



## Your Impact: BUILD Dedicates First Domestic Clinic in Laredo

BY ASHLEY WAGNER '18

**F**or some Texas A&M University students, a 40-foot long shipping container is a place of promise. With a little paint and a lot of hard work, they believe it can be a place of stability and aid for communities around the world. They believe it can save lives.

These Aggies are involved in BUILD, a student-run organization that converts shipping containers into fully functioning mobile medical clinics outfitted with essentials such as lighting, plumbing, electricity and donated supplies. The Texas Aggie Medical Clinics (TAMCs) are divided into four sections with different purposes—treatment, laboratory, examination and triage—and serve communities across the globe to improve quality and access to basic health care.

Founded in 2013, BUILD aims to unify the student body through collaboration and selfless service. The organization’s first project was dedicated to the 12 Aggies who lost their lives when Bonfire collapsed in 1999; students transformed 12 TAMCs in three years with nearly 1,500 volunteers and shipped the clinics to Kenya, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala and Greece.

### LENDING AID TO LAREDO

In 2017, they embarked on their next big project. The “5 For 5” campaign honored five Aggies who played critical roles in the Allied victory during World War II. The organization partnered with a Belgian museum’s exhibition called “Texas Aggies Go to War,” which had identified these men as embodiments of the Aggie Spirit. The clinics were constructed in 2017 and have been sent to Tanzania, Ecuador, Lebanon and Dominica. On May 9, BUILD team leaders honored William M. Peña '42 with a TAMC in his hometown of Laredo, the only domestic clinic in the “5 For 5” campaign.

Peña was a member of the Corps of Cadets and graduated with a degree



**BUILD By-The-Numbers**

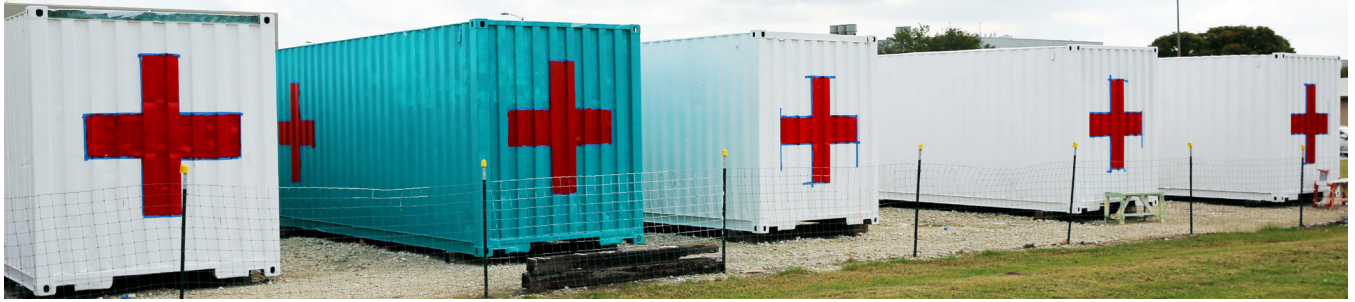
**100,000+**  
Lives Impacted

**22**  
Texas Aggie  
Medical Clinics Built

**14**  
Different Countries

**\$4,600**  
from Association donors in 2016-18

PHOTO COURTESY OF BUILD



in architecture in 1942. Immediately after, he joined the U.S. Army and served in the 28th Infantry Division, fighting in three major battles: Huertgen Forest, the Battle of the Bulge and the Liberation of Colmar. He was awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart and retired as a captain in 1947. His architectural legacy spans more than 150 projects in 39 states and nine countries, and countless lectures worldwide. In 2015, he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Texas A&M and The Association of Former Students, the highest honor bestowed upon a former student of the university. Peña died in 2018.

“William Peña’s story is one of sacrifice, bravery and service,” said BUILD’s Chief Executive Officer George Waterous ’19. “It’s our way of honoring and thanking him and all who served during World War II.”

For the time being, the Laredo-based clinic will live on a trailer and travel around Webb County, but there are plans for the TAMC to be shared with neighboring counties to serve more people in the area. A group of BUILD students visited the clinic at the beginning of the summer to see it work in real time, something they don’t get to see frequently with most TAMCs in different countries.

“I’ve gotten to hear from the community that this clinic will be serving,” said Waterous. “It’s unbelievable the conditions in which these people live in our very own country.” He hopes the clinic can travel the border and provide basic healthcare to people in the surrounding areas.

Amanda Wolken ’18 served as chief executive officer of BUILD during the campaign’s roots three years ago and

was actively involved in the planning process for Peña’s clinic. BUILD was intentional about the location of his TAMC, wanting it to stay in the United States and in his hometown to further his impact in Laredo, said Wolken. “He helped develop and grow the area, and thus was the perfect candidate for that clinic’s dedication,” she said.

The four “5 For 5” TAMCs already shipped abroad were named for the other Aggies in the museum exhibit: James Earl Rudder ’32, Joe E. Routh ’37, James F. Hollingsworth ’40 and Turney W. Leonard ’42.



William Peña ’42, second from left, was named a Distinguished Alumnus of Texas A&M University in 2015. The Distinguished Alumnus Award has been bestowed upon only 291 of A&M’s more than 506,000 former students.

### BUILDING FUNDS AND LEGACIES

Each TAMC costs around \$25,000 to construct and outfit with proper materials, making financial support necessary. In conjunction with individual monetary and in-kind donations, BUILD receives funding from the A&M Student Organization Funding Assistance Board, or SOFAB, which is funded by donations to The Association. SOFAB helps student organizations fulfill specific financial needs that may have been unpredictable or difficult to cover on their own.

“Now that we build five clinics each year, it creates a challenge,” said Waterous. “Luckily, we have generous donations and the Aggie Network to help us out, but always need more help.”

Months of tenacity, dedication and passion are put into these projects, and it takes commitment from BUILD command staff, volunteers and the communities they serve to get everything in place. But for this team of Aggies, the end result is worth more than the process it takes to get there. The destination is worth more than the journey.

“Between attending classes, these teams plan construction, coordinate material deliveries or pickups, drive volunteer participation, market and fundraise for the necessary funds and actually build the clinics with volunteer help,” said Wolken. “It’s an incredible feat, and I want to applaud the students for the work they put in, well above and beyond what is required, out of service towards others.”

BUILD is now working on its third campaign, the Fallen Aggie Hero Project, which honors 37 Aggie veterans killed on or after Sept. 11, 2001. In 2018, the first five TAMCs were shipped to Bolivia, Guatemala, Nigeria, Dominican Republic and Jordan.

In a note describing why he formed the student organization, BUILD’s founder Bryson Sutterfield ’13 wrote: “BUILD is about serving Texas A&M, our community, our state, our nation and even the world. It is about taking the passion, the work ethic, the ingenuity, and the selflessness of Aggies and creating something that will permanently impact lives.”