The Association and its Class Agents have been coordinating reunions for over 100 years. See if yours is coming up at tx.ag/Reunions.
Connecting Aggies For 140 Years

Key Functions Of Today’s Association Have Their Roots In Our Long History

By Sue Owen ’94

Quietly, steadily, for 140 years, The Association of Former Students has been building a network that helps and serves hundreds of thousands of Texas Aggies.

Today, Aggies who travel or move anywhere in the world can find an A&M Club to greet them, look up fellow former students and contact them to make a job or personal connection, or host an Aggie Muster of their own—all with tools provided by The Association.

Although technology powers these functions today, they are also among some of The Association’s oldest services.

And they’re not benefits that every university can offer. In fact, Texas A&M doesn’t provide them: You do.

More than 57,000 donors give every year so The Association can operate these and other programs for current and former students, faculty and staff.

At many schools, alumni programs are an expense the university pays for, but at A&M the opposite is true: The Association’s donors have become a major source of financial support to A&M and its current students.
Since 1942, when regular records are first available, The Association has raised more than $320 million for Texas A&M and for Aggies. Millions of dollars from Association donors go to A&M scholarships annually, and hundreds of thousands of A&M students have benefited from Aggie traditions, student organizations and academic/faculty support that you help fund. Along the way, The Association has kept expanding and improving core services that were among the very first ways that Aggies sought to help each other.

How To Find Fellow Aggies
The A&M College’s doors had only been open three years when 11 former cadets met in Houston on June 26, 1879, and decided to start keeping a record of all their fellow former students, “thus promoting and maintaining fellowship.”

This Ex-Cadets Association was the first of a few groups that evolved...
into today’s Association of Former Students. In 1896, another one of those groups, Alpha Phi, made plans for a “fraternity book,” or directory of alumni.

The power of being able to find each other has always been a major strength for Aggies. The first printed Directory of Former Students was issued by The Association in 1949, with over 600 pages listing more than 20,000 former students.

Association staff built a powerful search function at tx.ag/FindAnAggie that allows you to look for a fellow Ag even if you only remember, say, part of their name and what their major was. “Find an Aggie consistently ranks as one of the top-used web services we provide,” said Mike Smith, The Association's senior developer and web manager. “We take pride knowing that our system is one of the premier online directories in higher education.” He and his team are working now on enhancing it further.

The directory is updated daily, and if you move to a new location and plug in your new address at tx.ag/Profile, you can automatically receive Muster invitations, local A&M Club news and other updates.

Lifelong Aggie Involvement Through A&M Clubs
Organized A&M Clubs had their beginnings in 1897 with “local chapters.” By the 1920s, a wave of new A&M Clubs was resulting from an Association effort to visit communities, designate a point person and provide bylaws.

Today, there are more than 200 A&M Clubs chartered by The Association. The Club officers and volunteers get assistance from Association staff and can tap into tools The Association provides, such as being able to email the Aggies in their geographical area.

Amy Hale '10, one of The Association’s Former Student Programs coordinators, works extensively with A&M Clubs. “Some of our volunteers live so far from Aggieland, or they haven’t even been to campus anytime in years, but still have so much passion and love for Texas A&M and Aggies. The time and dedication they put into their Club and the events they put on are contagious,” Hale said.

The Association’s staff helps Clubs on a daily basis with everything from logo design to lunch announcements. Happy hours, service projects, kickball teams, golf tournaments, painting workshops—you name it, and an A&M Club is doing it.

As it has for many decades, The Association also uses its publications to help push out announcements and news about these Club events, along with news from A&M.

The Texas Aggie magazine you’re reading—which began in 1921 in a newspaper-style format, became a traditional magazine in 1966 and is now digital—has included calls to get involved with Clubs and photos of Club activities for 98 years.
On Jan. 1, 2000, Porter S. Garner III’79 became The Association’s seventh professional executive director, having previously served the organization in several capacities since 1981.

Today, as President and CEO, Garner is one of three leaders in The Association’s history to have helmed the organization 19 years or longer, and is on pace to become the longest-serving of the three.

During the 1926-47 tenure of E.E. McQuillen, Class of 1920, The Association standardized and expanded Aggie Musters around the world and abolished membership dues.

Randy Matson ’67, executive director 1980-99, supervised the original construction of the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center and directed the establishment of the Bonfire Relief Fund.

Garner is still writing his chapter in Association history. But already some of the impacts are becoming clear.

He’s provided a steady presence during a time when Texas A&M has had seven university presidents and four system chancellors.

Under Garner’s leadership, The Association has doubled its revenue and more than doubled the organization’s impact on Texas A&M. As revenue went from $10.7 million in 2000 to $21.5 million in 2018, The Association’s impact on A&M rose from $6.5 million to $13.6 million.

A 2008-09 enhancement project, funded by private donations, turned the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center from an office building into a campus destination.

What was more of a lobby space now is the multifunctional Flores Hall, hosting hundreds of events per year. Football on the Huddleston Video Wall brings thousands of Aggies together each fall during the free All-Aggie Tailgates. On the Neely mezzanine, exhibits share A&M’s history and traditions; this space is also where The Association now reads the Worldwide Live Roll Call for each Muster.

And thousands of Instagram photos have been snapped at a modern A&M icon that was conceived and built before Instagram ever launched. The Haynes Ring Replica, unveiled in 2009 as part of the building enhancement, draws students and visitors around the clock to the home of The Association.

And many Association efforts have expanded to serve the increased population of both current students and former students. An example is Traveling Aggies, a program Garner has long viewed as a true service that brings Aggies together, forming new friendships on every trip. It has nearly tripled in scope on his watch: from 527 travelers in 2000 to 1,457 in 2018.

Association Vice President Kathryn Greenwade ’88 has witnessed the changes of the past 20 years first-hand as an Association staff member since 1999 and as a member of the team Garner assembled in 1998 to begin looking at The Association’s future opportunities.

“It’s exciting to see so many things that were considered by many as far-fetched ideas in the late ’90s now firmly entrenched as part of The Association’s fabric in 2019,” Greenwade said.

“All of these initiatives—from Ring Day, to interactive exhibits in the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center—began with Porter’s vision. Thanks to his leadership over the last two decades, The Association is well-positioned to serve the Aggie Network both today and tomorrow.”
Former student news went online in 1995 when The Association launched its website. In 2009, @AggieNetwork social media accounts began reaching hundreds of thousands of Aggies, as well as spreading A&M news and Good Bull to those on the outside looking in.

No 'Muster' Without The Association

The Association played a major role in building the tradition of Muster—formalizing it, promoting it and even naming it.

In the early 1920s, The Association encouraged all A&M Clubs to hold gatherings on April 21. In 1923, it launched a concerted effort, calling for April 21 get-togethers around the state and nation, with a special radio program broadcast from campus.

During World War II, when a reported April 21, 1942, gathering of Texas Aggies under fire made nationwide headlines, the head of The Association seized the moment to turn it to greater good. E.E. McQuillen, Class of 1920, prepared hundreds of “Muster” packets—the first time the name had been applied—which he mailed to “Muster chairmen” worldwide for 1943.

It worked. There were over 500 Musters that year, and 600 the next. When students held their first campus Muster in 1944, McQuillen was the speaker.

Today, The Association supports more than 300 Musters worldwide and is actively working to increase that number.

Using publicity, email and its website—as well as the traditional method of mailing more than 250,000 Muster invitation postcards—The Association helps groups of Aggies come together each year. It provides Muster chairs with step-by-step planning assistance, resources and a database of Muster speakers.

The Association also maintains the annual Muster Roll itself. News of an Aggie’s passing can be reported at any time; visit tx.ag/AddAName for details.

In a recent addition to the Muster tradition, The Association began in 2018 a practice of reading all 1,600-plus names on the Muster Roll, in order to ensure that each was answered with a “Here.” This Live Worldwide Roll Call is streamed on the internet.

Going Forward

Even this list hardly scratches the surface of programs through which The Association helps current and former students—many of which also have a long history.

The Association took over the Aggie Ring program in 1969 at the request of A&M’s president, Earl Rudder ’32. It’s now the largest class ring program in the United States.

Since its first Class Agents were established in 1893 and first Class Reunion held in 1918, The Association has sought new ways to serve its A&M Classes. Among dozens of Reunions that Association staff help put on each year, 2019’s Sul Ross Group Reunion had over 1,000 attendees. In 2012, The Association created a Young Alumni Advisory Council; one of the council’s first suggestions was a Young Alumni Weekend, which now brings hundreds of recent former students back to A&M every fall.

Starting with an Alumni Bureau created in 1896 by an Association forerunner, The Association was for decades the hub for former students seeking jobs. A&M took over this placement service in 1939; now, The Association partners with A&M’s Career Center and supports HireAggies.com and other services for former students in career transition.

You can learn about the many other ways Association programs help Aggies, and meet the more than 75 full-time staff members who make it happen, at AggieNetwork.com.

It’s taken more than a century to build up the Aggie Network. The Association is here to keep carrying on that work.
Donors to The Association of Former Students leave a lasting impact on the Aggie Network, including a number of familiar sights on campus.

The Association led the fundraising campaign for the YMCA-Alumni Memorial Building in 1910, then gave the space back to Texas A&M to use for its students. In 1946, The Association initiated the Memorial Student Center building project with a $48,000 gift. Still looking for a place to call home, The Association opened the Forsyth Alumni Center in 1974 inside the MSC. As the student body expanded, The Association quickly outgrew this space.

In 1987, the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center opened, giving The Association’s programs for current and former students a permanent home. The building underwent a significant enhancement project and was rededicated in the fall of 2009. Today, it hosts hundreds of events every year, from All-Aggie Tailgates to Aggie Ring Days and beyond.
1 Alumni Center
The Williams Alumni Center showcases Texas A&M’s core values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and selfless service around the perimeter. The Haynes Ring Plaza features a 3-ton bronze replica of the Aggie Ring, the most recognized symbol of the Aggie Network. Learn more about this larger-than-life Ring at tx.ag/HaynesRingPlaza.

2 YMCA
The YMCA building was the first structure built on campus to be a social focus for the school. Its initial phase was completed in 1914, and its location, just north of Old Main Drive, made it the first major building reached by visitors and new students arriving from the rail depot on Wellborn Road. In 2012, the YMCA was restored and updated, yet maintains its unique look and original style. It now serves a new generation of Aggies as the home to the philosophy department along with classrooms for students.

3 All Faiths
The All Faiths Chapel was a gift from The Association in 1957, as a place for all denominations and religions. The Chapel has gone through two phases of renovations, the most recent in 2015. Thanks to donations provided by former students, current Aggies continue to use the space.

4 Memorial Student Center
In 1942, The Association did away with membership dues. It instead asked for an annual gift, with the first goal to build a student center. Ground broke on the site Sept. 21, 1948. Dedicated on Muster Day in 1951, the Memorial Student Center has changed more than just the look of campus. Originally dedicated to Aggies who died in the two world wars, the building was rededicated in 1976 to include Aggies who have died in all wars. On April 21, 2012, the MSC was reopened after an extensive three-year renovation and expansion.
WAYS TO GIVE

1 CENTURY CLUB
tx.ag/giving

Through annual gifts as little as $100, you can play a leading role in helping Texas A&M provide support to the Aggie Network in the form of scholarships, student organization assistance, support for Aggie traditions and much more.

SUPPORTING THE STUDENT BODY THROUGH

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Endowed Century Club offers a unique opportunity to forever impact the lives of the Aggie Network with a one-time commitment that provides annual support in perpetuity.

The Aggie Ring Scholarship program provides the opportunity to establish an endowment that will help ensure that an Aggie Ring is available to students who have earned the honor to wear one.

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W A Y S
T O
G I V E

SCHOLARSHIPS

*2018 Impact

Felix Palacios ’18, Scholarship Recipient

“Texas A&M showcases amazing commitment by alumni to give back to the university, and the scholarships I received are just one example of the many things The Association of Former Students does to give back to the students. My scholarships allowed me to focus solely on my studies and professional career, and that has paid dividends already. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Texas A&M, and I truly appreciate the generosity shown to me. Thanks, and gig ’em!”

SUPPORTING PROGRAMS | PROVIDING RESOURCES | CULTIVATING EXPERIENCES
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More Impact...

1,823 Student Scholarships Awarded

114 Aggie Rings Presented Through Scholarships

*2018 Impact

Supporting Programs | Providing Resources | Cultivating Experiences
We encourage you to check the details of your company’s matching gift program, as many programs may double and in some cases triple your gift. When completing your request, be sure to state that it is an unrestricted Annual Fund gift for Texas A&M University.

Setting up a recurring gift either monthly or annually is convenient, customizable and ensures that your gift makes a continuous impact for years to come.

Mary Nauert ’15, Student Organization

“I am so appreciative of the donation made by The Association of Former Students towards the Christian Veterinary Fellowship international mission trip. I am so grateful I was able to represent Texas A&M while also helping the people and animals of Honduras.”
2 MATCHING GIFTS

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STRENGTHENING THE AGGIE NETWORK THROUGH

CLASS PROGRAMS AND REUNIONS

OTHER WAYS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

OTHER GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

There are many other opportunities to make an impact, including with Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center Support Gifts, Class Gifts, A&M Club Gifts and Memorial Scholarships.
“Attending Aggie Entrepreneurship Saturday, a program supported by The Association, has greatly attributed to the success of my business, Legacy Pecans. Thank you for helping me make my dream of owning a small business a reality. I didn’t fully understand the impact of the Aggie Network until I went into business for myself. I have truly learned that the only Aggie that cannot help you is the one you do not meet. I am forever grateful and proud to be surrounded by individuals who exemplify integrity, success and selflessness.”

Heather Salopek ’11,
Aggie Entrepreneurship Saturday Attendee

For more information about our giving programs, recurring gifts or the matching gifts program, email Fundraising@AggieNetwork.com or call (979) 845-7514.

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