions Council members and loyal Aggie football and baseball season ticket holders, Kris and Bruce happily return to campus every chance they get.

"With the friends we've made at A&M, we just love to get together around Aggie Athletics and enjoy the facilities," Bruce said.

“THE MORE YOU'RE EDUCATED ABOUT WHAT A&M HAS AND WHAT THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION IS DOING FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT WANT TO HELP.

— KRIS PETERSEN

Along with their dedication through season tickets, the Petersens have also provided generous philanthropic gifts that make a significant impact on the 12th Man Foundation's mission.

"When we got involved with the 12th Man Foundation, it was the right point in our life to start giving back in a meaningful way," Bruce said. "When A&M got the opportunity to go to the SEC, we felt like we had to be competitive as a university, and while it meant a lot to us that A&M could take that leap, Kris and I wanted to do our part to help make sure that happened."

And to the Petersens, the reason to continue giving back is simple. Aggies want to see other Aggies succeed.

"To me it's a no-brainer because your support is really promoting academics and giving someone a chance at an education from a great university like Texas A&M," Bruce said. "It's all about trying to help them. I worked all four years of college every week and in the summers, and that didn't leave a lot of time for anything else. I'd rather help these student-athletes focus their energy on what they love."

While they humbly view their contribution as part of a team effort, Kris and Bruce take great pride in how far Texas A&M Athletics has come and what



the programs have accomplished since their days as students on campus.

"When you drive up and see these facilities, it just makes me so proud that our school has them," Kris said. "I feel so proud of where the department is right now. I think Ross Bjork is doing a great job, and I love our coaching lineup. They want to make good people out of the men and women in the athletic programs, and that's important."

As a couple who have watched and contributed to the progressive trajectory of Texas A&M Athletics as students, Aggie parents and die-hard fans, Kris says while they are blessed to be able to financially contribute, she doesn't know how one could ever walk away after the impact A&M has on your life.

"Once you get a little bit more involved, you get to know the staff, you interact with the coaches and the kids at events and you tour the facilities – it just exposes you to what's really going on outside of what's happening on the field on Saturdays," Kris said. "In other words, the more you're educated about what A&M has and what the 12th Man Foundation is doing for student-athletes, you can't help but want to help. Then it's just a matter of can you help at that time, or can you look forward to doing it at some point when you're able to." ■

Kris and Bruce have been bringing their twin sons, Bryce '14 and Dane '14, to Aggie football games since they were very young, including the iconic "Red, White and Blue Out" game in 2011 where Kris said their upper northeast end zone seats offered an "unforgettable sight." Today, the Petersens' gameday crew has expanded to include their daughters-in-law, Caroline '14 and Morgan '13.



POWER OF A SCHOLARSHIP

THE SHELBY FAMILY

The opportunity to attend Texas A&M has made a generational impact on the Shelby family

BY OLIN BUCHANAN

WHEN JIMMIE SHELBY CAME TO TEXAS A&M 36 years ago, he envisioned making life-changing runs at Kyle Field and leaving a legacy.

He accomplished both. Just not in the way originally planned. Jimmie learned goals can be refined and the path to them re-routed. He also learned the payoff can be greater than ever imagined.

Once a blue-chip football prospect, Jimmie was unable to fulfill his quest for stardom. Now a successful small business owner, the 54-year-old has found even greater gratification in seeing his daughter, Chloe, pursue her dreams.

She continued what has become a family tradition by graduating from Texas A&M. In May, she received a degree in Sports Management, though was not able to make the triumphant walk across

the stage due to the cancellation of graduation ceremonies because of the COVID-19 virus.

“It’s been a long trail,” Jimmie said from his home in Pflugerville. “It’s been great watching the different changes and things she’s been a part of. There was a little bump in the road, but we’re still excited about it.”

Chloe was thrilled to follow the trail that her parents first blazed.

“They’re passing the torch down to me,” she said. “It’s my time to make my footprint.”

Considering the Shelby family history, it was no surprise that the trail of footprints led from Pflugerville to College Station. Chloe was quite literally born to be an Aggie.

Her father was a star high school football

“
**THEY’RE PASSING THE TORCH
 DOWN TO ME. IT’S MY TIME
 TO MAKE MY FOOTPRINT.**

— CHLOE SHELBY '20

running back in Italy, a small Texas town south of Fort Worth. He rushed for more than 5,000 yards and accepted a scholarship offer from A&M as one of the prize prospects in Jackie Sherrill’s 1984 recruiting class.

“He would have been either a great linebacker or running back,” Sherrill said. “He could have been an all-conference player on either side. He would have been in the kicking game. He would have played an awful lot.”

Unfortunately, Jimmie sustained a devastating knee injury in the Texas High School Coaches Association All-Star game and was never able to play collegiately.

Not that he didn’t try. He used his athletic scholarship to get an education from A&M and help the team while trying valiantly to salvage his football career.

In those days an all-weather track surrounded the artificial turf of Kyle Field, which was open to the public.

During his attempts to rehabilitate his damaged knee, Jimmie met Kirsten Adams, an education major from Nebraska and daughter of an A&M Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences professor.

Their friendship became a romance which became a marriage. Chloe, their only child, made frequent trips to College Station to see football games in the stadium where her parents met.

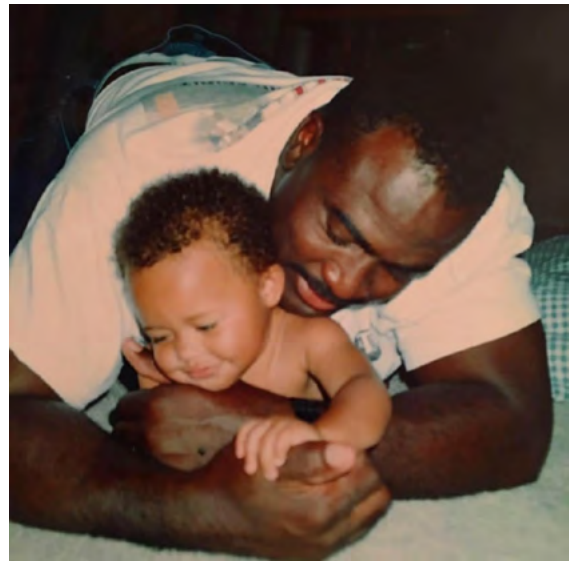
“I had grown up spending all my weekends in College Station,” said Chloe, who turned 22 in June. “Like all Aggies, once I experienced it there was no going back. I tried looking at others schools, but nothing sparked my passion like wearing my maroon and cheering on my Aggies.”

Chloe wasn’t content to recite Aggie yells and stand ready during football games. She wanted more. She wanted to be involved.

She immediately joined Aggie Elites, formerly

If you are interested in making a gift to support student-athlete scholarships, contact the Major Gifts office at 979-260-7595.

Jimmie Shelby accepted a scholarship offer from Jackie Sherrill in 1984, but a devastating knee injury ended the star running back’s football career before he enrolled at Texas A&M. The Italy, Texas native made the most of his opportunity in Aggieland, however, meeting his wife, Kirsten, and building a legacy that led to his daughter, Chloe, becoming an Aggie and making her own footprint on A&M Athletics.



“

TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF A&M IS ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPERIENCES I COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

— CHLOE SHELBY '20

Besides her parents, Chloe had another strong connection to A&M that led her to Aggieland. Her grandfather, Dr. Clark Adams (right), served as a Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences professor at A&M for 33 years. And while she didn't play sports at A&M, Chloe made an impact on Aggie Athletics through her involvement with Aggie Elites as well as Team 12, which she helped create to serve the Texas A&M Lettermen's Association and the football and basketball programs.

known as Aggie Hostesses, an organization that supports Texas A&M Athletics. As a sophomore, she helped create “Team 12,” which serves the Texas A&M Lettermen's Association as well as the Aggie football and basketball programs.

“That pushed me to further my passion for athletics,” Chloe said. “I developed relationships with lettermen and athletes.

“I wanted to be involved some way. To be involved in the past, present and future of A&M is one of the greatest experiences I could have imagined.”

Last spring she interned with the Letterman's Association. She assisted with office operations and helped prepare for the spring game, which was canceled because of the COVID-19 threat.

“Meeting the lettermen and hanging up their jerseys ignited my thoughts and passion of helping their transition to the real world,” Chloe said.

In that regard, she'd be following the example her mother set three decades ago.

“When I met Jimmie, he was just making the decision not to play football anymore,” Kirsten said. “Like most guys, he tried to play it off like no big deal. But it got to the point he didn't care about



his degree plan. He stopped working out as much. He was lost. He didn't know who he was without football.

“I came in and put his degree plan together. He just needed some direction. He was just trying to find who he was supposed to be. A lot of that became clear when he became a dad and owned his own business.”

And as Chloe met more A&M lettermen and learned more about her father's history, the career path she hopes to take became clearer.

“I know (Jimmie's) stories and his friends stories,” Chloe said. “There is a need for helping those players re-route their lives after sports. I'd like to devote a career to helping them find their way.”

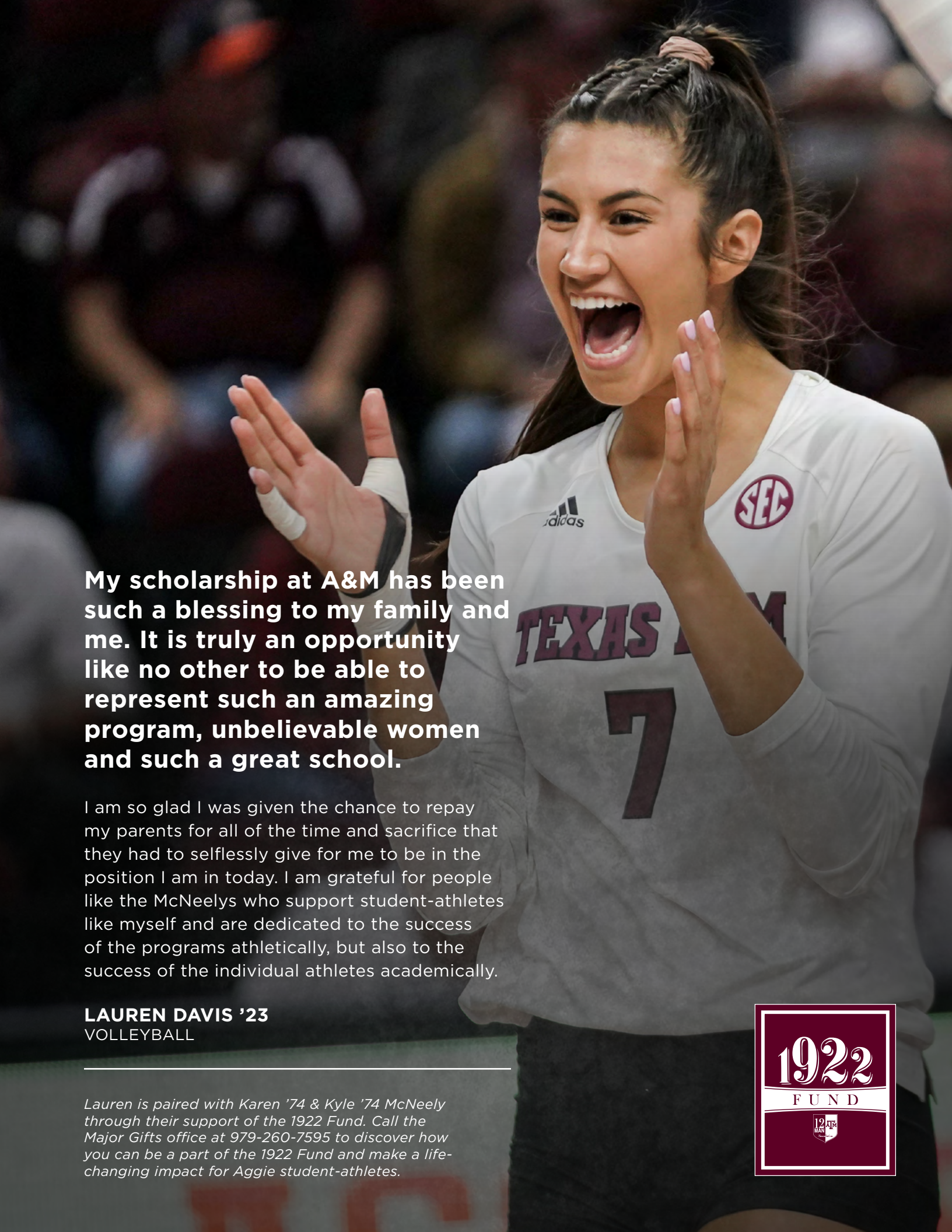
Her father could not be prouder.

“It means a lot to me,” Jimmie said. “Players will say ‘My son is going to play football and follow my legacy.’” She's a girl. But as my daughter she still followed my legacy and did above what I did. She made her own footprint being a part of the athletic program.”

Of course, she did. Graduating from A&M and being involved in athletics was in her DNA. 🍷



COURTESY OF THE SHELBY FAMILY



My scholarship at A&M has been such a blessing to my family and me. It is truly an opportunity like no other to be able to represent such an amazing program, unbelievable women and such a great school.

I am so glad I was given the chance to repay my parents for all of the time and sacrifice that they had to selflessly give for me to be in the position I am in today. I am grateful for people like the McNeelys who support student-athletes like myself and are dedicated to the success of the programs athletically, but also to the success of the individual athletes academically.

LAUREN DAVIS '23
VOLLEYBALL

Lauren is paired with Karen '74 & Kyle '74 McNeely through their support of the 1922 Fund. Call the Major Gifts office at 979-260-7595 to discover how you can be a part of the 1922 Fund and make a life-changing impact for Aggie student-athletes.



CHERI STEENSMA '89

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

CHERI STEENSMA ARRIVED AT TEXAS A&M in the fall of 1985 with high hopes and big goals. A four-year letter winner on the volleyball team, Steensma never achieved the national championship or All-America honors she sought.

But she left College Station with two tools even more useful in the real world – an Aggie Ring and an A&M degree.

“My priority was my education,” Steensma said. “You can’t play volleyball the rest of your life. I made some great friends who I’m still great friends with today. That’s what it was about. It was about the camaraderie. It was about the spirit. It was about the support. It was about the traditions. That’s what makes the school amazing. I also got to play volleyball.”

“As student-athletes, we’re very fortunate. We’re well taken care of. They encourage us and support us in getting our education. That’s the utmost importance, and then on top of that, we get to do something we love to do while going to school.”

Steensma earned her degree in political science in 1989 after a decorated career that included All-Southwest Conference honors in 1988 and '89. She forever will hold the now-defunct SWC record for career kills with 1,477, which still ranks sixth in A&M’s 1,000-kills club.

She also was voted to the American Volleyball Coaches Association all-region team as a junior. Southwest Conference coaches voted her second-team all-decade for 1981-91.

Steensma’s experience on the volleyball court provided her with as much schooling as the classroom did.

“It is a privilege to represent Texas A&M as a student-athlete,” Steensma said. “You are welcomed into a strong family unit when you step foot on campus, and they remain supportive when you are gone. The things we don’t realize in our youth is during this journey we are being developed for our next chapter in life. The skillsets we develop are



many that can be applied to our life after college athletics. Those skills include, but are not limited to, communication, teamwork, time management and leadership. You also experience victory and defeat and the lessons and learnings that go with both.”

Steensma, who went to high school in San Ramon, California, had no A&M ties when she chose the Aggies over several California schools. Born in Dallas, Steensma spent her first 13 years in Richardson before her father, Robert, who worked for American Airlines, was transferred to San Francisco International Airport.

She was sold on the Aggies from the start of the

Pictured above with her son, Austin, Cheri cherishes the opportunities and experiences she enjoyed as a Texas A&M student-athlete and is proudly giving back to the 12th Man Foundation in support of current and future student-athletes.



COURTESY OF CHERI STEENSMA

recruiting process, giving her reason to move back to her home state.

“For some reason or other, in the back of her mind, A&M was where she wanted to go,” said her mother, Carolyn Steensma, who retired to Arlington. “She is an Aggie through and through, no question. Her loyalty is there. It is where she belonged. It was the type of atmosphere Cheri needed, because of the camaraderie and everything that goes with A&M. I just think it was the perfect school for her.”

Steensma, who earned an MBA from the University of Phoenix, has experienced even more success in the business world than she did on the court.

She spent 24 years with Kraft, working her way up from sales rep to associate director of sales. She joined Bimbo Bakeries in 2017, serving as director of sales for the largest bakery company in the world. “She cares a lot about people,” John Lee, vice president of sales for Bimbo, said. “She cares a lot about her associates. She works hard. She is willing to learn, and she’s competitive. She likes to win.”

Steensma became a Champions Council member in 2019. She also joined the board of the Aggie Women Network. With Steensma now back in Texas, living in Flower Mound, and her son, Austin, working as a helicopter pilot in California, she has the time to give back.

“I went through college on a scholarship,” Steensma said. “I didn’t have to pay for my education. So, I want to help someone else live my dream.

“There are only 12 women on scholarship on a volleyball team. That’s 12 out of more than 60,000 students. That’s a gift.”

“
**THERE ARE ONLY 12 WOMEN
ON SCHOLARSHIP ON A
VOLLEYBALL TEAM. THAT’S 12
OUT OF MORE THAN 60,000
STUDENTS. THAT’S A GIFT.**

— CHERI STEENSMA

45 YEARS OF WOMEN'S SPORTS

Female student-athletes have been making their mark at A&M and beyond for four and a half decades

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

TEXAS A&M OFFERED SOME WOMEN'S SPORTS in the early 1970s, but it wasn't until June 15, 1974, that the Athletics Department began oversight. Women joined the Corps of Cadets that same year.

Vicki Brown-Sobecki was one of the first females to receive an athletics scholarship at A&M, and also was one of the school's first female All-Americans. She later became the first female swimmer inducted into the Texas A&M Athletics Hall of Fame and the first female president of the Texas A&M Lettermen's Association Board of Directors.

Female student-athletes have set many firsts – and won many firsts – since then. The Aggie women have won seven NCAA titles, another in the AIAW, which predated the NCAA for women's sports, and 13 equestrian national titles.

Since joining the Southeastern Conference in the fall of 2012, A&M has 14 conference titles in women's sports.

The Aggies have produced winners on the court, field and track and in the pool, but they have an even better track record of sending leaders into the workplace.

The remarkable women featured in this article highlight a few of the many incredible female student-athlete success stories over four and a half decades of Texas A&M Athletics.

DESSIE SAMUELS '77

Dessie Samuels comes from an Aggie family. She wanted to follow her father and brother to A&M, but the Aggies didn't offer women athletic

Dessie Samuels became a member of the first-ever Texas A&M women's tennis team in 1975. The team didn't have uniforms that year, so Samuels' mother – a seamstress – made some for the 1976 season. After A&M, Samuels enjoyed a 30-plus-year career as a USTA official earning the John T. McGovern Award in 2019 for her outstanding contributions to the profession.



NICOLE PEREIRA/USTA



scholarships. So, Samuels went to Tyler Junior College to play tennis. Two years later, in 1975, she became one of the Aggies' first scholarship tennis players.

"Since it was the beginning, we were the trailblazers," Samuels said. "We didn't have anything to compare to, because there hadn't been anything before. My first year we didn't have any uniforms. We just played in whatever. That's what they had done before. Then my senior year, my mother was a seamstress and she had a fabric shop, and she got everybody's measurements and made us these maroon skirts that wrapped around and buckled. That's what we played in."

For Samuels, it was an honor to represent Texas A&M as a student-athlete

"That was what was cool for me," she said. "My dad was Class of '50, and he was pretty proud that I was playing for Texas A&M."

Samuels earned her degree in physical education in 1977 and returned to get a teaching degree in biology. She became a certified official for the United States Tennis Association in 1982 and, in more than 30 years, officiated matches at

“

IT WAS AN HONOR TO BE AN ATHLETE PLAYING FOR TEXAS A&M. THAT WAS WHAT WAS COOL FOR ME. MY DAD WAS CLASS OF '50, AND HE WAS PRETTY PROUD THAT I WAS PLAYING FOR TEXAS A&M.

— **DESSIE SAMUELS '77**

Wimbledon, the Australian Open and the U.S. Open.

From 2000 to her retirement in 2019, Samuels served as a supervisor for the USTA's pro circuits. It entailed more than 200 nights away from her home in Terrell, running pro tournaments all over the U.S.

"My experience at A&M is one I'm glad I had," Samuels said. "Tennis has been really good to me. I never thought when I started playing as a sophomore in high school that it would end up being my career."

SHAWN ANDAYA-PULLIAM '88

Shawn Andaya-Pulliam grew up in Stockton, California, 1,818 miles from College Station and a world away from A&M.

"In a million years, I never thought I would end up somewhere like Texas A&M," Andaya-Pulliam said, "and then to win a national championship, too. It was just far-fetched for me from the childhood I had."

Andaya-Pulliam pitched for the Aggies from

The first softball player ever inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame, Shawn Andaya-Pulliam was a record-setting pitcher for the Aggies from 1984-87. As a senior in 1987, the All-American led the A&M program to its third national title following national runners-up finishes in '84 and '86.





An athletics scholarship was life-changing for Andaya-Pulliam, and she is paying it forward by changing lives across the world through VOOM Foundation. The Aggie legend is also a parent of two-student-athlete sons with her husband and former Aggie men's basketball student-athlete Al Pulliam '87, who serves as Senior Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations for the Texas A&M Foundation as well as a commentator for the A&M men's basketball program.

1984-87, leading them to the NCAA Women's College World Series three times and winning the national championship her senior year. She finished her career with a 114-28 record, an 0.43 earned run average and a then-NCAA record 1,234 strikeouts.

"I never thought I'd be a starting pitcher," said Andaya-Pulliam, the first softball player ever inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. "I never thought I'd play in three national championship games. To finish your career – the last game you ever play in – where you're considered the best in your sport at the time, that's the stuff of storybooks."

Andaya-Pulliam, who remained in College Station after earning her degree in Sociology in 1988, coached softball for five years before going to work for non-profits. She has spent the past four years with the VOOM Foundation, the past three as the Executive Director of Foundation Development and Sustainability.

VOOM is a private international medical humanitarian organization with a primary mission of raising the standards of healthcare in Africa through education and training. U.S.-trained medical staff participate in organized mission trips to Nigeria

twice yearly, teaching local doctors open-heart surgery and providing impartial sustainable healthcare programs that support the underserved.

"The greatest thing VOOM does is provide hope," Andaya-Pulliam said.

The scholarship to A&M provided Andaya-Pulliam with hope.

"This is how my life was supposed to go," Andaya-Pulliam said. "I had a very, very tough upbringing. From a broken home. Very poor. I was born into a neighborhood where criminals would run through the backyard on a frequent basis. We had SWAT teams come through our house before, looking for people. That's the type of environment I grew up in, so leaving that environment and coming to Texas A&M was a serious, true blessing, and life-changing."

Andaya-Pulliam thought softball was everything she was about until she began working with VOOM Foundation.

"I realized that growing up poor taught me how to fight for the poor," she said, "because I understand the poor and understand what it's like to be trapped in your environment and want to be out and not know exactly how to get out."

COURTESY OF SHAWN ANDAYA-PULLIAM

“

MY SPIRIT AND GRIT TO WORK HARD FOR OTHERS COMES FROM MY EXPERIENCES AS AN ATHLETE AT A&M. EVERY HARDSHIP IN MY LIFE WAS A CATALYST TO PREPARE ME TO WORK IN THIS TOUGH THIRD-WORLD ENVIRONMENT WHERE QUITTING IS NOT AN OPTION.

— SHAWN ANDAYA-PULLIAM '88

Playing in three national championship games for the Aggies taught Andaya-Pulliam that you can't quit if you want to achieve a goal.

“My spirit and grit to work hard for others comes from my experiences as an athlete at Texas A&M,” she said. “Every hardship in my life was a catalyst to prepare me to work in this tough third-world environment where quitting is not an option. I also understand how opportunities can change your life. It was the opportunity to come to Texas A&M to get an education and be on a national championship team that pushed me to this type of career.”

ANDREA WILLIAMS '97

Andrea Williams didn't know she wanted to play volleyball in college. She also didn't know she

wanted to go to A&M. It was San Antonio club volleyball teammates Suzy Wente and Dana Santleben who convinced Williams to play volleyball and do it at A&M.

“When I visited, it felt like home,” Williams said.

Williams played volleyball four seasons, ending her career with 343 kills, a .301 hitting percentage and 281 digs, while lettering two seasons in basketball as a reserve. The Aggies went to the Sweet Sixteen in both sports while Williams was there.

She graduated from A&M with a degree in Speech Communication in 1997, leaving without knowing what she wanted to do. But things worked out just as well in the workplace as they did in College Station.

Williams has spent almost two years as the Chief Operating Officer at the College Football Playoff, a job that tops a full, four-page resume. She primarily is responsible for managing the national championship game.

“When I arrived at A&M, I think I was just trying to live up to the expectations that were around me, without having a sense of direction,” said Williams, who lives in Dallas. “I didn't know I wanted to be a commissioner of a Division I conference at the age of 22. I'm not even sure I knew what it was then. But I knew whatever job I got, I had to work hard if I wanted to advance. Sports teaches you so

A former Texas A&M volleyball and women's basketball student-athlete, Andrea Williams currently serves as Chief Operating Officer for the College Football Playoff. A 1997 Aggie graduate, Williams' primary responsibility is managing the national championship game and all of its affiliated events.



COURTESY OF ANDREA WILLIAMS

“

SPORTS TEACHES YOU SO MANY THINGS. YOU HAVE TO BE A TEAM PLAYER. YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO SET GOALS AND HOW HARD YOU HAVE TO WORK TO ACHIEVE THEM. YOU LEARN TO MANAGE CONFLICT, AND YOU UNDERSTAND TIME MANAGEMENT.

— ANDREA WILLIAMS '97

many things. You have to be a team player. You know what it means to set goals and how hard you have to work to achieve them. You learn to manage conflict, and you understand time management. All of that pushed me into where I am and the direction I went, even though at the time, I probably didn't have a path in mind.”

Williams, who has a master's in Sport Administration from Ohio University, worked in the A&M Sports Information department as a student and had internships at CBS Sports in New York and at KYLE-TV. Internships at the Southern Conference and the Big Ten followed graduation.

Her career has included being Commissioner of the Big Sky Conference, Associate Commissioner of the Big Ten and Director for the Women's Basketball Championships for the NCAA. Her time at

the Big Sky made her the first African-American woman ever to lead a Division I conference.

“Because I had such strong leaders in my life, they positioned me to advance in my career,” Williams said. “They positioned me in a way that I could elevate within our profession. With everything, it always comes back to people. You watch and you learn.”

AMBER REYNOLDS-JACKSON '01

Texas A&M offered Amber Reynolds-Jackson everything she wanted. Everything, that is, except a scholarship in 1997. She earned that after one season on the Aggie soccer team.

“I was sold on A&M with the traditions,” Reynolds-Jackson said. “It's a huge school, but it feels like family.”

Reynolds-Jackson joined the Corps of Cadets, earned a three-year scholarship and left in 2002 with a degree in Aerospace Engineering. After 14 years of active duty in the Air Force, Reynolds-Jackson now serves in the reserves while flying full time as a first officer for Delta Air Lines.

“I do love to fly,” said Reynolds-Jackson, who lives in Charleston, South Carolina, with her husband, Mike, and their two children. “It's not like I grew up wanting to fly, but now, during this pandemic thinking I might not fly, it's really put things in perspective for me. I can't really think of anything else

Two years prior to joining the College Football Playoff, Williams became the first African-American woman ever to lead a Division I conference when she was selected to serve as commissioner of the Big Sky Conference.





COURTESY OF AMBER REYNOLDS-JACKSON (THIS PAGE); COURTESY OF ANDREA WILLIAMS (FACING PAGE)

I want to do. I think maybe I took it for granted before, but I get to go to new places, and I get to see the sun almost every day I'm flying."

Reynolds-Jackson's desire to fly nearly prompted her to leave Aggieland for the Air Force Academy after the 1998 season before coach G. Guerrieri informed her of how many pilots A&M produces. She joined the Corps of Cadets, with placement in the V-1 outfit, an off-campus unit that caters to students with special circumstances.

"You have to picture this: I had just gotten my hair cut really short, and it was bleach blonde," Reynolds-Jackson said. "I had a nose ring, and I'm interviewing with this commandant in the Corps. Flying just kind of happened after that."

Reynolds-Jackson was a team captain her senior season, earning the program's defensive MVP award as well as the Athletics Department's Distinguished Letterman Award, given annually to one female and one male student-athlete.

The San Jose CyberRays drafted Reynolds-Jackson, and she played six months with the Women's United Soccer Association before returning to school to complete her degree. That was followed by flight training.

"I loved soccer," said Reynolds-Jackson, who is originally from Missouri. "I never wanted to stop

playing. I want my kids to have something in life they love like I loved soccer. I just think soccer set me up for life. I was not the best player, but I worked really hard and enjoyed doing it."

Reynolds-Jackson graduated from pilot training in 2004, earning the Distinguished Graduate Award, the Commander's Trophy and the Academic Excellence award. While stationed at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, she flew C-21 leer jets and then piloted C-17s at Charleston Air Force Base. Reynolds-Jackson also was stationed at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. She started with Delta in 2016 and recently flew her final flight in the MD-88 as the company retired the "Mad Dog."

"It's been a great life," Reynolds-Jackson said.

“ I WANT MY KIDS TO HAVE SOMETHING IN LIFE THEY LOVE LIKE I LOVED SOCCER. I JUST THINK SOCCER SET ME UP FOR LIFE. I WAS NOT THE BEST PLAYER, BUT I WORKED REALLY HARD AND ENJOYED DOING IT.

— AMBER REYNOLDS-JACKSON '01

Amber Reynolds-Jackson, pictured above as a soccer student-athlete, pilot, wife and mom, served 14 years of active duty in the Air Force, flying to all seven continents. Today, Reynolds-Jackson lives in Charleston, South Carolina, with her husband, Mike, and their two children, Ollie and Alexi, and serves in the reserves while flying for Delta Air Lines.

“

GETTING AN ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP, FIRST AND FOREMOST, ALLOWED ME TO GET AN EDUCATION AND ALSO DO SOMETHING I LOVE — RUN AND COMPETE AT A HIGH LEVEL.

— JESSICA BEARD '11

If you are interested in making a gift to support women's athletics at Texas A&M, contact the Major Gifts office at 979-260-7595.

JESSICA BEARD '11

Jessica Beard once dreamed of being a dentist when she grew up. Now, she's working toward becoming a high school athletics director. Beard, who received a bachelor's degree in psychology in 2011, is halfway through a master's degree in sports management from A&M and is a graduate assistant with A&M's Coaching Academy.

"I just want to create culture and a new climate around sports," said Beard, a native of Euclid, Ohio. "It's great that you can run fast, jump far, throw far, but what are the things that are going to get you through these certain doors? I don't want so much of the emphasis to be on the athlete aspect that they don't grow and nurture the academic side. I want to have the resources available to the kids, so they can be their best selves and excel beyond sports. I love to see it happen in sport, but I don't want it to stop there. If sports stop, I don't want it to mean life stops."

One of the most decorated student-athletes in Texas A&M's history, the 16-time All-American helped the Aggies win three consecutive outdoor track and field national titles and claimed the



prestigious Bowerman Award in 2011, the top individual honor in collegiate track and field.

"So many people have to take student loans and get into debt, but for me coming all the way from Ohio, if it wasn't for my athletic scholarship I don't know that I would have ended up at or been able to afford a school like Texas A&M," Beard said. "Getting an athletic scholarship, first and foremost, allowed me to get an education and also do something I love – run and compete at a high level."

Beard's athletic career hasn't ended at age 31, but it is in limbo. She began training last November for the now postponed 2020 Olympics. The 400-meter sprinter has hopes of competing in the Tokyo Games in 2021.

"It was disheartening," said Beard. "You want what's best for everybody, but at the same time, we had our sights set on July 2020, and now it's like what do you do?"

Beard has five gold medals and a silver in World Championship relays, but she has never run in an Olympics. She hopes 2021 is her year.

Regardless of her future opportunities to compete on the track, the Aggie legend is determined to make a profound impact on the next generation of athletes. ■

A 2017 inductee to the Texas A&M Athletics Hall of Fame, Jessica Beard was an integral part of three national championship teams in Aggieland and claimed the 2011 Bowerman Award, often considered the Heisman Trophy of collegiate track and field.



TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS



You can tell that Texas A&M values student-athletes, but I think that sticks out to me because I'm a female student-athlete.

You can see how they go over and beyond to make the female student-athlete experience the same or close to the same as much as they can to the male student-athlete experience. A&M is willing to invest, and believes that female sports are important. You can tell that through facilities, through fans that attend and the support that it gets in all areas.

AMANDA SCARBOROUGH '08
*ESPN Analyst, Softball Pitching Coach
and Texas A&M Softball Legend*



DAT NGUYEN '98

From the scout team to the Hall of Fame, the Aggie legend and now successful business owner has made the most of his opportunities

BY WILL JOHNSON '01



Nguyen, the father of three daughters and twin boys with his college-sweetheart-turned-wife Becky, owns and operates a Chick-fil-A franchise in Montgomery Plaza in Fort Worth that he purchased in 2016. A College Football Hall of Famer, Lombardi Award winner and one of the greatest players in A&M history, Nguyen led the Aggies to the Big 12 Championship as an All-American in 1998 and enjoyed a seven-year NFL career with the Dallas Cowboys.

WHEN DAT NGUYEN WALKED ACROSS THE STAGE as a graduate of Texas A&M, a true student-athlete success story was unfolding. He clutched his diploma at Reed Arena in the summer of 1998, having been awarded a B.S. in Agricultural Leadership.

Graduation usually signals the end of one's time at their university, but that wasn't the case for Nguyen. He still had another football season to play with the Aggies the following fall. What a chapter it was in this story.

The Aggies won the 1998 Big 12 Championship in a thrilling classic over Kansas State. Nguyen was named an All-American and won the prestigious Lombardi Award. He finished his A&M career as the school's all-time leading tackler.

But the story is incomplete without how Nguyen's journey started at A&M. Arriving from the small, shore-lined town of Rockport, Texas, his adjustment to College Station, and college life, wasn't easy.

"There were some down times," Nguyen said. "I had doubts."

Nguyen redshirted in 1994, and uncertainty filled his outlook on the future. His high school coach, Bob Pysen, helped him find a different viewpoint.

"He told me football and athletics are going to end one day," recalled Nguyen, paying homage to one of his mentors who passed away in April of this year.

The lesson Nguyen learned from Pysen was to make his education a priority.

"It opened my eyes," he said. "I re-evaluated my situation."

“
**ALL I WANTED WAS AN OPPORTUNITY.
THE OPPORTUNITY CAME WITH THE
12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS'
INVESTMENT IN MY SCHOLARSHIP.**

— DAT NGUYEN '98





Born in a refugee camp in Fort Smith, Arkansas, shortly after his family escaped Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War, Nguyen's improbable rise from undersized high school football player to college All-American and NFL All-Pro is one of the most remarkable stories in college football history and one that was made possible because of an athletics scholarship.

If you are interested in providing an opportunity for a future A&M student-athlete, contact the Major Gifts office at 979-260-7595.

“**MY SCHOLARSHIP WAS THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME — OTHER THAN MY WIFE AND KIDS.**”

— DAT NGUYEN '98

Nguyen needed that positive spark to embrace the opportunity that was in front of him.

“I didn't understand how important that scholarship was,” he said. “I didn't appreciate it as much until I redshirted.”

With a new mindset Nguyen went to work. Not just as a student or an athlete, but with an all-out effort toward being both.

“You never know when your window is going to be,” he said.

Nguyen worked out at 6 a.m. in the old Netum Steed weight room before starting class at 8 a.m. Football practice was in the afternoon and study hall filled his evening. He stayed steady through it all, waiting for his opportunity.

When it came, he was ready. Nguyen cracked A&M's lineup and never left it, starting 51 consecutive games for the famed Wrecking Crew.

The *New York Times* once described him as a “tornado in cleats, a player who would wipe out blockers twice his size and sniff out a play before

it developed.”

Following his legendary Aggie career, Nguyen played seven seasons in the NFL with the Dallas Cowboys. Athletics indeed ended with his retirement in 2006, but the lessons learned from the playing fields and classroom still serve him today.

Nguyen, who was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2017, is currently the owner and operator of Chick-fil-A's Montgomery Plaza location in Fort Worth. He's taken his teachings from Aggieland and applied them as a restaurateur.

“With the restaurant, our game is every day,” he said. “We coach and teach on the run. We recruit. We better get five-stars.”

It's hard to decipher if he's operating a restaurant or coaching a football team. Nguyen coached immediately after his playing days, including as A&M's inside linebackers coach from 2010-11.

“We rank employees,” he said. “Who's a starter, a backup and who needs a redshirt? Who are the All-Americans?”

As a coach in a different arena these days, Nguyen still sticks to the values instilled in him at Texas A&M both on the field and in the classroom.

“Be a light,” he said. “Share a compliment or smile. Offer with care. Be where your feet are.”

With athletics behind him, that motto leads him into his future. As Nguyen has proven time and time again, he will continue to make the most of every opportunity. ■

THANK YOU!

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JULIA BLACK '22

Agriculture Communications & Journalism
(Track & Field/Cross Country Student-Athlete)

"I want to be able to give back to the 12th Man Foundation which does so much for the athletics department. I see firsthand the impact that the Foundation has made."



DARIA BRITTON '22

Allied Health (Soccer Student-Athlete)

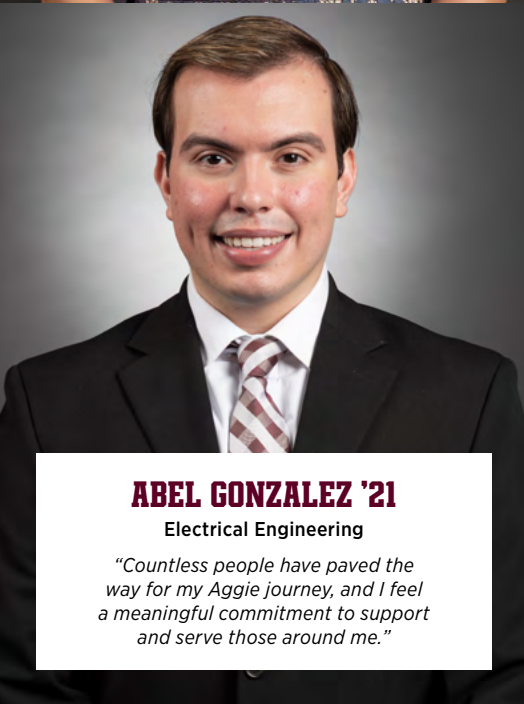
"It is very important to me to remember that Texas A&M Athletics is made possible by 12th Man Foundation donors and I look forward to encouraging more student involvement with our athletics department."



CAMERON CRENWELGE '21

Business Administration - Management
(Equestrian Student-Athlete)

"The ability to attend my dream school, acquire an education and continue participating in the sport I love is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I want to ensure that future student-athletes are able to experience Texas A&M as I have."



ABEL GONZALEZ '21

Electrical Engineering

"Countless people have paved the way for my Aggie journey, and I feel a meaningful commitment to support and serve those around me."

12TH MAN FOUNDATION

**INTRODUCING
THE 2020-21
COLLEGIATE
COUNCIL**

This select group of student leaders will be dedicated to enhancing engagement between the 12th Man Foundation and the Texas A&M student body. Learn more by visiting www.12thmanfoundation.com.



NICOLE LOPEZ '22

Business Management

"I'm extremely passionate about Texas A&M Athletics, but more importantly the student-athletes themselves."



MADISON PENNINGTON '23

Business Honors

"I would like to serve the student-athletes and donors who strive to make Texas A&M Athletics one of the best athletics departments in the nation."



OLIVIA TREADWELL '22

Communication

"I want to help share the amazing things about the 12th Man Foundation with my peers."



GARRETT WRIGHT '21

Aerospace Engineering

"I am excited to be a part of the Collegiate Council because I get to help pave the way to truly connect the student body with the 12th Man Foundation."



I am forever grateful for the 12th Man Foundation donors, and I am so excited to be blessed with the opportunity to give back to this organization through the Collegiate Council.

The donors support us day in and day out, and we would not be able to do what we do without them. The 12th Man's commitment to our university is what makes Texas A&M so special. It encompasses a lot of what being an Aggie really is. It's the Spirit of Aggieland that attracted us to this campus, and by being involved and supporting each other, we keep that spirit alive.

JULIA BLACK '22
TRACK & FIELD/CROSS COUNTRY

Julia is one of three student-athletes who are members of the 2020-21 Collegiate Council. For more information on this select group of student leaders, visit www.12thmanfoundation.com.

CHRISTINA WEBSTER

Senior Director of Development

BY ADAM QUISENBERRY



ABOUT CHRISTINA

- » GREW UP IN SEATTLE, WASH.
- » 10 YEARS OF FUNDRAISING EXPERIENCE
- » GRADUATED FROM WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY IN 2012
- » LIFELONG SEATTLE SEAHAWKS AND SEATTLE MARINERS FAN AND AVID FANTASY FOOTBALL PLAYER

Following nearly five years of supporting Boise State athletics with the Bronco Athletic Association, Christina is eager to meet and assist 12th Man Foundation donors while becoming indoctrinated into Texas A&M Athletics.

A NEWCOMER TO THE LONE STAR STATE, Christina Webster is quickly discovering why so many hold Aggieland dear.

“As someone who’s grown up a sports fan,” says Christina, “it’s no secret that Texas A&M is known for having an incredible and passionate fanbase with lots of amazing traditions. For me, having the opportunity to come to a place like this was something I had to explore. Now that I’m here, I’m finding out how it’s all true and what an amazing place this really is.”

Joining the 12th Man Foundation as the Senior Director of Development, the enthusiastic Christina plays a crucial role within the Annual Fund staff which is tasked with supporting donors during a unique and challenging time for the organization.

“I am excited to improve our team by bringing Christina on board,” said Senior Vice President of Annual Fund and Donor Services Michael Solomon. “While we are laser-focused on the impacts of COVID-19 and serving our donors during this unprecedented time, her 10 years of experience in annual fundraising will help us continue to grow our efforts to support Texas A&M Athletics through philanthropic annual giving.”

A native of the Pacific Northwest, Christina grew up in the Seattle area where a love of sports was fostered at an early age and was primarily shaded by the navy blues and greens of her hometown Mariners and Seahawks.

“I’ve been my dad’s fantasy football partner since seventh grade,” said Christina, adding a few other choice comments on who should get the lion’s share of credit for the team’s success.

It was during her college days that Christina’s interest in sports evolved into a calling, as she started out as a student worker for the Cougar Athletic Fund while pursuing a degree in sports management at Washington State. Those early years of her professional career were influential as she developed a deeper understanding into the role fundraising and donors play for a successful athletics department.

“When I started out, I had no idea what athletic development was or what all went into it,” she said. “I had a lot of friends who played college sports and they had no idea where their scholarship came from, so that’s something that I’ve tried to build into what I do. Teaching student-athletes how they have benefited from the generosity of others is important because I didn’t know until I started working.”

Following her time with the Cougar Athletic Fund, which extended three and half years as a full-time employee post-graduation, Christina spent just under five years supporting Boise State athletics with the Bronco Athletic Association prior to the opportunity at the 12th Man Foundation.

Despite moving to Texas this summer during one of the longest offseasons in Aggie Athletics history, Christina is anxious to become acquainted with the people who make Aggieland such a special place.

“I’m excited to meet people here,” she said. “The donors are the ones who make all this possible, and I want to be the one who helps them do that.”





MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT WITH A MATCHING GIFT

Many employers will match tax deductible gifts to the 12th Man Foundation, which can double your contribution in support of Texas A&M Athletics

While each company has its own procedure, typically the process includes these easy steps:

- 1** You request a matching gift form from your company's website or HR office
- 2** You complete the form and send it to the 12th Man Foundation with your gift
- 3** The 12th Man Foundation verifies the gift information and returns it to your employer
- 4** Your employer issues a matching gift contribution to the 12th Man Foundation

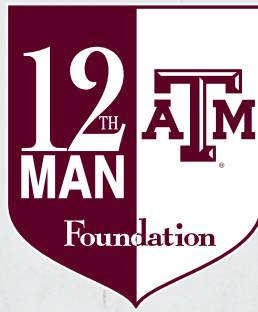
Ask your employer if they offer a matching gift program to maximize your impact on Texas A&M student-athletes

While annual seat contributions are no longer tax deductible, donations to the Annual Fund may be tax deductible since they are not tied to a ticket purchase

Consult your tax advisor to determine the deductibility of your gift



For more information about making a matching gift to the 12th Man Foundation, call Toni McDowell at 979-260-7577.



FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS
AND FACILITIES IN SUPPORT OF
CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS



The mission of the 12th Man Foundation is to fund scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics and our donors are the lifeblood of that mission.

If you know someone who might be interested in making an impact for Texas A&M student-athletes by joining the 12th Man Foundation, we'd love to hear about them!

WWW.12THMANFOUNDATION.COM/REFER