

12th Man

2025 | VOLUME 30, NO. 1

FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES
IN SUPPORT OF CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS



75 YEARS

GATEWAY TO OPPORTUNITY

YOUR GENEROSITY PROFOUNDLY TRANSFORMS
THE LIVES OF AGGIE STUDENT-ATHLETES



TO OUR DONORS,

As we celebrate our organization's 75th anniversary, I can't help but reflect on the transformative impact 12th Man Foundation donors and season ticket holders like yourself have made upon Texas A&M University and Aggie Athletics. For three-quarters of a century, this steadfast support has driven the advancement of our athletics programs, providing Aggie student-athletes with scholarships, elite facilities, world-class resources and the foundation for championship success.

It is our organization's highest privilege to steward this extraordinary level of generosity that continues to position Texas A&M at the forefront of collegiate athletics. We understand the unwavering dedication, adaptation and innovation required to navigate today's dynamic landscape of college sports, and we remain resolute in our commitment to help meet the needs of our athletics department.

Most notably, we take great pride in the opportunity to serve Texas A&M Athletics' supporters and amplify your collective voice. Since our humble beginnings as The Aggie Club in 1950, our organization remains a vital conduit for the 12th Man's passion to empower our student-athletes and achieve athletic excellence. Your contributions are strengthening a legacy of loyal support that stands unrivaled in collegiate athletics.

This issue of *12th Man Magazine* highlights the growth of our organization, the generosity of our benefactors and their lasting impact on Aggie Athletics across generations. I am inspired by the remarkable progress 12th Man Foundation donors have made — and will continue to make — within the space of collegiate athletics development.

Thank you for what you make possible for our student-athletes, and here's to the next 75 years of funding Texas A&M Athletics.

Gig 'em!

Travis Dabney '96
President & CEO



12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS PIONEER SPORTS PASS SCHOLARSHIP

Longtime supporters of Texas A&M Athletics, Debbie & Gordon Pilmer '73 established the first-ever Sports Pass Scholarship for current students at Texas A&M University. Through their desire to impact students who are passionate about Aggie Athletics, the Pilmers generously covered the cost of sports passes for six deserving Aggies during the 2024-25 academic year. Eligible sports pass holders can apply for this annual opportunity through the Texas A&M University Scholarship Application.

CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO AGGIELAND, BUCKY MCMILLAN

On April 5, Texas A&M Athletics named Bucky McMillan, three-time Southern Conference Coach of the Year, as the 23rd head coach of Texas A&M Men's Basketball. Coach McMillan brings his innovative "Bucky Ball" style to Aggieland following a five-year transformation of Samford University's program, where he compiled a 99-52 record with three conference championships. His fast-paced, attacking style of play earned Samford the No. 13 national ranking in scoring offense during the 2024-25 season. Defensively, the Bulldogs forced an average of 16.1 turnovers per game, ranking No. 4 in the country. The 12th Man Foundation welcomes Coach McMillan to the Aggie family.



CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN FACILITIES & RENOVATIONS



1

**GRAHAM ATHLETIC
COMPLEX**



5

**LINDA & DENNIS CLARK '68
NUTRITION CENTER**



2

**COOLIDGE FOOTBALL
PERFORMANCE CENTER**



6

McFERRIN PLAZA



3

**ADAM C. SINN '00 ACADEMIC
& WELLNESS CENTER**



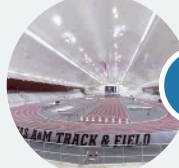
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WATTS PLAZA



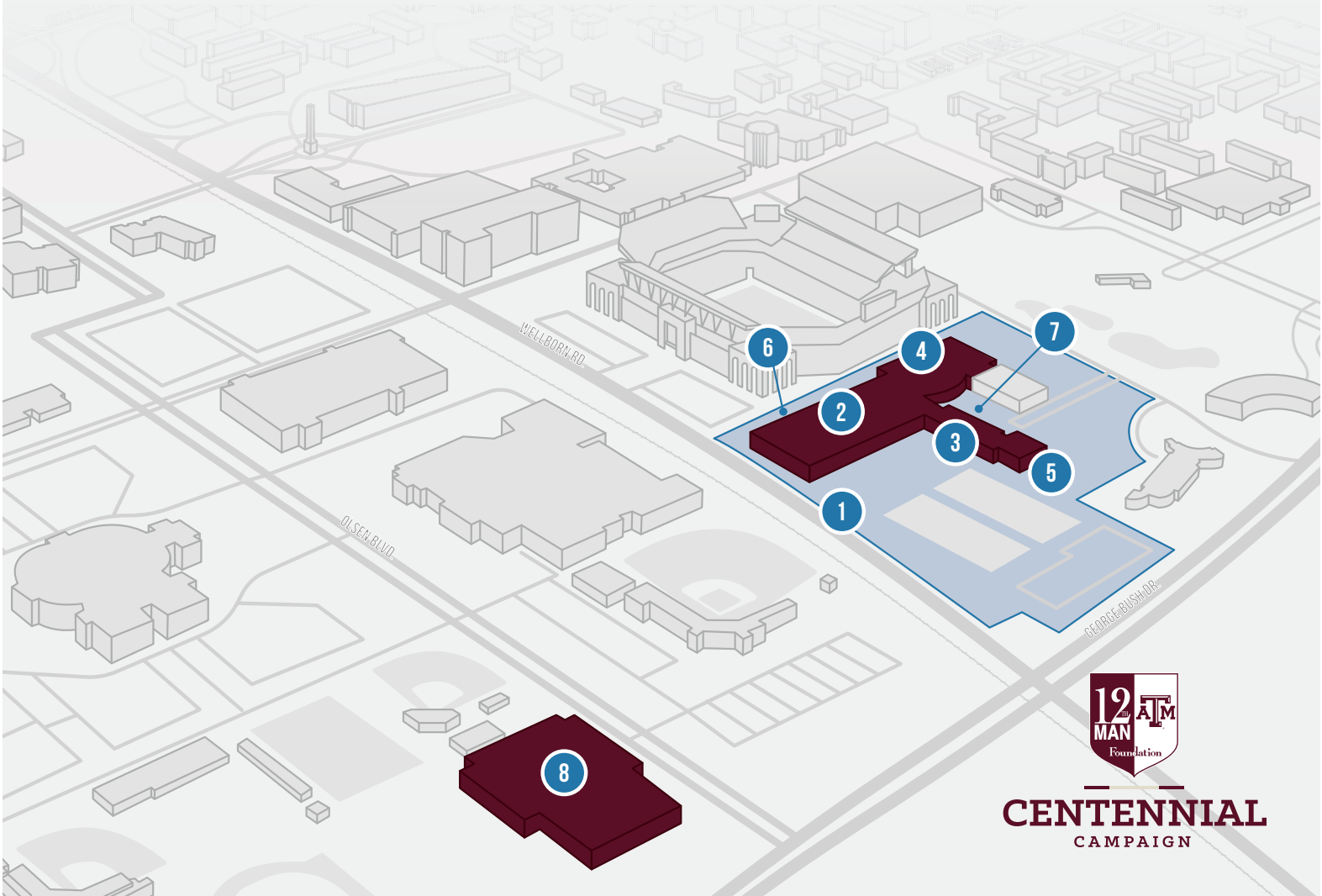
4

**BRIGHT-SLOCUM CENTER
FOR TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL**



8

**R.A. 'MURRAY' FASKEN '38
INDOOR TRACK & FIELD**



**CENTENNIAL
CAMPAIGN**

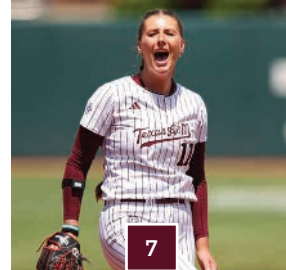


COVER FEATURE

Ja'Mar Toombs '03 | Page 33

Aggie Football letterman fulfills promise to earn his A&M degree

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86



12TH MAN FOUNDATION & CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS

3 Centennial Campaign Facilities & Renovations Map

9 Q&A with Trey Henderson '80

Meet the chair of the 2025 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees

15 April & Jay Graham '92

Commemorating a historic gift in support of Texas A&M Athletics

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

20 Adam C. Sinn '00 Academic & Wellness Center

Modern facility creates revolutionary hub for Aggie student-athlete success

BY IVY ROBINSON '20

23 Linda & Dennis Clark '68 Nutrition Center

State-of-the-art center offers comprehensive dining for student-athletes

BY AUBRIE STROMBERG '24

24 Coolidge Football Performance Center

College athletics' largest indoor football facility sets elite standard of excellence

BY MEGAN HOFFMANN '22

26 Bright-Slocum Center for Texas A&M Football

Aggie Football is forging champions and shaping winning future in top-tier facility

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

28 R.A. 'Murray' Fasken '38 Indoor Track & Field

Cutting-edge indoor track facility cements Texas A&M's position among the nation's elite programs

BY MEGAN HOFFMANN '22

30-31 McFerrin & Watts Plazas

35 Staff Spotlight: Brady Bullard '95

12th Man Foundation's Senior Vice President of Major Giving Programs

BY KATELYN BUYS '14

36 Building a Legacy: 75 Years of the 12th Man Foundation

Dive into the organization's history and evolution across generations

BY CAMRYN GARNER '21

TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

7 Emiley Kennedy '25

How Aggie Softball's ace found her path and purpose in the circle

BY MATT SIMON '98

10 Jace LaViolette '26

Staying true to his Aggie roots with unwavering loyalty

BY WILL JOHNSON '01

POWER OF A SCHOLARSHIP

40 Then & Now: Making Waves

Two generations of Aggie swimmers unite through the 1922 Fund

BY CAMRYN GARNER '21

COVER PHOTO: TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS / LAURA MCKENZIE (LEFT) | TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (RIGHT)

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EMILEY KENNEDY '25

How Aggie Softball's ace found her path and purpose in the circle

BY MATT SIMON '98

JUST BEFORE A MID-JANUARY PRACTICE AT DAVIS

Diamond, head coach Trisha Ford glanced across the field and noticed something.

Turning to her staff in the bullpen, she pointed and said, "Look at the way Emiley Kennedy is walking right now. She's walking with a purpose. She has a little strut about her like, 'I'm it. I'm the dog. I'm the face of the program.'"

Indeed, she is.

Kennedy, a 6-foot-2 left-handed senior pitcher from The Woodlands, leads a Texas A&M Softball team that opened the 2025 season as a consensus top-10 pick and earned its first No. 1 national ranking in program history. In critical moments that define a program and its ability to be successful, the Aggies find comfort knowing their ace stands ready in the circle.

Every preseason list had Kennedy's name near the top — and rightfully so. One of the nation's premier pitchers, her ascent is the product of as much mental growth as it is physical development.

"For Emiley, it was more about proving to herself that she can have some goals that are really hard, be vulnerable with it and then go out and achieve it," said Ford, now in her third season leading the Aggies. "They're hard to say out loud sometimes, but you also have to live with the consequences of that. Every day do you live up to that standard?"

"It was really cool to see her earn that and for her to understand, 'Okay, I did X, Y and Z in order for me to get there and help our team get to the final game in Super Regionals last season.' What I'm most excited about is it made her hungry for more."

Kennedy's journey to the circle is relatively recent. In fact, softball was the last of the many sports she

played while growing up — and she played them all.

Her father, Pat, is a longtime football coach (currently the athletic coordinator and head football coach at Lake Creek High School). Her brother, Cole, played football. Her sister, Ashley, played basketball. Kennedy jokes that nearly every childhood memory took place in a gym.

Even with all that exposure, sports were not always her first choice.

"My dad likes to remind everyone that I wanted to be a dancer," Kennedy said. "My high school had a team called the Highsteppers — kind of like the Rockettes. I wanted to be one so bad. I went to camp and everything. Then I got good at softball and I grew five inches in fifth grade. That's when I kind of outgrew the dancing stage of life."

Kennedy first picked up a softball at age 12, urged by her mother Christine — a former player herself — to give it a shot.

"It was in the backyard," Kennedy recalled. "Mom made me. She said, 'You've got to try it.'"

She tried, and she did. She started out playing first base, where she was a pretty good fielder and hitter, too. But not good enough to make the local All-Star team. That is when the All-American pitcher was born.

"I went home and thought, 'You know, I could be a pitcher. Then they would need me,' she said. "So, I started throwing in my backyard. I haven't turned back since."

Kennedy joined a club softball team in eighth grade and quickly found herself competing with and against future Division I talent. She received her first scholarship offer as soon as she joined the team — an experience she describes as "an eye-opening

moment.” Many more offers followed soon after.

Texas A&M checked all the boxes for Kennedy. She wanted to play in a high-level environment like the SEC and stay close to home.

“I visited it, loved it and that kind of locked it in for me,” Kennedy said. “I don’t think it sunk in at first — my little freshman self — that I committed to a four-year school, earned a scholarship and that my dream was coming true. To this day, I am still extremely thankful.”

After a coaching change following her freshman year at A&M, Kennedy faced a big decision. When Ford was hired as head coach, she made Kennedy her first call. Kennedy, who had fallen in love with Aggieland, chose to stay.

Kennedy’s sophomore and junior seasons were marked by significant growth, both in her abilities on the field and in her trust in the process. As a sophomore, she threw 119 innings, finishing with a 12-5 record and a solid 2.47 ERA. The Aggies advanced to the regional finals in Ford’s first season, setting the stage for what was to come.

In 2024, however, it became clear that Kennedy was the go-to arm in the circle. She pitched a remarkable 202 innings as a junior, while showcasing strong improvement across the board. She won 24 games and posted a sub-two ERA — an outstanding feat in a league as competitive as the SEC. Her performance helped lead the Aggies to their best SEC finish and earned the program the coveted distinction of hosting an NCAA Regional for the first time since 2018.

After sweeping through the College Station Regional, it was off to Austin to face Texas, the tournament’s No. 1 seed.

The Aggies threw punch after punch at the Longhorns, pushing the best-of-three series to the brink in front of a huge national television audience. In the end, A&M fell just shy of advancing to the

“

EMILEY IS PREPARED FOR THE WORLD, AND THAT’S REALLY WHAT OUR JOBS ARE. OBVIOUSLY, WE ARE EXPECTED TO WIN AT A HIGH RATE, BUT ULTIMATELY, WE PREPARE OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES FOR LIFE. I HOPE THE WORLD FOR HER, HONESTLY.

— TRISHA FORD



During her junior season, Kennedy earned All-SEC First Team honors after setting program records in innings pitched (100.1) and strikeouts (86) in league play. She also attained NFCA All-America Second Team honors, becoming the first left-handed pitcher to earn All-American status in 41 years. Kennedy continued her excellence into 2025, earning All-SEC First Team honors for the second consecutive year.



Women’s College World Series, dropping the decisive game, 6-5.

“I still think about it,” Kennedy said. “We were four outs away from the World Series, as a 16 seed, beating the No. 1 seed. It was a great three games, and we were only four outs away.”

Last year’s grit evolved into dominance for the 2025 season. The maroon and white stormed to unprecedented heights, being named a 2025 SEC Tournament Co-Champion and making history as the program’s first-ever No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA softball tournament.

Regardless of how the 2025 season ends, Ford has found it a joy to watch the transformation of Emiley Kennedy — both as a student-athlete and as a person.

“It’s been so cool to see her evolve from where she was previously to where she is today,” Ford said. “Emiley is prepared for the world, and that’s really what our jobs are. Obviously, we are expected to win at a high rate, but ultimately, we prepare our student-athletes for life. I hope the world for her, honestly.”

TREY HENDERSON '80

Meet the chair of the 2025 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees



ABOUT TREY

- » EARNED A DEGREE IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS FROM TEXAS A&M IN 1980
- » AGGIE FOOTBALL SEASON TICKET HOLDER AND GENEROUS 12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONOR
- » OWNER OF HENDERSON MINERAL INC.
- » HE AND HIS WIFE, BRIGETTEE, ARE THE PARENTS OF HALL '09, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW REBECCA, HUDSON '10 AND GRANDPARENTS OF GEORGE, CHARLIE AND JACK

Why did you choose to attend Texas A&M University?

Both of my parents graduated from Southern Methodist University (SMU), so I was actually raised as a Mustang. One of my dad's best friends, Rod Pittman '56, took us to Kyle Field for an Aggie Football game against SMU in the early 70s. Rod was a member of the Corps of Cadets, a Past President of The Aggie Club (now the 12th Man Foundation) and a member of The Association of Former Students' Board of Directors. Rod's son, Lane, and I were best friends and still are to this day. I visited Lane during his freshman year at Texas A&M when he was a manager for the Aggie Football team. A&M's culture, pride and traditions were a perfect fit for me, and I loved everything I experienced at the university.

When did you first get involved with the 12th Man Foundation, and what inspired you to further your involvement over the years?

Travis Dabney was my first contact with the 12th Man Foundation when he was a part of the Major Gifts department. We stayed in contact over time, and I was eventually able to give something that would earn us priority points and allow us to purchase season tickets for athletic events. I credit him for cultivating Brigettee's and my interest in supporting Texas A&M Athletics.

What has solidified your passion for supporting Aggie student-athletes?

What gives me great pride are the student-athletes from my hometown of Lufkin who have come through the athletic program. Having Aggie Football athletes like Donald Muhlbach, Terrence Kiel, Reggie McNeal and Jorvorskie Lane; Aggie Baseball athletes like Gandy and Tyler Stubblefield and Joey Register; Beau Muhlbach in Aggie Basketball; and Grant Ashby, who is currently on the Aggie Track & Field team, make me incredibly proud. I watched all of them grow up and had the opportunity to coach several of them. Watching them excel at the next level is an amazing feeling.

What has been the most rewarding part of serving on the Board of Trustees?

The people — my fellow trustees and their spouses, our amazing staff and their families and the awesome network of 12th Man Foundation donors who continue to show unbelievable support for our student-athletes. Also, getting to know the student-athletes and coaches as individuals, hearing their stories and learning their passions has been exceptionally fulfilling.

What motivates you to serve and further the 12th Man Foundation's mission?

Our mission of funding scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics drives my desire to serve. I am also very motivated by hearing the personal stories of our student-athletes. They are all so humble and appreciative of what 12th Man Foundation donors help provide for them, and they strive to be champions. I am in awe of each and every one of them.

What legacy do you hope to leave as chair of the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees?

I constantly remind myself that this organization is bigger than any one person. This year is not about me or my legacy but about building upon the foundation that was established many years ago through tremendous leadership and amazing success. Working alongside our staff and trustees, I am committed to advancing our mission and keeping Texas A&M at the forefront of college athletics.



JACE LAVIOLETTE '26

Staying true to his Aggie roots with unwavering loyalty

BY WILL JOHNSON '01

WHEN JACE LAVIOLETTE REFLECTS ON TEXAS A&M'S thrilling journey to the winner-take-all finale at the 2024 College World Series, he speaks with the wide-eyed wonder of a kid playing Little League.

"By far, the most fun I've ever had playing this game," said the Aggies' centerfielder.

The Katy, Texas native started swinging a bat as a young boy after his mother gave him an ultimatum: play baseball or join the Boy Scouts of America.

"At the moment, I was like, 'Dude, Boy Scouts are awesome,' but I think I chose the right path," LaViolette said with a chuckle. "I obviously chose to play baseball, and I fell in love with the game at a really young age."

Playing on college baseball's biggest stage, he brought star power to the A&M program while holding on to the youthful joy of the game. His love for baseball and being part of a team was shaped, in part, by the place he chose to play.

"The fans — you can't get much better than that," LaViolette said while reminiscing about the 2024 season. "It was just different. Everyone was rallying behind us. It felt like we were just one big family."

LaViolette understands what makes Aggieland special. Even as a rising star, he stays grounded and true to his roots. But make no mistake — his star is bright, and he made a commitment to letting it shine in College Station.

He led the charge that kept himself — and his teammates — at A&M during a time of transition.

"That's how much this school means to us," LaViolette said. "That's how much this university has done for us. I believe that once you're an Aggie, you're always an Aggie."

During that time of flux shortly after the 2024 College World Series, LaViolette was a steadying presence.

"Why try to go somewhere else when we can stay here, be a part of the best university in the nation and have the best fans in the nation," he said.

LaViolette and the core group that came just one swing away from a national championship returned to Aggieland for another season in 2025.

Beyond the accolades, LaViolette is also known for his memorable nickname, "Lord Tubbington" — a title bestowed by his ever-humorous teammate Hayden Schott. But that nickname did not suffice for long. On March 29, 2025, LaViolette became A&M's home run "king," launching his 57th career homer to break a tie with Daylan Holt '01, who hit 56 from 1998 to 2000.

"There's two ways to look at it: you can be happy, or you can be sad," Holt said lightheartedly about his record being on borrowed time. "For me and everything that Jace has done, I'm taking the happy route."

Holt has a great appreciation for how LaViolette has represented the program.

"He is a great kid," Holt said. "What he has been able to do and accomplish is absolutely crazy."

LaViolette is part of a different era of college baseball than Holt and other Aggie record holders — one defined by the transfer portal and NIL. He bypassed opportunities to enter the portal, and NIL has only enhanced his appreciation for A&M and its faithful fanbase.

"It's definitely put me in a position I never thought I would be in," LaViolette said. "It's put me in a position





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I CAN'T THANK THE 12TH MAN AND THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS ENOUGH FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE FOR ME AND MY FAMILY. IT HAS BEEN UNBELIEVABLE.

— JACE LAVIOLETTE '26

where I can better myself and do things that can help me for the long run.”

LaViolette knows what it means to be an Aggie — and just how special the support is for Aggie student-athletes.

“I can’t thank the 12th Man and the 12th Man Foundation donors enough for what they have done for me and my family,” he said. “It has been unbelievable.”

With a pro career on the horizon, LaViolette remains a star who has not forgotten the joy that first drew him to the game. Focused on what lies ahead, he has fully embraced his opportunities as an Aggie — and will leave behind a legacy rooted in pride, passion and a genuine love for Texas A&M.



LaViolette established himself as a power hitter for Texas A&M Baseball in 2023, earning Freshman All-American honors from multiple organizations after setting the Aggies’ freshman home run record with 21 homers. On March 29, 2025, LaViolette set the Aggie Baseball program record for career home runs after achieving his 57th homer, breaking a tie with Daylan Holt ’01.

TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS / ETHAN MITO (TOP LEFT), SYDNEY STEVENSON (MIDDLE), EVAN PILAT (BOTTOM RIGHT), ETHAN MITO (BOTTOM LEFT)



**NIL HAS GIVEN ME
LIFE-CHANGING
OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAVE
ALLOWED ME TO BE IN A PLACE
THAT I WANT TO BE AT — AND
THAT'S TEXAS A&M.**

RYAN PRAGER '25

AGGIE BASEBALL
STUDENT-ATHLETE



**THE SUPPORT FROM THE 12TH MAN
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WHEN WE TRAVEL TO OTHER
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DONORS, THANK YOU FOR
LETTING ME BE ABLE TO PLAY THE
SPORT OF MY DREAMS HERE.**

AVA UNDERWOOD '26

AGGIE VOLLEYBALL
STUDENT-ATHLETE



**TEXAS A&M HAS FOUND A
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SCHOOL, YOU HAVE THINGS TO
GET DONE AND YOU'RE ABLE
TO MAKE MONEY BUT YOU
HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT
THINGS. THEY'VE TRULY
HANDLED NIL BETTER THAN
ANYBODY IN THE COUNTRY.**

HENRY COLEMAN III '24

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STUDENT-ATHLETE

ANSWERING THE CALL



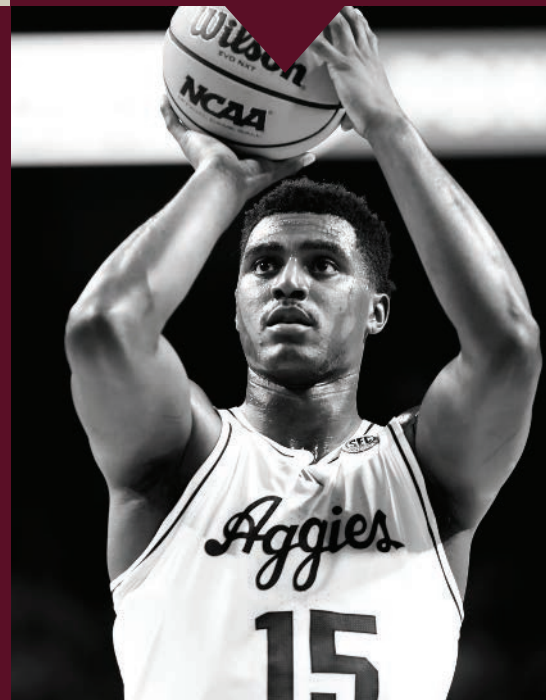
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AMAZING. JUST COMING HERE
AND NOT HAVING TO WORRY
ABOUT BEING ABLE TO EAT — IT
REALLY CHANGED MY LIFE IN
THAT ASPECT. I WASN'T A
PERSON THAT WAS ALWAYS
BLESSED WITH EVERYTHING.**

WILL LEE III '26

AGGIE FOOTBALL
STUDENT-ATHLETE





APRIL & JAY GRAHAM '92

Commemorating a historic gift in support of Texas A&M Athletics

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

IT WAS THANKSGIVING NIGHT, 1985, AND TEXAS A&M was hosting Texas with the Southwest Conference Championship and a trip to the Cotton Bowl on the line.

In one of the loudest games in Kyle Field history, the Aggies routed their rival, 42-10. The contest included the Longhorns' quarterback asking officials to penalize A&M for excessive crowd noise and concluded with cotton raining down from the stands, covering the field like snow.

Meanwhile in Houston, a 15-year-old Jay Graham was watching the nationally-televised event with some new friends. That was his introduction to Texas A&M.

Born and raised on a farm in southern Oklahoma and the son of a University of Oklahoma graduate, Jay was a diehard Sooner whose family had recently relocated to Houston for his father's career. As he witnessed A&M's dominant victory over the Longhorns, Jay discovered he had a common interest with Aggie fans — beating Texas.

That next fall, Jay experienced Aggie gameday in person for the first time with his father and brother when they visited campus for A&M's game against Southern Miss. They sat in the horseshoe on the north end of Kyle Field, and Jay watched the 12th Man in awe during the Aggies' victory. He was hooked.

Jay enrolled at A&M in the fall of 1988, earned a petroleum engineering degree and went on to become the extremely successful entrepreneur

he is today, all while embracing everything about being an Aggie.

"Texas A&M probably defines me," said Jay, who along with his wife April, have generously given back to the university in numerous ways. "Just about every piece of clothing I wear every day has A&M on it. I'm 100-percent convinced I am where I am today because of Texas A&M."

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Likewise, A&M is where it is today — and where it will be able to go tomorrow — because of people like April and Jay Graham.

The Grahams have devoted their time, with Jay serving on the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents since 2019 as well as the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees from 2018-21, and they have generously shared their resources in support of multiple projects and initiatives in both athletics and academics.

In 2022, the couple took their philanthropy to an unprecedented level by committing a \$25 million lead gift to the Centennial Campaign.

"The timing was right for us personally and financially," Jay said. "This is the first significant opportunity we have had to really make an impact in a way that we hope is transformational for Aggie Athletics."

Their extraordinary gift represents the single largest capital commitment ever made in support of Texas A&M Athletics.

"Jay and April are great donors and great

friends,” said 12th Man Foundation Senior Vice President of Major Giving Programs Brady Bullard ’95. “What they did made the success of the Centennial Campaign possible. Transformational gifts such as this don’t happen often, and the Grahams should be recognized and celebrated for their vision and commitment. I am extremely honored to be a part of this and watch the success of my old college buddy and his family and the impact they continue to make on Texas A&M.”

In recognition of their historic gift, the redeveloped area south of Kyle Field is now Graham Athletic Complex. On Feb. 14, 2025, the world-class complex was officially dedicated to celebrate and commemorate the Grahams for their extraordinary support of Texas A&M Athletics and Aggie student-athletes.

“This complex is our wow factor,” said Texas A&M Head Football Coach Mike Elko. “The ability to have everything connected, everything right here and everything at an elite level — thank you to the Graham family and Centennial Campaign donors for everything you did to make that an accomplishment.

“Student-athletes still care about facilities. As much as this world has changed, this complex shows the commitment this university has to being at the forefront of the athletic future.”

For the Grahams, the motivation to give back comes from their strong faith and their belief that to whom much is given, much will be required. From their church and local charities to A&M’s athletics and engineering departments, they believe that being good stewards of their resources means making a difference in the lives of others while leaving a legacy.

“I’ve seen what giving back to A&M has done for Jay,” said April, a Texas Tech graduate who was born and raised in Albuquerque, before moving to Houston when she was 12. “I may not have attended A&M, but I see the love that people have for this university. It changes people. It changes who they are and what they do, so it’s always been important to give back.”



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THIS COMPLEX IS OUR WOW FACTOR. THE ABILITY TO HAVE EVERYTHING CONNECTED, EVERYTHING RIGHT HERE AND EVERYTHING AT AN ELITE LEVEL — THANK YOU TO THE GRAHAM FAMILY AND CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN DONORS FOR EVERYTHING YOU DID TO MAKE THAT AN ACCOMPLISHMENT.

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I'VE SEEN WHAT GIVING BACK TO A&M HAS DONE FOR JAY. I MAY NOT HAVE ATTENDED A&M, BUT I SEE THE LOVE THAT PEOPLE HAVE FOR THIS UNIVERSITY. IT CHANGES PEOPLE. IT CHANGES WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DO, SO IT'S ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO GIVE BACK.

— APRIL GRAHAM

THE PHONE CALL

Jay's life was forever changed by a fellow Aggie named Billy Pete Huddleston '56, a Junction Boy who played for the legendary Bear Bryant. The former visiting petroleum engineering professor and successful entrepreneur took Jay under his wing while he was at A&M and beyond, offering his wisdom and support every step of the way.

“His dynamic nature, his success...you wanted to be like him,” Jay said of Huddleston, who led an extraordinary life up until his death in 2019. “He taught me, trained me and had faith in me.”

When Jay was looking for a new opportunity several years after graduation, one phone call to Huddleston was all it took to secure a job. After four years of working for Huddleston and four years with another oil and gas company, Jay felt like the time was right to start his own business. Again, it took just one phone call to Huddleston to make it a reality.

“I was expecting him to tell me not to do it,” Jay recalled, assuming his mentor would offer some sage advice. “Instead, he gave me an initial

investment. He knew just from me being an Aggie that he did not need anything else from me. That's how we got started.”

The rest, as they say, is history. In 2007, Jay co-founded WildHorse Resources along with his friend and business partner, Anthony Bahr '91. Since taking the company public in 2014, Jay's career as an oil and gas entrepreneur has continued to flourish, extending well beyond his wildest dreams. Today, he serves as chairman and CEO of Spur Energy Partners.

“We've been blessed as a family, and for us, it's important to give back as much as we can,” said Jay, who along with April contributed to the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field, Bright Football Complex and Texas A&M Lettermen's Association facility in addition to donating to A&M's football, men's basketball, women's basketball, baseball and men's golf programs.

“When we learned about this opportunity with the Centennial Campaign, it was important that it was not sport specific. It has helped our football program, but we also now have an entire complex

The Grahams met in 1999 and married in 2001. Jay serves as chairman and CEO of Spur Energy Partners and also makes significant contributions to higher education as a Texas A&M University System Board of Regents member, appointed by Governor Abbott in 2019. He also served on the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees from 2018-21.





In addition to their historic lead gift to the Centennial Campaign, the Grahams continue to support Texas A&M Athletics as dedicated baseball, softball, football and men's basketball season ticket holders.

dedicated to academics, nutrition, mental health and wellness for all our student-athletes.”

A FAMILY LEGACY

April and Jay are proud parents of their two sons, Jacob and Jackson. Jacob, Class of 2024, earned his finance degree at A&M in May 2024 and has served as the primary deep snapper for the A&M football team since the 2023 season. Jackson, Class of 2028, is now following in his older brother's footsteps as a long snapper for Aggie Football.

“Having sons in the football program, you realize what student-athletes go through,” April said. “They say it’s a job, but it’s beyond a job. To do everything they do, it’s a struggle, and they need all-around support.”

The family's love of sports goes all the way back to Jay's childhood. He was a standout high school baseball player and attempted to walk on to the Aggie Baseball team while at A&M. Like so many Aggie families, A&M sporting events have been one of their primary sources of entertainment over the years.

“Our first family football season tickets were in the south end zone when there was bleacher

seating,” Jay said. “We bought a family pack of tickets because that’s all we could afford. To have the players run through the end zone and our boys run around the grass out there was a lot of fun. It truly is an experience you get to share with family.”

Beyond athletics, the Grahams have given numerous scholarships through the Texas A&M Foundation for petroleum engineering students and are proud sponsors of Aggie Park as Pillars of the Aggie Network. They also co-founded the Petroleum Ventures Certificate program at Texas A&M University, a collaboration between Mays Business School and the Harold Vance Department of Petroleum Engineering.

Through their spirit of philanthropy, the Grahams have made an enduring impact across A&M's campus. And with their transformational gift to the Centennial Campaign, the Grahams will make a difference in Aggie student-athletes' lives for years to come.

“We’re incredibly appreciative of April and Jay Graham, who have consistently gone above and beyond in support of Texas A&M,” said 12th Man Foundation President and CEO Travis Dabney ’96. “They took the time to understand

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THIS IS A FAMILY GIFT AND A FAMILY LEGACY. THIS IS FOR ALL OF US TO IMPACT A&M GOING FORWARD. WE MAY BE THE LEAD GIFT, BUT WE'RE NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT. THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT IS WHAT EVERYBODY CAN GIVE.

— JAY GRAHAM '92

the vision for the Centennial Campaign and the impact it would make on our student-athletes. Their generous support set the campaign in motion and has proved to be the cornerstone we're building upon.”

“April and Jay represent all those things that make this place the greatest university on the planet,” Texas A&M University President General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III said. “They are great Americans, they are great human beings, they are great Aggies

and they are unbelievable contributors to the future of student-athletes here at Texas A&M.”

For April and Jay Graham, it is about Aggies helping their fellow Aggies and leaving a legacy for the next generation.

“This is a family gift and a family legacy,” Jay said. “This is for all of us to impact A&M going forward. We may be the lead gift, but we're not the most important gift. The most important gift is what everybody can give.”





CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

ADAM C. SINN '00

ACADEMIC & WELLNESS CENTER

Modern facility creates revolutionary hub for Aggie student-athlete success

BY IVY ROBINSON '20

A JOURNEY DOWN HOUSTON STREET ON A&M'S CAMPUS unveils the grand entrance to Graham Athletic Complex, guiding visitors to the front doors of the cutting-edge Adam C. Sinn '00 Academic & Wellness Center. The facility is a testament to Texas A&M's commitment to holistically developing its collegiate competitors and providing the premier student-athlete experience across all college sports.

The three-story, architectural masterpiece is a multipurpose space, offering a wide range of services and resources for all Aggie student-athletes. The largest of its kind in the Southeastern Conference, the building

contains 60 offices for student support staff members, 75 private study and tutoring rooms, five classrooms (including computer labs) and two conference rooms. More than 27,000 net square footage is specifically dedicated for educational and learning purposes, ensuring student-athletes have an elite space to help them thrive physically, mentally and academically — all while preparing for their future careers.

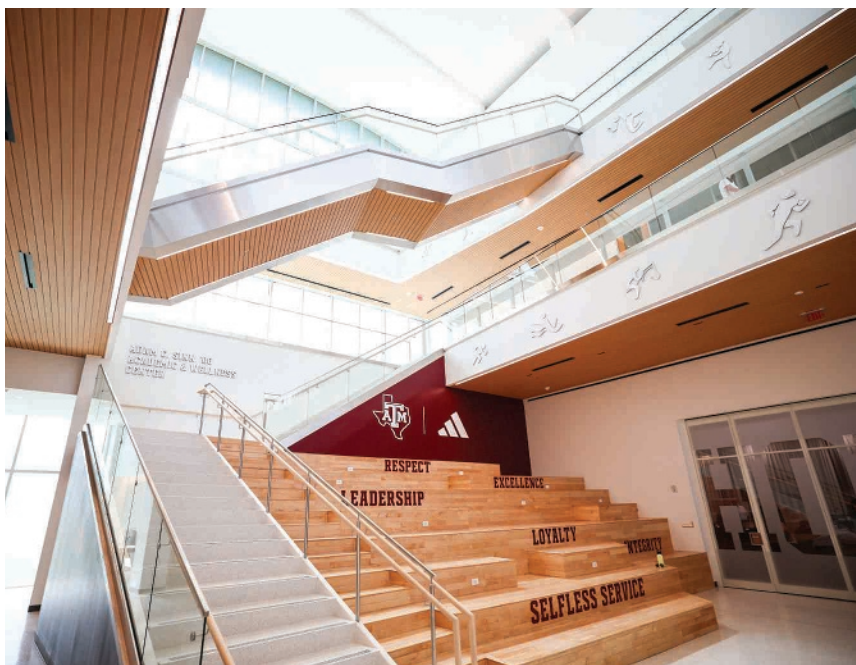
In August 2024, benefactors of Texas A&M and university leadership gathered to commemorate the center's namesake Adam Sinn '00. Attendees toured the beautiful facility and heard remarks from Aggie

Baseball pitcher Ryan Prager '25 to gain his perspective on the new space.

"The amount of people who work so hard to provide resources for us and have buildings like the Sinn center is incredible," Prager said.

Sinn, a first-generation Aggie and Illinois native, is the youngest donor to make an eight-figure gift to the 12th Man Foundation. After building an incredibly successful career as a commodities trader, the Mays Business School graduate is now impacting student-athlete success in competition, the classroom and in life through his gift to the Centennial Campaign.

"I want Texas A&M to win," Sinn said. I want Texas A&M student-athletes to win. When our alumni are winning in business, we must set the path forward for the next generation if



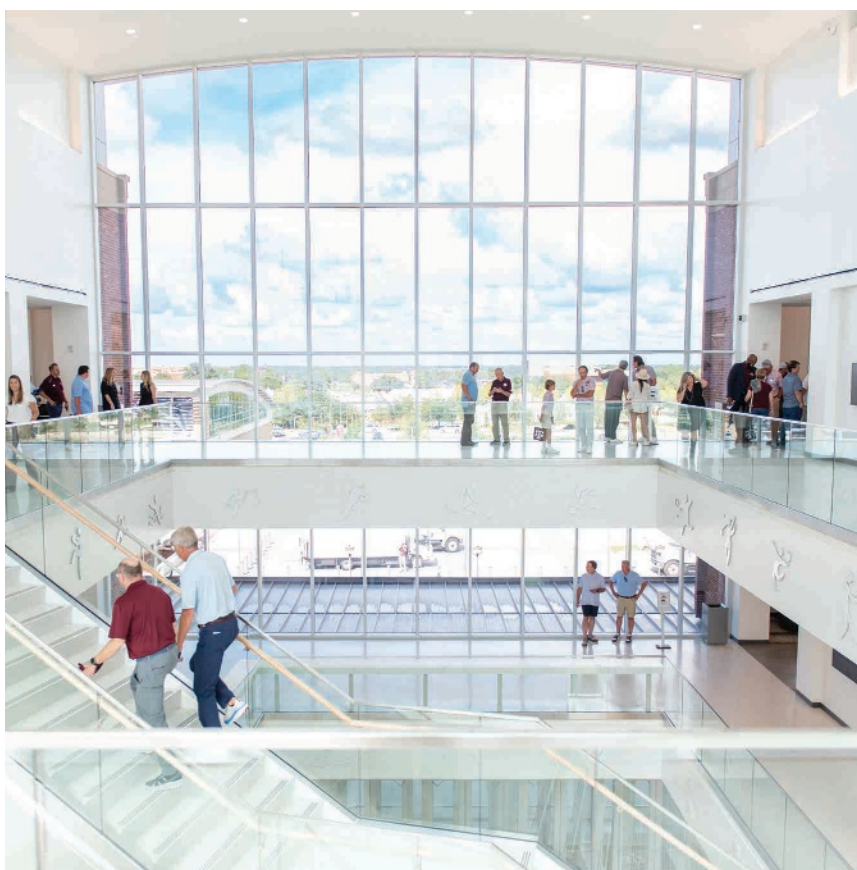
we want our school to be the best."

Upon entering the center's main entrance, visitors step into the Pam '75 & Larry L. Little '73 Lobby filled with abundant natural light and pristine white walls. The north end of level one features offices and spaces dedicated for student-athlete support beyond the classroom, including name, image and likeness (NIL) and student-athlete engagement. A recording studio and podcast room offers broadcast-ready environments for student-athletes to fulfill NIL opportunities and promote their personal brand. Performance nutrition staff are also housed in this area, providing personalized resources such as dietary advising and dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) for student-athletes.

The Linda & Dennis Clark '68 Nutrition Center sits adjacent at the south end of level one, featuring a 500-person dining facility (including

“THE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE WHO WORK SO HARD TO PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR US AND HAVE BUILDINGS LIKE THE SINN CENTER IS INCREDIBLE.

— RYAN PRAGER '25



outdoor seating) with a 3,300-square foot prep kitchen, four “hot” stations and to-go lockers.

Level two of the center encompasses corridors of study and collaboration spaces, tutor rooms, laptop bars, flexible conference rooms, computer labs and offices for counseling, sports psychology, compliance and academic services staff. A trip up the “flying staircase” to level three leads to additional study rooms, learning and mentor labs and a collaboration zone with informal pods for student-athletes to work together.

Within the fiercely competitive landscape of college sports, the ability to attract, retain and successfully develop elite student-athletes is not only important — it is essential for championship success. The Adam C. Sinn ’00 Academic & Wellness Center is the beating heart of Aggie student-athlete well-being and prosperity, standing as a transformative powerhouse for current competitors in the maroon and white and for generations to come.



LINDA & DENNIS CLARK '68 NUTRITION CENTER

State-of-the-art center offers comprehensive dining for student-athletes

BY AUBRIE STROMBERG '24

THE LINDA & DENNIS CLARK '68 NUTRITION CENTER IS A cornerstone of Texas A&M Athletics' commitment to the holistic development of Aggie student-athletes. Located within the Adam C. Sinn '00 Academic & Wellness Center at Graham Athletic Complex, this state-of-the-art space offers a comprehensive dining experience designed to meet the nutritional demands of elite competitors.

On-site sports dietitians and nutritionists work directly with student-athletes to optimize their dietary intake. These experts provide personalized meal plans, hydration strategies and supplement guidance, helping student-athletes understand the direct impact of nutrition on training, recovery and overall performance.

"The resources here are just amazing," said Aggie Football student-athlete, Terry Bussey '28. "Being able to go into Clark and get the nutritious food you need is really big."

Beyond fueling Aggie student-athletes, the Clark Nutrition Center fosters camaraderie and team-building among athletes, coaches and staff. The facility accommodates up to 300 guests indoors, with an additional 200 seats available on an outdoor patio,

providing a welcoming space for team meals and fellowship.

At the heart of the center is a 3,300-square-foot kitchen, fully equipped with modern appliances to prepare a diverse selection of fresh, nutritious and performance-enhancing meals. Every detail — from the menu planning to meal presentation — is designed to ensure student-athletes receive the fuel they need to succeed.

The facility stands as a testament to the generosity and vision of Linda and Dennis Clark '68, longtime supporters of Texas A&M. Dennis' connection to the university dates back to high school, when he stumbled upon a 1958 edition of *Aggieland*, the university's yearbook. Captivated by A&M's traditions and legacy, Dennis instantly knew it was the place he belonged.

More than just a dining facility, the Clark Nutrition Center embodies Texas A&M's dedication to athletic excellence, student-athlete well-being and the enduring impact of its former students. Through philanthropy and vision from donors like Linda and Dennis Clark, the university continues to provide unparalleled resources that power the success of current and future generations of Aggie student-athletes.



CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

COOLIDGE

FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE CENTER

College athletics' largest indoor football facility
sets elite standard of excellence

BY MEGAN HOFFMANN '22

WHEN AGGIE STUDENT-ATHLETES STEP THROUGH THE MASSIVE 30-by-30-foot door connecting the Coolidge Practice Fields to the Coolidge Football Performance Center, they are walking through more than just an entrance — they are entering the premier indoor football practice facility in all of college athletics.

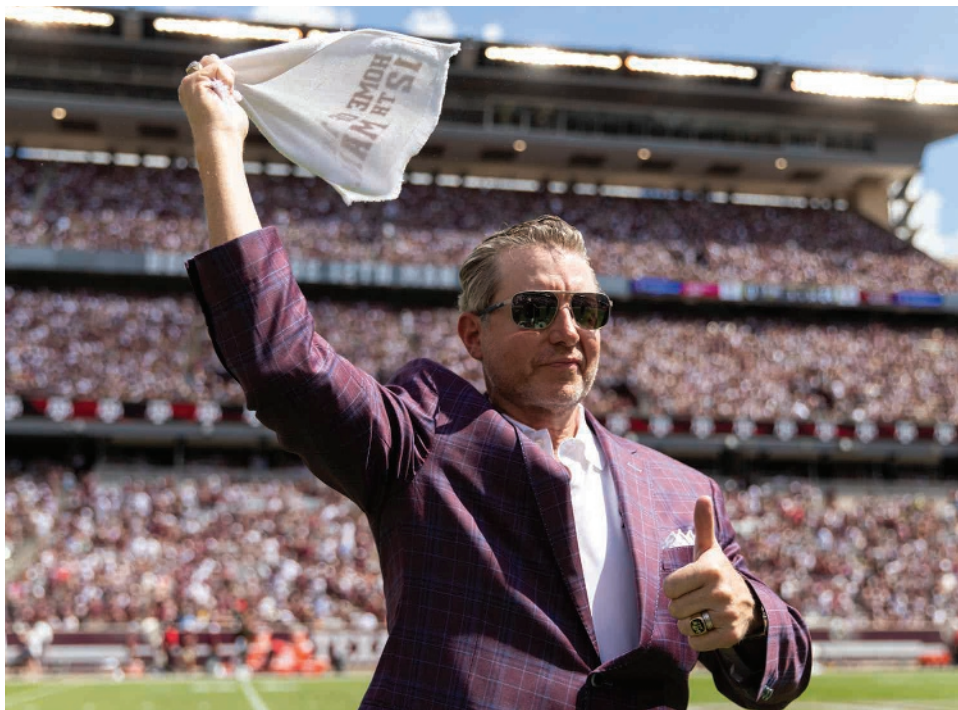
Located near the southwest corner of Kyle Field within Graham Athletic Complex, the 132,000-square-foot Coolidge Football Performance Center is not only the largest indoor practice facility in college football, but an architectural marvel designed to elevate every aspect of Aggie Football.

At the core of the facility is a 160-yard, fully air-conditioned indoor practice field, built with player performance and

safety in mind. The facility includes 10-yard run-offs on each side, offering plenty of space for maximum practice effort.

“One of the things that we were very intelligent in was how it was designed and built,” head football coach Mike Elko said. “When an athlete is running full speed at the sideline, a lot of schools have run-offs that are only five yards. That athlete is running into something. That’s not ideal.”

The attention to detail extends beyond just safety. Drop-down field goal posts at both end zones complement the versatile practice space while strategically placed camera platforms ensure every drill and run-through can be captured and later analyzed during team film sessions. An elevated observation deck also provides premium viewing areas for families, recruits and NFL scouts, offering a bird’s-eye view



of the action below.

This transformative space would not exist without the generosity of David Coolidge '87, who generously contributed a \$15 million lead gift to the Centennial Campaign to make the facility a reality. As a former member of Jackie Sherrill's famed 12th Man Kickoff Team, Coolidge understands firsthand the importance of premier training spaces for football student-athletes.

"I want to be a part of the solution," Coolidge said. "Our program has never been in the position it's in now. I have never seen it this strong where you have administration, athletics and coaches that all seem to be on the same page with the same vision."

With direct access to both the Coolidge Practice Fields and the Bright-Slocum Center for Texas A&M Football, the Coolidge Football

Performance Center creates a seamless training environment that positions Texas A&M at the forefront of college football.

"I was here as a coach in what we had prior, and I can't tell you how innovative, elite and top of the line this facility really is," Elko said. "We can come in here as a full team and run two practices back-to-back and have zero issues. Our ability to function at an elite level every time we come inside of it is second to none."

For Texas A&M Football, the future is not only bright — it is already taking shape within the nation's premier indoor practice facility.



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— MIKE ELKO





CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

BRIGHT-SLOCUM CENTER FOR TEXAS A&M FOOTBALL

Aggie Football is forging champions and shaping
winning future in top-tier facility

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

CHAMPIONSHIPS AREN'T JUST WON ON GAMEDAY — they're built in the relentless grind of the offseason. They take shape in early mornings, late nights and countless hours of preparation that separate the best from the rest. For Texas A&M Football, that pursuit of excellence begins inside the Bright-Slocum Center for Texas A&M Football at Graham Athletic Complex.

Since opening in 2003, the Bright-Slocum Center has served as the home of Aggie Football. Recognized as one of the premier facilities in college athletics, it has undergone more than 36,000 square feet of renovations, modernizing every aspect of its infrastructure. The latest \$17.1

million redevelopment, made possible through donor support of the Centennial Campaign, reflects Texas A&M's continued investment in its football program. A lead gift from Wayne Roberts '85 helped propel this project forward, ensuring the facility meets the highest standards for player development, recruiting and daily operations.

With a vision to honor two legendary figures in Aggie history, Roberts requested the facility be renamed the Bright-Slocum Center, paying tribute to legendary head coach R.C. Slocum alongside the original namesake and pioneer supporter, Harvey R. "Bum" Bright '43.

"If it says Texas A&M on the jersey, I want us to

excel,” Roberts said. “I want to ensure our student-athletes, coaches and staff have everything they need to reach their full potential and compete for championships — both on and off the football field.”

From the moment visitors step into Tommie E. Lohman '59 Hall, which serves as the Bright-Slocum Center's grand lobby, they enter a facility designed to elevate Aggie Football. Every space is meticulously designed to support success at the highest level.

When the redeveloped facility reopened in August 2023, it introduced expanded player development spaces, including dedicated meeting rooms for each position group and team meeting



rooms. It also features state-of-the-art offensive and defensive walkthrough rooms for real-time game analysis and planning and the Foss Family Recruiting Room, a premier space overlooking the Coolidge Football Performance Center that highlights the program's elite status to prospective student-athletes.

“The Bright-Slocum Center is the heart of our program,” said Head Coach Mike Elko. “It's where we develop our student-athletes, showcase our program to recruits and build the foundation for our success. From daily operations to game-planning, everything we do to compete at the highest level starts here. This facility is a testament to the incredible support from 12th Man Foundation donors and reflects Texas A&M's commitment to winning championships.”

Beyond the latest renovations, the Bright-Slocum Center features top-tier resources, including the Vicky and Terry Klein '78 Locker Room, advanced hydrotherapy pools, world-class sports medicine facilities and more — ensuring that player development is second to none.

Every detail, every upgrade and every investment reflects a singular focus: equipping Aggie Football with the tools to win.

Fueled by the unwavering support of 12th Man Foundation donors, Texas A&M Football is not just building for today — it's laying the foundation for a championship future.



“

THIS FACILITY IS A TESTAMENT TO THE INCREDIBLE SUPPORT FROM 12TH MAN FOUNDATION DONORS AND REFLECTS TEXAS A&M'S COMMITMENT TO WINNING CHAMPIONSHIPS.

— MIKE ELKO



CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

R.A. 'MURRAY' FASKEN '38

INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

Cutting-edge indoor track facility cements Texas A&M's position among the nation's elite programs

BY MEGAN HOFFMANN '22

A NEW CHAPTER IN TEXAS A&M TRACK & FIELD EXCELLENCE began in 2024 with the opening of the R.A. 'Murray' Fasken '38 Indoor Track & Field facility, a venue as impressive as the program's championship legacy.

Located at the intersection of George Bush Drive and Olsen Boulevard, the 130,000-square-foot facility is just 100 yards away from E.B. Cushing Stadium, creating an elite complex on west campus that lives up to the nine-time national championship program.

Made possible through the generous support of lead gift donors Amy '84 and Tim Leach '82 as part of the historic Centennial Campaign, the Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility stands as a monument to Texas A&M's commitment to excellence.

"It's absolutely fantastic," said Pat Henry, head coach of the Texas A&M Track & Field program.

"I've been around the world. I've seen a lot of tracks. There is nowhere like this."

The Leaches chose to name the facility in honor of Fasken, a 1938 Texas A&M graduate and one of the university's earliest benefactors who quietly supported both academics and athletics.

"Murray Fasken was one of the most influential leaders and philanthropists at Texas A&M over the last century," said Tim Leach. "He led and supported programs in such a way that many Aggies have never heard of his legacy."

Every detail of the Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility was designed with championship performance in mind. The 200-meter, six-lane track, featuring a cutting-edge Mondo Super X 720 surface, is permanently banked precisely at 12 degrees — a



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NOWHERE LIKE THIS.**

— PAT HENRY

level that is on brand for Aggieland and aligns with the specifications of America’s elite indoor venues.

From the sprint straightaways to dedicated spaces for pole vault, long jump and triple jump, the Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility offers Aggie student-athletes everything they need to train year-round. Beyond the main competition area, athletes also have access to 60-meter warm-up lanes and an outdoor practice area featuring a 250-meter, six-lane track.

“We’ve been very pleased with the way the facility runs,” Henry said. “I’m absolutely amazed.”

In addition to its premier training features, the venue also offers an

impressive spectator capacity of approximately 4,000. The raised seating design surrounding the track ensures clear view of all competition areas from any location.

The Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility represents a significant achievement of the Centennial Campaign, strengthening the university’s ability to attract and develop elite talent.

Already certified by World Athletics, the international governing body for the sport, the Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility stands ready to host competitions at every level — from conference championships to international meets. The facility made its championship-level debut as the host of the 2025 SEC Indoor

Track & Field Championships, where the Texas A&M men’s team captured its first-ever SEC indoor title in March.

“It would not have happened without the support of Tim and Amy Leach,” Henry said. “They are dedicated to Texas A&M and to the advancement of our athletics programs.”

As Texas A&M Athletics continues its pursuit of championship excellence, the Fasken Indoor Track & Field facility represents the power of visionary support. In a program steeped in tradition and championship-level success, this world-class venue provides Aggie student-athletes with the environment they need to train, compete and chase greatness at the very highest level.



McFERRIN PLAZA

McFERRIN PLAZA HONORS THE VISIONARY SUPPORTERS WHOSE GENEROUS

contributions to past capital campaigns funded transformative facilities that laid the foundation for Texas A&M Athletics' pursuit of excellence.

Located between Kyle Field and the Coolidge Football Performance Center at Graham Athletic Complex, the plaza is named in recognition of two of those visionary supporters — Dorothy and Artie McFerrin — whose extraordinary leadership and steadfast commitment to the 12th Man Foundation left a lasting legacy. Their profound impact on the trajectory of Aggie Athletics continues to inspire excellence and will benefit Texas A&M for generations to come.

Artie McFerrin's journey as an Aggie began in 1955 when, as a seventh-grader, he attended his first Texas A&M football game at Rice Stadium. After witnessing a thrilling comeback, he left that day as a devoted Aggie fan, possessing a passion that would shape his future and his family's.

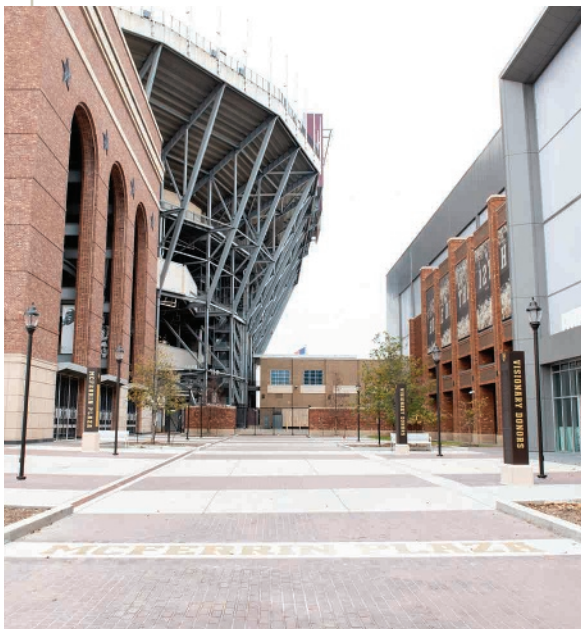
A native of Beaumont, Artie attended Texas A&M University, earning a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1965 and a master's degree in the same field in 1969. While a student at A&M, Artie was a member of Company E-1 in the Corps of Cadets.

In 1966, Artie married Dorothy Jersild, and together they raised their two children, Jeffrey and Jennifer. Artie's entrepreneurial spirit and unyielding enthusiasm led to the founding of several chemical processing companies during his highly successful professional career, yet his heart remained deeply tied to his alma mater.

Dorothy and Artie chose to give back to Texas A&M in transformational ways through their financial resources, selfless service and leadership, becoming among the most generous supporters of Texas A&M Athletics. Their lead gifts to the Kyle Field Redevelopment Campaign and other significant projects elevated Texas A&M's athletic programs to new heights. Beyond athletics, the McFerrins' influence extends across the entire Texas A&M campus, reflecting their deep commitment to the university's values and future.

An Aggie to the core, Artie served on the 12th Man Foundation Board of Trustees, including a term as chair in 2013. His steady leadership and steadfast support were instrumental in the historic redevelopment of Kyle Field. Artie was named a Distinguished Alumnus of Texas A&M University in 2008, and in 2015, the McFerrins' lifetime of exemplary service and support was honored with the prestigious E. King Gill Award.

Through their extraordinary commitment, service and leadership, Dorothy and Artie have created a legacy that will endure, inspiring future generations of Aggies to give back and support the university they hold dear.





CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

WATTS PLAZA

LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF KYLE FIELD AND POSITIONED between the entrances of the Adam C. Sinn '00 Academic & Wellness Center, Bright-Slocum Center for Texas A&M Football and the Davis Player Development Center, Watts Plaza welcomes visitors to the unmatched facilities of Graham Athletic Complex.

Named in recognition of Centennial Campaign donors Crystal and David Watts, the plaza's design honors all Centennial Campaign donors for their remarkable support of Texas A&M Athletics. The 12th Man Foundation's Centennial Campaign, launched in April 2022 with an ambitious \$120 million goal, surpassed expectations by raising nearly \$123 million by April 2023. These contributions have provided significant enhancements to the academic, wellness and athletic development of current

and future Aggie student-athletes.

To honor the generosity of these donors, two commemorative pillars were installed within Watts Plaza. These pillars serve as a lasting tribute to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the Centennial Campaign, ensuring their names are etched into the fabric of Texas A&M Athletics. Such recognition acknowledges the significant financial support and celebrates the shared vision and commitment to the university's future.

Watts Plaza not only adds to the aesthetics of Graham Athletic Complex but embodies the spirit of giving that propels Texas A&M Athletics forward. As the future unfolds, the plaza will stand as a reminder of the extraordinary collective effort and generosity that make athletics excellence at Texas A&M possible.



JA'MAR TOOMBS '03

Aggie Football letterman fulfills promise to earn his A&M degree

BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS '86

JA'MAR TOOMBS KEPT HIS PROMISE.

In May 2024 — 26 years after he arrived in College Station — the former Texas A&M fullback earned his degree in agricultural leadership and development and walked the stage at Reed Arena.

It fulfilled a promise to himself, his mother, his tutor and his late son.

"I always felt like it was an honor in itself that, even though I didn't get stardom after leaving A&M, they still treated me like Johnny Manziel," Toombs said. "I love the time that I played and what it did for me, but being able to finish and get my degree and be a 'real' alum, I feel like that puts me on the same level. I wasn't just somebody who was on the field. I went through the grind and got the paperwork, too."

Toombs, a highly recruited running back from Kilgore, Texas, originally committed to Florida State. When his mother, Angela Belle, asked how she was supposed to watch him play at a school 750 miles from her home, Toombs told her she could watch on TV. Soon enough, he was making a trip to A&M.

"I enjoyed my visit," Toombs said, "but I told them, 'I want to sleep on it,' not wanting to make a rash decision. I was still leaning toward Florida State, but that night, I woke up in the middle of the night hearing the Aggie War Hymn. It was crazy. I said, 'I guess I'm going to A&M.'"

Toombs won the hearts of Aggies, and A&M won his heart. In three seasons, to chants of "Toooooombs," the Big Rumble gained 1,638 yards from scrimmage and scored 27 touchdowns.

"When I first went to a game, I thought they were

booing him," Belle said. "I asked my husband, 'Why are they booing him? They don't even know him.' He hadn't even been there long. I asked Ja'Mar the same thing when the game was over, and he said, 'Momma, they aren't booing. They're saying Toooooombs.' It was something else."

Following his junior season at A&M, Toombs declared for the NFL Draft. The decision went against the advice of head coach R.C. Slocum and the wishes of his mother, who hoped he would stay in school and finish his degree. Toombs, though, was driven by a strong desire to support his family with the opportunity a rookie contract could provide.

Toombs arrived at the Scouting Combine heavier than expected, raising concerns about his readiness for the next level. Although he never got the opportunity to play in the NFL, he continued pursuing his dream in the Arena Football League with the Dallas Desperados and New York Dragons.

Toombs admits that returning to A&M would have been the right move after his NFL aspirations fell short, but with three children to support, providing for his family took priority. He began working, including as a substitute teacher and an assistant football coach.

He took a mix of online and community college courses on and off through the years, chipping away at the 51 credit hours he lacked for a degree when he left A&M in 2001.

Tiersa Hopkins worked as an academic specialist for the athletics department while Toombs was in school. She took Toombs under her wing, not only tutoring him but serving as a second mother to him.

“

IT'S JUST FULFILLING, KNOWING THAT I STARTED SOMETHING A LONG TIME AGO AND WAS ABLE TO FINALLY FINISH IT. IT'S SOMETHING I REALLY WANTED TO DO.

— JA'MAR TOOMBS '03

Even after they both left A&M, Hopkins continued to serve as an advisor, a mentor, a tutor and an encourager for Toombs. She cried as many tears of joy as Toombs did when he walked across the stage in Aggieland.

“It took so much sticking with it, but I knew he would do it,” Hopkins said. “I had no doubt about it. He has come too far and put too much into this university not to walk away with that diploma.

“Once you get that degree, they can’t take that away. He earned that. Ja’Mar now is in position to have that professional job he’s always wanted.”

Toombs did not get serious about completing his degree until he made a promise to his oldest son, Cory. In 2009, Cory was diagnosed with acinic cell carcinoma, a cancer of the neck and throat. He went through dozens of surgeries and radiation treatments before his death in 2021 at the age of 23. Lamar University, where Cory was attending school as an aspiring graphic artist, awarded him with an honorary degree.

Cory inspired Ja’Mar to become a first-generation college graduate.

“We’d talk about a whole bunch of stuff,” Toombs said of his son. “I would tell him, ‘I’m going to go back and finish my school. That will propel me hopefully to find somewhere I’m making good money, and I want to one day be able to fund a scholarship in your name for art kids.’ He said, ‘Well, you make sure you go back and get it.’

“I told him, ‘I’m not going to let anybody forget you.’”

Three years after the death of his son, and 24 years after his final carry at A&M, Toombs earned his diploma. His Aggie Ring indicates he’s the Class of 2003, but he walked with the Class of 2024.

“I told them, ‘I’m glad y’all let me crash your graduation,’” Toombs said.

Much changed at A&M from the time he started to the time he finished, including the name of his major. He began as an agriculture development major, which changed to agricultural leadership and development.

He is changed, too, after finishing what he started.

“I hate that it took so long,” Toombs said. “I didn’t think about filling out employment forms way back then and how important that degree was. It’s just fulfilling, knowing that I started something a long time ago and was able to finally finish it. It’s something I really wanted to do.”

Amid the 12th Man’s chants of “Toooo-mbs,” the Aggie Football letterman had a memorable performance during the 1998 Nebraska game when the Aggies defeated the defending national champion Cornhuskers, 28-21. This inaugural Maroon Out game marked a pivotal victory that would help set the stage for the Aggies’ first-ever Big 12 Championship title later that December.



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS / LAURA MCKENZIE (BOTTOM RIGHT)
TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS (TOP LEFT) | PHOTO COURTESY OF TIERIA HUDSON (BOTTOM LEFT)

BRADY BULLARD '95

12th Man Foundation's Senior Vice President of Major Giving Programs

BY KATELYN BUYS '14



ABOUT BRADY

- » FROM SWEENEY, TEXAS
- » GRADUATED FROM A&M IN 1995 WITH A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN KINESIOLOGY
- » EARNED A MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN 1996
- » HE AND HIS WIFE, JACKIE, HAVE THREE SONS: BRADY '21, NOAH AND JACKSON
- » FAVORITE SITCOM IS SEINFELD
- » ENJOYS TRAVELING WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY AND OPERATING TRACTORS & CHAINSAWS IN HIS FREE TIME

FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES, THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION'S Major Gifts staff has played a vital role in securing transformational support for Texas A&M Athletics. With a steadfast commitment to donor relationships, visionary leadership and a relentless pursuit of excellence, the team has consistently risen to every challenge, helping Aggie Athletics compete at the highest level.

A key factor in the department's extraordinary success is its stability. Since its inception, Major Gifts has had only three leaders: Stu Starner, followed by Travis Dabney — now the 12th Man Foundation's President and CEO — and Brady Bullard. Each has built upon the vision of their predecessor, ensuring that while faces may change, the department's mission remains unchanged: to identify potential donors, build meaningful relationships and make a compelling case for supporting Texas A&M Athletics.

Bullard joined the Major Gifts staff in 2014 and was promoted to senior vice president of major giving programs in 2017. Under his leadership of Major Gifts, the 12th Man Foundation reached a historic milestone with the completion of the Centennial Campaign in April 2022, raising an impressive \$122.9 million in philanthropic support. This remarkable achievement was more than just a fundraising triumph — it was a testament to the trust, passion and shared vision between the 12th Man Foundation and its generous donors.

"Brady's approach to leading Major Gifts is rooted in a deep understanding of connection and purpose," said Vice President of Major Gifts Brian Bishop '91. "He doesn't just cultivate donations; he fosters relationships that empower donors to

feel part of a mission larger than themselves. His ability to inspire and connect with donors is what makes him a true leader in our organization — all while using his sharp sense of humor to create an atmosphere of warmth and trust."

One of the most significant evolutions within Major Gifts has been the advancement of data-driven decision-making. Today, the team leverages analytics and prospect research to strategically identify and engage donors, allowing for a more personalized and impactful approach to fundraising. Subsequently, the demographic of donors is shifting, with younger generations stepping forward, demonstrating that the spirit of giving endures across all ages.

Amid these advancements, relationships remain at the heart of Major Gifts. The standards set by Starner, centered around respect, authenticity and genuine care, have been upheld by Dabney and are embraced by Bullard and his team.

"I am incredibly thankful to work for and with Brady Bullard," said Assistant Vice President of Major Gifts Lauren Hickey-Garcia. "He is a thoughtful and strategic leader that brings high energy and a lot of personality to our team. I am appreciative that our team culture is a mix of grit, hard work, movie quotes and laughter."

Bullard's leadership style is a blend of vision and empowerment. He challenges his team while fostering an environment of trust and growth.

"He is the type of boss that sets high expectations and then provides the structure and autonomy to go out and achieve our goals," adds Hickey-Garcia. "His mentorship and guidance have left an indelible impact on my life and career."

As the organization looks to the future, one thing is certain: the legacy of strong leadership and meaningful relationship-building will continue to shape Texas A&M Athletics for generations to come. Through unwavering dedication, strategic vision and a commitment to excellence, the Major Gifts team has not only secured remarkable philanthropic success but also set the stage for continued achievement.

The future is bright, and the spirit of the 12th Man remains as strong as ever.



BUILDING A LEGACY:

75 YEARS OF THE 12TH MAN FOUNDATION

WHAT BEGAN ON APRIL 2, 1950, AS A modest effort by seven former students has evolved into one of collegiate athletics' premier fundraising organizations.

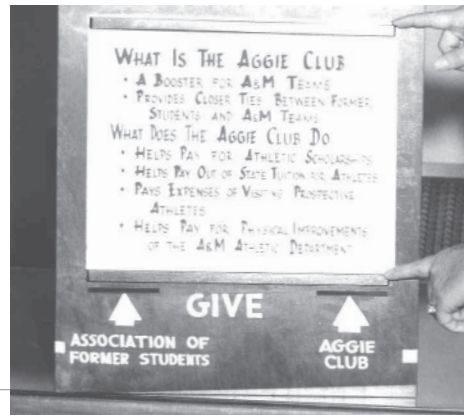
The 12th Man Foundation's enduring mission — funding scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics — has transformed the landscape of Texas A&M Athletics. Since its inception, donors have contributed more than \$1.5 billion, providing crucial resources and opportunities for generations of Aggie student-athletes.

The organization's growth reflects the passionate spirit of the 12th Man. Donor support has elevated Texas A&M Athletics to national prominence, creating tangible impact through transformative facilities and life-changing scholarship opportunities for student-athletes.

Throughout decades of change, shifting leadership, technological advancements and conference realignment, 12th Man Foundation donors have remained the organization's bedrock. Their commitment transcends financial transactions, creating a community dedicated to advancing Texas A&M Athletics.

The 12th Man Foundation endures today as a source of stability in an ever-changing world of collegiate athletics because of its extraordinary donors who embody the true spirit of service — always ready when called upon.

This timeline showcases pivotal moments across generations of the 12th Man Foundation's 75 year history, illustrating the remarkable journey that has shaped the past and will continue to influence the future of Texas A&M Athletics.



1950

FOUNDED BY SEVEN AGGIES

On April 2, 1950, seven former students established The Aggie Club to raise scholarship funds for athletes returning from WWII. With A.E. Foerster serving as first president, they secured tax-exempt status and raised \$16,182 in their inaugural year, establishing a foundation that would transform Texas A&M Athletics for decades.

1975

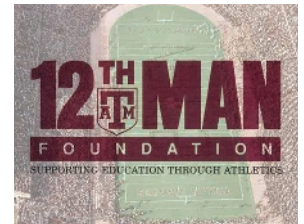
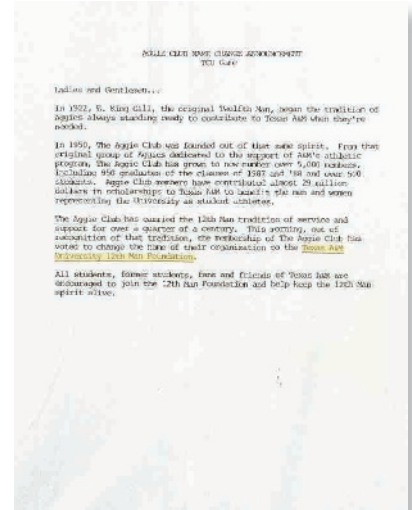
HARRY GREEN JOINS STAFF

Harry Green's arrival marked a pivotal turning point for the organization. A relationship-building innovator who "never met a stranger," Green spent nearly two decades expanding donor relationships across Texas. Under his leadership, membership grew from 1,000 to over 6,500, while annual giving increased to more than \$2.5 million.

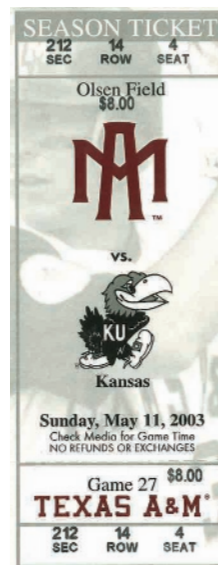
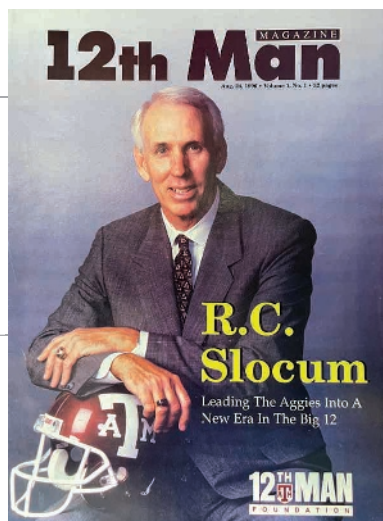
1988

NAME CHANGES TO 12TH MAN FOUNDATION

On November 19, 1988, The Aggie Club became the 12th Man Foundation. The name change resolved confusion with other A&M clubs while better representing the organization's fundraising mission. The rebranding represented the organization's growth and professionalism, setting the stage for remarkable advancement in the decades ahead.



BY CAMRYN GARNER '21



1996-99

ADVANCEMENTS IN COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY

The mid to late 90s marked a digital revolution for the 12th Man Foundation. *12th Man Magazine* launched in 1996, elevating donor communication from tabloid to polished publication. In 1998, the organization pioneered online ticket sales for the Sugar Bowl and established 12thmanfoundation.com, revolutionizing how it engaged with its growing donor base.

1999

THE ZONE AT KYLE FIELD

The Bernard C. Richardson Zone transformed Kyle Field's north end, introducing premium experiences that redefined gameday. The Zone Club, with its wood paneling and custom chandeliers, established a new standard for collegiate premium seating. The project helped Texas A&M lead the nation in attendance while setting a foundation for future premium experiences.

2000-2011

CHAMPIONSHIP VISION CAMPAIGN

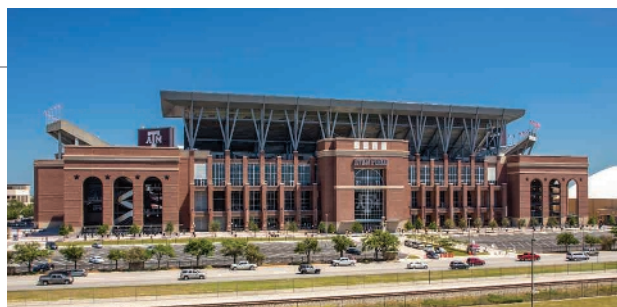
Recognizing Texas A&M's facilities lagged behind competitors, the athletics department and the 12th Man Foundation launched the Championship Vision Campaign under Jack Little's leadership. Beginning with a \$35 million goal, the 12th Man Foundation's first capital campaign ultimately raised \$150 million over three phases, funding facility upgrades across athletics and culminated with the \$24 million redevelopment of Olsen Field at Blue Bell Park.

2003

OFFICIAL TICKET PROVIDER

All ticketing operations were consolidated under one roof, with the 12th Man Foundation becoming the official ticket provider for Texas A&M Athletics. Led by Tracy Treps and Carole Dollins, this integration unified separate ticketing offices, creating a streamlined donor experience while strengthening the 12th Man Foundation's role in supporting Aggie Athletics.

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



2005

MAJOR GIFTS DEPARTMENT

The 12th Man Foundation established its Major Gifts department to strengthen donor relations and secure significant contributions for facility improvements. The organization recognized the need for dedicated professionals to build deeper connections with donors. Led by Stu Starner, the team revolutionized fundraising approaches, learning how to effectively engage donors for transformative capital projects.

2007

PRIORITY POINTS & MISSION STATEMENT

The 12th Man Foundation launched the Aggie Access Priority Point program, creating a fair and transparent framework for allocating donor benefits. The organization also adopted its enduring ten-word mission statement: "Funding scholarships, programs and facilities in support of championship athletics."

2011-12

TEXAS A&M JOINS THE SEC

When uncertainty surrounded the Big 12, Texas A&M's transition to the Southeastern Conference became a reality. Amid potential legal challenges, Texas A&M leadership utilized the 12th Man Foundation's independent structure to provide support for the indemnification of lawsuits, helping ensure A&M's place in the SEC.

2013-15

KYLE FIELD REDEVELOPMENT

The largest football stadium renovation in collegiate athletics history transformed Kyle Field into the premier venue in college football. The 12th Man Foundation raised \$220 million toward the \$485 million project, far surpassing its \$125 million goal. Completed in just two years, the redevelopment expanded capacity to over 102,000, making it the SEC's largest stadium.

**2016**

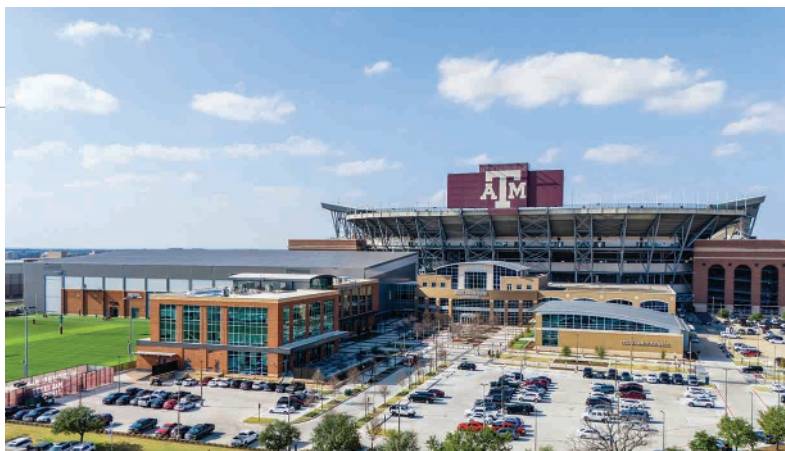
NEXT STEP CAMPAIGN

Following Kyle Field's completion, Texas A&M Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation launched the \$40 million Next Step Campaign for football, softball and track and field. The centerpiece projects — Davis Diamond and E.B. Cushing Stadium — delivered premier venues for Aggie Softball and Track & Field, continuing the elevation of Texas A&M Athletics facilities.

2020

COVID-19

When COVID-19 restrictions limited Kyle Field capacity to 25 percent, 12th Man Foundation donors responded with extraordinary generosity. Nearly 3,500 season ticket holders contributed \$11.6 million in support during this critical time. Meanwhile, Aggie Football finished 9-1 with its first Orange Bowl victory and the program's highest ranking since 1939.

**2022-23**

CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN

Honoring E. King Gill's legendary stand, Texas A&M Athletics and the 12th Man Foundation launched the \$120 million Centennial Campaign. The largest philanthropic fundraising effort in 12th Man Foundation history, the campaign was completed in just one year with 380 donors contributing \$122.9 million, surpassing the original goal. This unprecedented support funded transformative facilities, solidifying A&M's commitment to championship-level resources.

2023-25

NIL & EXPANDED MARKETING

As collegiate athletics entered the Name, Image and Likeness era, the 12th Man Foundation and its donors adapted strategically. From fall 2023 to spring 2025, the organization invested over \$15 million in external marketing initiatives, supporting NIL opportunities while fostering increased engagement between Aggie student-athletes and donors through events and promotional appearances.

THEN & NOW: MAKING WAVES

Two generations of Aggie swimmers unite through the 1922 Fund

BY CAMRYN GARNER '21

VICKI BROWN-SOBECKI '78 VIVIDLY REMEMBERS THE MOMENT SHE told her father where she wanted to go to college.

She was just 12 years old, fresh off earning five first-place finishes at a swim meet held on Texas A&M's campus. On the walk from Cain Pool to the Memorial Student Center to pick out a victory souvenir, she paused beneath an oak tree outside The Aggie Club building, turned to her dad and declared, "This is where I want to attend college."

When her father gently explained that Texas A&M did not admit women at the time, her response was immediate:

"Well then, I'll be the first."

Brown-Sobecki did not just dream of attending A&M — she was determined to compete as a student-athlete at Texas A&M.

That dream became reality when Brown-Sobecki earned a spot on the Texas A&M Women's Swimming & Diving team as one of the university's first female recipients of an athletics scholarship — paving the way for generations of

female student-athletes in Aggieland. As a student-athlete, she recognized the generosity behind her scholarship and made a promise to herself to do the same for others in the future.

"I thought, 'One day I'm going to pay it forward,'" Brown-Sobecki recalled. "I told myself, 'I'm going to be one of those donors and use whatever opportunity I get to give back because I'm receiving a very special scholarship from a person who has seen the value in that.'"

Today, Brown-Sobecki's commitment to philanthropy continues through her involvement with the 1922 Fund, a 12th Man Foundation initiative dedicated to endowing scholarships for all student-athletes at Texas A&M. Since its inception in 2015, donors have pledged approximately \$20 million to the 1922 Fund in support of student-athlete scholarship endowments.

Fulfilling her promise to give back, Brown-Sobecki and her husband, Dan, chose to endow a scholarship specifically for the Texas A&M Women's Swimming & Diving program, helping future generations of swimmers in the same program where her own journey began.

One of the unique aspects of the 1922 Fund is the opportunity for qualifying donors to be paired with current Aggie student-athletes, fostering meaningful relationships between those who passionately support Texas A&M Athletics and the student-athletes who proudly compete for the maroon and white.

Since the fall of 2021, Brown-Sobecki has been paired with All-American swimmer Chloe Stepanek. A 2024 Texas A&M graduate with a degree in biomedical sciences, Stepanek is now pursuing a master's degree in kinesiology. Originally from Northport, New York, her accomplishments in both the pool and classroom reflect the legacy Brown-Sobecki has helped pave. With a 4.0 GPA, Stepanek made history as the first Texas A&M swimmer to earn SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors



THEN

Vicki Brown-Sobecki '78

Former Swimming Student-Athlete
1974-78

NOW

Chloe Stepanek '24

Swimming Student-Athlete
2020-25





twice and is a 15-time All-American.

The 1922 Fund pairing has proven especially meaningful for both Brown-Sobecki and Stepanek.

“I was grateful when I was paired with Chloe because she is a sprinter like I was,” Brown-Sobecki said. “I was excited that I could relate to her training program and what she has to do in both individual competition and relays. It really was a perfect match because it was fun to see somebody have that opportunity like I did.”

For Stepanek, learning about Brown-Sobecki’s pioneering role at A&M left a lasting impression on her.

“I was in shock,” she said. “I was paired with this amazing woman who had so much history here, basically developing the swimming and diving program and being the foundation for what it’s become today.”

What began as mutual respect between two athletes has blossomed into a cherished bond. Brown-Sobecki has become a meaningful presence in Stepanek’s life, celebrating milestone moments like receiving her Aggie Ring, competing at swim meets and walking the stage at graduation.

“I would not be at Texas A&M if I did not have my athletic scholarship,” Stepanek said. “I am blessed and so thankful to be on a scholarship here. It’s given me the opportunity to stay here for five years and live out my dream.”

Together, Stepanek and Brown-Sobecki marvel at how far the program has come. Today’s Aggie swimmers train in what Stepanek calls the best facility in the country. For Brown-Sobecki, witnessing that progress brings deep satisfaction.

“When I see the facilities our team has today — the pool, the locker room and the nutrition center — I think back and I know it’s all been worth it,” Brown-Sobecki said.

Watching Stepanek’s success in and out of the pool, Brown-Sobecki cannot help but reflect with gratitude on more than five decades of progress.

“She’s all the things you would want a student-athlete from Texas A&M University to represent when she goes out into the real world,” Brown-Sobecki said. “It’s been a real blessing to have the opportunity to help her and her family make her dream come true. For 50 years, I’ve watched the progression. To the men and women who helped me get to this full circle moment, bless them all.”



“

I WOULD NOT BE AT TEXAS A&M IF I DID NOT HAVE MY ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP. I AM BLESSED AND SO THANKFUL TO BE ON A SCHOLARSHIP HERE. IT’S GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO STAY HERE FOR FIVE YEARS AND LIVE OUT MY DREAM.

— CHLOE STEPANEK '24



Stepanek has earned 15 All-American honors throughout her swimming career at Texas A&M, along with five SEC Championship medals. A decorated scholar-athlete, she was named the SEC Women’s Swimming & Diving Scholar-Athlete of the Year in 2023 and 2024.



CONGRATULATIONS

TEXAS A&M MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

The Texas A&M Men's Track & Field team claimed the program's first-ever SEC Indoor Championship title at the R.A. 'Murray' Fasken '38 Indoor Track & Field facility in March. The Aggies secured the crown with a decisive win in the 4x400m relay, as anchor Kimar Farquharson brought the team home for the final gold.

Key performances included Auhmad Robinson winning the 400m title and Sam Whitmarsh defending his indoor 800m title. Cooper Cawthra earned silver in the mile, and Ja'Qualon Scott secured silver in the 60m hurdles with a school-record time. The team's success was capped by a strong showing in the triple jump from Gavin Champ, helping maintain the lead before the final event.

Texas A&M finished the championships with 107.5 points and a total of nine medals — five gold, three silver and one bronze.



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