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*Fall 2020 Edition*



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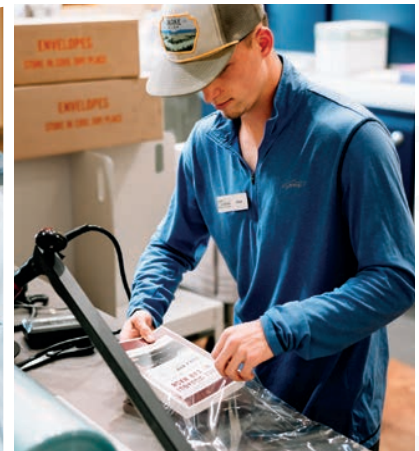


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PHOTO BY HUNTER WOODS

Without labour, nothing prospers.

The class of 2020 was faced with many hardships. Our achievements and dreams were dashed and divided like a million stars in the night sky, that we wished on over and over again, sparkling, but broken.

We did not get to experience the word 'Here' echo in our ears, a proper Ring Day, a graduation ceremony in Reed Arena, a bluebonnet photo shoot in The Gardens, or one last goodbye to our favorite professors.

What we do have though are the memories we can tell our children and grandchildren about how we persevered through it all while looking at a 12" laptop screen. Disconnected from one another, yet somehow closer than we ever were before.

When the March 12 email came through that the remainder of the semester would be online, panic struck the students of Texas A&M. The town was filled with cars full of clothes, trucks carrying couches and people fleeing to the safety of their childhood homes, much earlier than they had expected.

The AgriLeader Editorial Team held a meeting and concluded that the Fall 2020 edition would be published no matter how many miles we were apart from one another. We studied the logistics of completing a magazine outside of the Curl Lab, unsure at first and still unsure, but we must have pulled it off if you are reading this today!

The staff writers have finished interviews in any way possible, going extraordinary lengths to ensure the

material going into this edition would be no less than exception. Their enthusiasm, dedication and passion for journalism are evident on each page.

I am beyond proud of what my new friends family has been able to accomplish.

As you look through this issue, I hope you are reminded of not only what we have been able to do, but what the prospective, current and former students of Texas A&M are able to do.

Fellow Aggies are professors (*"Life & Horticulture,"* pg. 9), restaurant managers (*"CFA, College Station,"* pg. 7), restaurant owners (*"Cooper's Bar-B-Que,"* pg. 6), rodeo queens (*"The Rodeo Queen Journey,"* pg. 20), cooks (*"From Tori's Kitchen,"* pg. 43), influential figures (*"Dr. Deborah Dunsford,"* pg. 44), mom CEO's (*"West Wingin' It,"* pg. 30), but above all... they are our classmates and friends no matter where we go in the world.

I never expected to take the agriculture route that I am on, but agricultural communications and journalism have mixed an old passion and a new one together perfectly.

Thank you for allowing me to lead this publication. The staff (pg. 46), Dr. Tobin Redwine and Jessica Spence have done an exceptional job.

And of course... thank you to my friends and family for always believing in me! I love you all more than you know.

Hunter Woods, '20  
Editor-in-Chief

# DATAPACK

ABBA #: 907087

DOB: 10/11/2011



This Datapack daughter raised by D3 Cattle Co. is unbelievable in person. She is an absolute bombshell and we couldn't be more excited for D3 Cattle Co. as they will use Miss D3 Katia (S) to start their Polled Program around her.

Miss ELC Polled Cassie 21/8 (P)



Datapack daughter sold to Dr. Dale A. Fritz in this past Highway 60 Path to Excellence Private Treaty Sale is an overall beautiful female. Dr. Fritz couldn't have been more excited with his purchase of his donor prospect to start a POLLED based cow family around her!

Miss ELC Roxanne 25/7 (P)





This smooth Polled Datapack daughter is one we knew we had to retain in our donor program. Miss ELC Roxanne strikes you with her femininity and soundness. We can't wait to see the offspring this Grand Champion Grey Female will bring.

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PHOTO BY DARLA WOOTAN

# When Business Meets Bar-B-Que

by Madison Trousdale

Few accomplish owning a successful business. Texas A&M University alumnus, Chad Wootan '92, not only accomplished owning one successful business, but three.

Right out of high school, Wootan got his real estate license and began school at Texas A&M where he studied animal science.

"Upon graduation, I decided to pursue a career in real estate and sales and opened up Wootan Homes in 2001 and Lone Star Realty in 2006," Wootan said.

When Wootan isn't building homes or selling property, he is busy owning and operating Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, College Station.

Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que first opened in 1962 in Wootan's hometown of Llano, Texas. Wootan's father, Terry Wootan, took over operations in the mid 1980's and grew its popularity to where it is today with six locations around Texas.

"When my dad took over, Cooper's was an empty building

with no recipes, no inventory, no instruction manual," Wootan said. "My mom and dad took the business and put it on the map, serving thousands of travelers and locals."

Wootan explained that he always knew he wanted to follow his father's footsteps and be in the barbecue business one day, which



PHOTO BY DARLA WOOTAN

is why in October 2019, he and his wife, Darla Wootan, opened a Cooper's in College Station.

"Knowing the time and monetary commitment, we decided to push our Cooper's barbecue dream until after our kids were grown," Wootan

said. "25 years later, the dream has come true and with our two children, Blaine and Kalen, being grown, the timing was perfect."

Wootan proves that with hard-work, dedication and the Aggie spirit, anything is possible. Wootan said that his time at Texas A&M taught him many valuable life lessons and gave him connections that have lasted throughout his life and career.

"The animal science department was a small, close knit group that taught me leadership, communication and community involvement," Wootan said. "Texas A&M core values, along with my upbringing, were instilled in me and I hold true to them today."

Visit [coopersbbqcollegestation.com](http://coopersbbqcollegestation.com), [lonestarcbs.com](http://lonestarcbs.com) and [wootanhomes.com](http://wootanhomes.com) to learn more about Wootan's businesses.





PHOTO BY MAKAYLA DOOLITTLE

# How an ALED Major Found His Passion with Chick-fil-A

by MaKayla Doolittle

Many college students go through school without really knowing what career path they would like to follow. Agricultural leadership and development graduate Jacob Doolittle, '17 felt the same way during his time in Aggieland.

Doolittle found his passion working as the general manager of a Chick-fil-A in The Woodlands, Texas.

After graduating, Doolittle applied for several jobs and ultimately decided to take the job that offered him the most money working in sales for a construction company. During his first week in that position, he knew it was not a good fit for him.

"I absolutely hated the company culture and I had no vision for anything past what I was doing at the time," Doolittle said.

After deciding that he would leave the construction company, Doolittle began to assess his passions and talents to decide what career was the best fit for him.

"I really sat down and thought about what I wanted for my future," Doolittle said.

Doolittle said he knew he loved the culture at Chick-fil-A having worked there for several years prior to attending Texas A&M. He loved that the core values of the company were much like the core values of



PHOTO BY MAKAYLA DOOLITTLE

Texas A&M, and he could see a future growing and moving up at Chick-fil-A.

Doolittle also said that he took a substantial pay cut when he began his career with Chick-fil-A, but he

knew it was a temporary sacrifice to make for the opportunities he could have.

"At that point, I decided to take a risk and make less money because I wanted a career with Chick-fil-A."

Doolittle attributes a great deal of his success as a general manager to his time spent at Texas A&M, particularly in the ALED department, claiming he uses the information he learned in school every day at work. He described ALED as majoring in people and said that he uses many of the leadership skills he learned to foster relationships and build his team members individually.

"My advice would be that you should sit down and think about what career you really see yourself in and make it happen," Doolittle said.

Doolittle would like to eventually own his own store and use that to make a community impact by offering family events and donating to causes he believes in.

"It really gives people a good idea of what we're all about, which is just loving and serving people," Doolittle said.

# Making an Impact

by Hannah Crandall

Ron Gill, Ph.D '84, a successful agriculture extension livestock specialist, teaches animal welfare, beef production and beef quality assurance labs at Texas A&M University. Gill grew up in the ranching and cattle production industry and now works educating producers and extension agents, particularly about low stress livestock handling.

Gill attended Angelo State for his undergraduate



PHOTO BY HANNAH CRANDALL

and masters degrees, but earned his doctoral degree from Texas A&M, where he also coached the horse and livestock judging teams. His experiences in life and his career have made him a great mentor for students at the university pursuing careers in production.

“You know, it takes a lot more effort post-graduation a lot of times,” Gill said. “But what I try to do is talk about where the opportunities are going to be in the industry.”

Gill worked as an extension specialist for many years, but he now enjoys getting to work with Texas A&M students through two or three labs every semester. Gill realizes the challenges facing the production industry and is working on ways to combat those issues starting with Texas A&M students.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RON GILL

“Some people have the desire to pursue that skillset, and a lot of people don’t; but we need to find the ones that do and let them know there is a path for them if they want to do that,” Gill said.

In Gill’s opinion, one of the most important things that students wanting to pursue a career in this field need to consider is gaining experience. He stresses the importance of finding opportunities for his students when working with them in his labs.

“I think you just have to make yourself get out there and do those things, really hustle to find opportunities to get some experience,” Gill said.

Gill’s various awards from the county extension agents for his work in county programs, as well as by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association for his success in beef quality assurance education, serve as inspiration for his students to continue his exceptional work.

“They mean a lot,” Gill said about his awards. “Because it kind of validates the impact you’ve had.”

Gill continues to set an example for students to follow in his footsteps and educate those working in the cattle industry.



PHOTO BY HANNAH CRANDALL

# Cultivating Relationships

by Lauren O. Smith

*For Andrew King, Ph.D., it's all about relationships. As a lecturer in Texas A&M's horticulture department, King, class of '10 and '15, seeks to connect personally with his students, using his life experiences, natural curiosity and love of people to inspire genuine excitement for horticulture.*

*Q: Where did you grow up and how did your childhood shape your current interests?*

A: I grew up on a retail nursery in East Texas, in Tenaha, about 35 miles north of Nacogdoches. My great-grandfather started a strawberry farm in 1915, although it probably was before that. The first documented receipt we could find was 1915. We started growing strawberries, did that for four or five years, and then other families started doing that too so it became less profitable. We started growing fruit trees and roses, and it blossomed into everything else. It's still there for 105 years now. So I'm a 4th generation Texas horticulturist, and all four of those generations there's so many stories, so many lessons learned. My great-grandfather was a pioneer and put a strawberry farm where there was nothing before. My grandfather was probably the best horticulturist of the bunch; he was just excellent. My dad was by far the best salesman; he loved people and he would spend however much time his customers wanted to spend walking around the place. If they only bought one plant, he would be happy. He just enjoyed that. He also moved us toward more cutting-edge plant materials.

PHOTO BY LAUREN O. SMITH



*Q: What prompted you to pursue a Ph.D., and how did you choose A&M?*

A: My junior year of college at Stephen F. Austin State University, David Creech was my major professor. I love Dave, and I still talk to him today. I just looked at him in class one day and thought, "You

know, I could do this. I think I would enjoy it.' He inspired me, but he didn't encourage me because he didn't even know I was interested in it. In fact, I think most people would have discouraged me from doing it because they'd say, 'Your place is at the nursery,' or whatever. So I kept it in my mind for a while. I went off and did some gallivanting between my undergrad and graduate work. I met my wife while in North Carolina, and I decided that I was coming back to Texas and the best way for me to reach my goals was to go to graduate school.

*Q: How does your childhood on your family's strawberry farm affect the way you teach?*

A: I can't think of very many classes that go by where I don't mention working on the family nursery. It set me on this path and enlightened me to all these things initially. It's through that prism that I see everything. I wouldn't be doing this had my family not been interested in it. It was never a question for me to do anything else. I mean, I didn't know I'd be a professor, or lecturer, but I can't imagine doing anything else.

*Q: How do you encourage your students?*

A: I try to encourage the students by reminding them that horticulture is supposed to be fun. The whole point is to try to imbibe these people with some excitement, little enthusiasm. I really love people, and I think sometimes my students are a little weirded out by the questions I ask them, especially in a lab setting where it is a lot less formal. I always appreciate when people take the time to get to know me.

*King's classes include Garden Science, Wild Edible, Cultivated and Poisonous Herbs, and Plant Propagation.*



PHOTO BY LAUREN O. SMITH



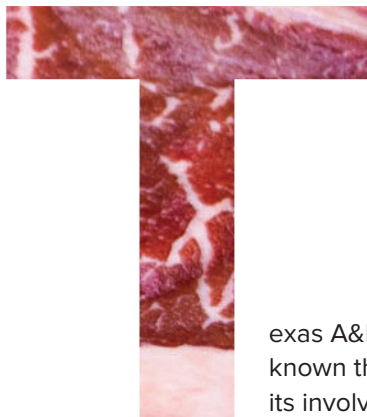
# MORE THAN MARBLING

*The beef on Texas A&M's Meat Judging team*

*Story and photos by Leandra Flores*

ING





Texas A&M University has been known throughout the years for its involvement in agriculture.

Many teams compete around the nation to represent Texas A&M in judging competitions. One of these teams, the Texas A&M meat judging team, has grown to become more than just a team, but a tradition.

### *Meat the team*

The Fightin' Texas Aggie Meat Judging Team began competing back in 1938, making them the first team to place first at Southwestern and third at the American Royal.

Texas A&M animal science majors Andrew Cano '20 and Sterling Pieniasek '22, come from completely different perspectives in regards to how they chose to be a part of the meat judging team.

However, both know the hardships and success of what it is like being a part of such a team.

Cano never planned on joining the team but after a hard time, he decided that he needed a change.

Cano said that his first year at Texas A&M was not going as well as he envisioned.

"I was losing hope," Cano said.

That feeling drove Cano to try out for the 2019 meat judging team.

"I wanted to feel like I was a part of something bigger than just another student at A&M," Cano said.

While Cano found his passion for meat judging later in life, newcomer Pieniasek always saw herself judging meat for Texas A&M.

Pieniasek comes from a long line of judging members.

"My parents were on the 1992 Texas A&M Meats Judging Team, my Uncle Ray judged on the 1985 Texas A&M Meats Judging Team, and my Uncle Michael and cousin both judged meats at Texas Tech," Pieniasek said.

Unlike Pieniasek, Cano had no experience prior to joining the team.

Cano said he felt he was at disadvantage because meat judging is not big in his hometown.

"Everything I learned was completely new to me," Cano said.

His lack of experience didn't affect his team. The 2019 Texas A&M Meat Judging Team won the American Royal, took reserve at the Southwestern and never left the top three in any contest.

### *Practice makes perfect*

The Texas A&M Meat Judging Team evaluates three species: pork, lamb and beef.

Cano said he tries to make it as simple as possible when evaluating meat.

"I use three factors: trimness, muscling, and quality," Cano said. "Both trimness and muscling indicate the amount of yield a carcass has, and yield is the amount of usable product, or the amount of closely trimmed retail cuts."

Pieniasek uses those three factors when evaluating meat as well.

"Ultimately, we are deciding which representative would be the most desirable to the consumer," Pieniasek said.

She compares her team to the USDA, being that both evaluate carcasses and wholesale cuts based on the amount of predicted percent of retail and quality cuts.

The Texas A&M Meat Judging Team gains their knowledge during weekly 6 a.m. practices.

Cano said preparation for the contest would happen approximately a week before the actual contest.

The team practice involves being in a processing plant such as the Rosenthal Meat Center. However, that is not the only place they hold their practices.

"Texas A&M's meat judging program has a really good relationship with the people at Tyson Amarillo, and we would visit their plant in order to practice," Cano said.

Closer to contest, the team would travel and take the opportunity to practice in other plantations.



Pieniasek said she sees it as a great opportunity to not only hone their craft, but visit with students from other universities.

“We also visit other colleges and work out in their meat laboratories and coolers,” Pieniasek said. “Just as others schools have visited Rosenthal before Houston.”

### *Teamwork makes the dream work*

Cano said that he never believed that he and his team would become the family they are today until coaches Kyle Caldwell and Ciarra Gawlik gave him a single domino from a set.

“Now the significance of the domino, is that no other domino in a set is exactly like another but you need them all to play the game,” Cano said.

Cano described the dominos as the team and in order for them to compete well, they must all be there working together.

“It highlighted our individuality and represented how we all fit together in order to perform well,” Cano said.

Pieniasek says that in order to break the ice, she and her teammates got together and carved pumpkins in the spirit of Halloween.

However, carving pumpkins wasn't the point of bonding for her.

“We officially bonded as a team when we travelled for two weeks together on a trip to Denver,” Pieniasek said.

She says you get to really know each other well after spending fourteen days with her team, trapped in and out of a van.

After that, the team was pretty much family.

Cano said that he nor his teammates believed they would become as close as family.

“We had thought it sounded so cliché how much



family the coaches, coordinators and past judges said we were going to be but they were right,” Cano said.

### *For what's to come*

The Texas A&M Meat Judging Team has done a great job since starting at the National Western in Denver, Colorado finishing third behind Kansas and

Oklahoma State University.

In doing so, judging member Lauren Lee placed sixth High Individual and Reagan Hood placed tenth High Individual.

In a tight contest the Texas A&M Meat Judging Team placed fourth at the Southwestern in Fort Worth, Texas, with that the team won Beef Grading and Overall Beef.

In addition, Trent Stolowski placed fourth High Individual and Lauren Lee placed eighth High Individual.

At the Iowa State University Meats Contest, the team placed third and won Beef Grading, Beef Judging, Overall Beef and Team Hams. Lauren Lee had another great day in the cooler and finished sixth High Individual.

The Meat Judging Team placed overall third place at the Houston Livestock Show with several individual

successes.

Pieniasek said that not only did her teammates experience success, but she had her own personal high as well.

“We have great hopes for what we can accomplish as a team this fall,” Pieniasek said.

The International Meats Contest will be held in November in Dakota City, Nebraska.

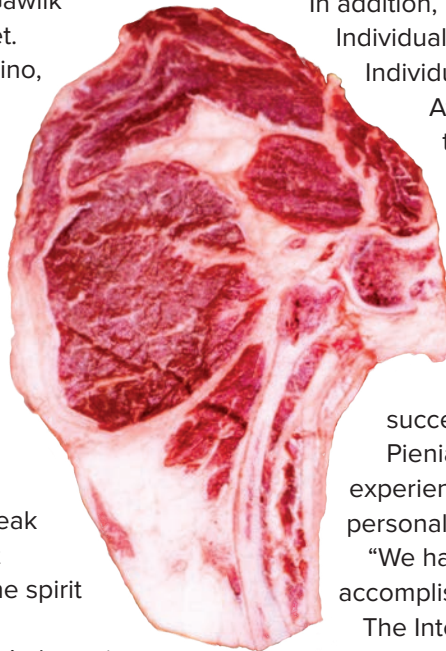
Prior to the International, the Texas A&M Meat Judging Team will compete at three contests in order to bring back the National Champion title back to College Station.

Cano says the National Championship is extremely prestigious amongst the meat science atmosphere.

He has nothing but faith that the 2020 Meat Judging team will prevail in bringing that title back home.

While wanting the title as much as they do, Cano values the importance of many “lasts” for the team.

“Make sure you make the most of the rest of your time together.”



# Passion Paired with Agriculture

by Mackenzie Weadock

Without a background in agriculture, Sydney Garcia '20 found a surprising home in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences studying agricultural economics.

"I have a natural understanding of economics, and it's completely relevant to everything we do beyond school," Garcia said. "It's my strength, it just took an unconventional path for me to realize that I'm good at it and I enjoy studying it."

But for Garcia, it's about more than just economics.

"With a degree plan that allows me to study marketing, sales, management and so much more, I get to study such a wide variety of topics," Garcia said. "All of these classes have taught me how to build relationships, understand professional language, seek out the origin of various materials and much



ARTWORKS COURTESY OF SYDNEY GARCIA

more which will directly impact the success of my business."

Garcia's education took her from student to small business owner.

"Unfinished Edge is my newly launched small business focused primarily on hand-drawn painting and digital designs," Garcia said.

Garcia explained the impact of social media branding to the success of her business.

"We are currently building an online presence through social media and Etsy," Garcia said.

"There are several homemade artist and DIY-like communities, so we meet people where they are."

Unfinished Edge believes in people and their passions.

"For me, art was my escape from the stresses of life, but I kept it intimately for myself," Garcia said. "Once I realized it was a natural strength and people liked it, I just became bold and put myself out there to see what would happen."

Garcia pairs her passion for people with her newfound understanding of agriculture to create bold art using well-sourced and natural materials. Unfinished Edge sells via Etsy and Instagram.



# An Aggie Wrangler's Inspiration

by *Maleri McHam*

Savanna Anderson, '21, fell in love with Texas A&M University after a visit to the vet school. The town, community and especially the school spirit won Anderson over.

Agriculture always played a big part of Anderson's life. She raised a wide variety of animals; including racoons, squirrels, cows, pigs and exotic animals such as anteaters. Anderson worked with them all.

Being surrounded by agriculture led Anderson to not only major in animal science in pursuit of becoming a vet, but also to the community she found in Aggie Wranglers.

The first moment Anderson saw the Aggie Wranglers perform at Fish Camp inspired her to be a part of their team.

"The 20 minutes that they were there performing and teaching, everyone was just so in awe of what they were seeing that it didn't even matter that you had just been sitting in that room for an hour talking," Anderson said. "Seeing the pure joy on everyone's face, I wanted to do that. I wanted to be the person that was able to bring joy to people through dancing."

When Anderson was younger, she played sports and briefly took studio dance. However, it was not until high school that she began going to dance halls.

While Anderson had some background in country-western dancing, she didn't really begin to learn until freshman year of college. She began taking lessons from the Aggie Wranglers and quickly realized it was different than anything she had ever done before. Despite the difficulties, Anderson fell in love with the Aggie Wranglers.

Today, Anderson gets to teach those lessons to hopeful Aggie Wranglers and anyone else who wants to learn country-western dancing.

Anderson also had the opportunity to perform at every session of Fish Camp, the place where she was first inspired by the Aggie Wranglers.

"I know that me seeing it at Fish Camp is what sparked my interest in it, so it's really great to be able to be there and spark that interest into somebody else," Anderson said.

Anderson's passion for Aggie Wranglers stems from the way it allows her to inspire so many people. This organization positively affects so many, making it much bigger than just Anderson and her teammates.

Lifelong skills, such as leadership, communication,

time management, problem solving and conflict resolution, are all things that Anderson has gained from Aggie Wranglers. She has also gained a close community that makes her feel at home.

As an Aggie Wrangler, Anderson followed their core values – commitment, humility, integrity, respect, partnership and excellence, or CHIRPE. Upholding these values allows Anderson to always put her best foot forward.

"When I go out dancing, I really feel like I'm back home in the Stockyards," Anderson said. "I love having that sense of not just the community, but the at home feeling."



# Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

by Maleri McHam

Many students reach a point where they search for an internship that will help further their interests or career. With countless opportunities available, choosing an internship can be difficult. Worries of not finding the right one, it not working out or the it not leading to a fulfilling future cross the minds of many individuals. However, if you are a student interested in learning about government policy, the Agricultural Natural Resources Policy internship is a rewarding opportunity. Phillip Smith, Texas A&M University '04, found his calling through the ANRP internship.

## *The Beginning*

Texas A&M University embedded itself into Smith without him knowing it. Despite his family having no ties with Texas A&M, Smith and his siblings found themselves drawn to the university.

Smith said his family enjoyed agriculture and were hobby farmers and ranchers. He grew up with an appreciation for agriculture that grew through high school and into college.

Chuck McHam, Smith's agriculture teacher in high school, said Smith was actively involved. He participated in parliamentary procedure, showed livestock and became an area officer.

"Phillip was always eager to learn and always wanted more information. He wanted to know about people and animals," McHam said.

Smith said he had a passion for agriculture, something Texas A&M

was well known for.

"I remember watching A&M football and not knowing why. My two older brothers went to A&M too, and I just followed behind," Smith said. "There was no question where I was going to go."

Smith began college intending to follow in his older brother, Cliff's, footsteps.

"He was an agricultural business major, and I thought that it sounded like something I would enjoy," Smith said.

After being in agricultural business for a year, Smith said he realized he enjoyed economics, leading him to change his major. Deciding to become an agricultural economics major led Smith to discover the ANRP internship and, ultimately, what he wanted to do in his future.

Smith said he heard about the ANRP internship in his agricultural economics classes. Interested, he decided to take an agriculture policy class.

"I had heard about the programs briefly a couple of times before, but it wasn't until after I had taken some classes about policy that I decided it was something that interested me," Smith said.

While in college, the Farm Bill became a major topic of discussion in the policy class Smith took. Smith said Texas A&M played a big role in the bill, leading his policy class to become immersed in talking about it. This class was a turning point in his life.

"After that, I decided to apply for the internship and ended up getting accepted," Smith said.



PHOTO BY BREANN SMITH

## *The Internship*

They say the work you put in is what you get out, and that could not be more true.

When remembering Smith as a student, McHam described him as dedicated and ready to jump in wherever needed.

"Phillip is highly intelligent and he's always eager to learn new things," McHam said.

Smith's work ethic carried over into his internship. Smith explained his dedication as an intern made his experience impactful.

Smith's drive to learn and get the most out of his internship gave him a step ahead of others.

"It wasn't but a few days before I had a key to the office where I could unlock and pick up the mail and get there before anybody else," Smith said.

Jeb Hensarling, a former States Representative, oversaw the team Smith interned with. Hensarling said Smith had character traits that made him a great individual to work with.

"Judgement and likeability, those are probably his greatest attributes," Hensarling said. "You want to like the people you work around, and Phillip's character and demeanor makes him somebody you enjoy working with."

Smith said Hensarling and the office staff were excellent. They did not only give interns small tasks like getting coffee and opening mail, but actively gave them projects to learn and grow from.

On top of office jobs, Smith said he would engage with the office staff and ask to be a part of more things.

"I jumped at every opportunity," Smith said. "I'd ask if I could stick around and watch debates with the chief of staff, with the legislative director, with the congressman."

Smith said he learned by watching and carefully listening to those above him. He recognized the ANRP internship as a learning opportunity and was determined to soak it all in.

Smith explained that he was able to gain a lot through giving the ANRP internship his all. Rather than looking at it as something to build his resume or a stepping stone for what came next, he treated it as a way to grow.

"I really tried to learn a lot, even if I didn't think at the time I was going to do anything related to government policy or that field," Smith said. "But by the end of that semester, I found something I really liked."

Throughout the internship, Smith said he was inspired by Hensarling.

"My boss, Jeb, was in his first year as a member of congress," Smith said. "He asked me what I wanted to do after college, and I told him I wanted to be a lawyer. He told me that I didn't need a law degree to do government policy"

Hensarling explained that members of congress do not have a lot of direct contact with the interns. However, this does not prevent them from recognizing when an intern is doing well.

"Phillip obviously showed great talent, great political judgement and a great work ethic," Hensarling said. "Because of that, eventually, he came to work for me."

## *The Job*

After returning from the ANRP internship, Smith said he finished college and set out to find a job.

"I had job offers," Smith said. "There were a couple of things, but

they weren't exactly what I wanted to do."

He got in touch with the Republican National Committee, who asked if he would be interested in working in Michigan at a campaign victory center.

Former president George W. Bush began running in his second presidential race at this time, and Smith had the opportunity to be a part of his team.

"It was just through contacts I had made," Smith said. "While I was there, I was like, 'Hey, this is what I want to do'."

Smith described how he loaded his truck and trailer up and headed back to Washington DC. It was only a few weeks before he was able to secure a paying job in policy.

After working in policy for a while, Smith said he decided he wanted to broaden his career path.

"I had decided that I wanted to get some political experience and started visiting with some folks about getting in on a political race on the campaign side," Smith said.

In Texas, it was a big political year, so Smith said he reached out to some people. He ended up coming back to Texas for a short time and worked on a senator's campaign.

Smith made his way back to the federal side of things after this experience, working under Hensarling. Smith's past experience with Hensarling made him a good candidate for the job. Hensarling said he trusted Smith and knew he would be a valuable worker.

"He started out as the number two person working for me in East Texas and, eventually, became my top guy in East Texas," Hensarling said. "A lot of his job was to represent me at various events, and in some respects to being my eyes, my ears and my mouth when I was in Washington."

This time around, Phillip was able to move out of purely policy work.

"It kind of shifted gears from a day-to-day shaping policy, to

constituents services, and working with local governments and also the hundreds of thousands of constituents he had across the board," Smith said. "Everything from Medicare and USDA, all the way to social security."

When working with them, Smith said he kind of became the ag guy. The committee he became a part of did not focus only on agriculture, so not everyone had knowledge of it.

Hensarling said their district, the 5th district of Texas, had a lot of agricultural and small business interest. Hensarling explained that he felt going to Texas A&M helped Smith better understand the agriculture side of things.

"I think going to A&M can help you be a little bit more attuned to the challenges, hopes, desires and dreams of a lot of people in the ag community and small business community," Hensarling said.

Hensarling explained that he and Smith formed a close relationship through their years together.

"You kind of develop a family and a camaraderie with those people who work with you in politics," Hensarling said. "Getting to see him be successful makes me happy."

Smith said he continued to grow throughout his career, but it all started with his decision to attend Texas A&M and participate in the ANRP internship.

"If I had gone anywhere else, I wouldn't have had that same experience," Smith said. "Without that internship, I wouldn't have had a clue that this is what I wanted to do with my life."



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# Rodeo on the Air

by Emily Wedemeyer

The sights, smells and sounds of rodeos and the agriculture industry are all familiar ones for agricultural communications and journalism major, Baylee Jankowski, '20.

Jankowski grew up traveling from one dirt arena to another. Both of her parents rodeoed as she grew up, her dad a steer wrestler and her mom a barrel racer. She was exposed to rodeo at an early age, and it didn't take long before she became immersed in the sport herself.

When Jankowski enrolled at Texas A&M, she decided to continue her involvement in the sport of rodeo. She joined the Aggie Rodeo Team and competed in barrel racing and goat tying. She also held an officer position within the organization and served as its Bible study leader.



PHOTO BY EMILY WEDEMEYER

Aggie Rodeo Team faculty advisor Alfred Wagner, Ph.D has known Jankowski for many years.

"Baylee is a breath of fresh air that always gets her projects done. She

has served our team as secretary for two years and is very responsible about getting our information out accurately," Wagner said.

Outside of the time she dedicates to her academics and the rodeo team, Jankowski has an abundance

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“Being coached to compete in rodeo queen contests has equipped me for life, even outside of the rodeo world.”

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of responsibilities as a rodeo queen. While holding the titles of Miss Rodeo Jacksonville 2019 and Miss Rodeo Sandhills 2020, Jankowski makes appearances in various parades, rodeos and occasionally speaks at schools and events. As

an ambassador for the sport of rodeo, Jankowski advocates for the agriculture industry with the platform she has earned.

Rodeo queen contestants are judged in various categories such as horsemanship, speech, modeling,

overall appearance and personality. Jankowski admits that she never planned on becoming a rodeo queen, but her natural talent has brought her much success. She won the first rodeo queen contest she entered, which was the 2017 Fort Bend County Youth Rodeo Association. While serving as the Fort Bend County Youth Rodeo Association

rodeo queen that year, Jankowski was personally encouraged to continue competing in rodeo queen contests and was told that she had great potential.

"Being coached to compete in rodeo queen contests has equipped



PHOTO COURTESY OF DUDLEY.DORIGHT.COM

me for life, even outside of the rodeo world,” Jankowski said. “I have developed valuable skills that will allow me to excel in interviews, broadcasting and other areas in the real world.”

As her time on the rodeo team dwindles and her reign as a rodeo queen nears an end, Jankowski does not plan on retiring from the rodeo or agriculture industry anytime soon.

In the future, Jankowski hopes to create something that would provide people who have never experienced rodeo before, the opportunity to learn more about the sport. Her ideas include using virtual reality technology or producing either a television show or documentary to do so.

Jankowski’s passion for rodeo fuels her desire to create an alternative way of bringing rodeo to people that would not normally pay to see it themselves. She wants to provide a glimpse of a behind-the-scenes perspective of the production. Additionally, Jankowski wishes to inform people of the history of rodeo.



PHOTO BY GRACE MARSHALL

“A lot of people don’t even know that most rodeo events were not created as a sport or for entertainment,” Jankowski explains. “They were actually created out of necessity — not flippantly, but with a purpose, and a lot of people don’t know that.”

Jankowski also wants the general public to have a better understanding of how well the animals used in rodeo events are

treated and how crucial their health truly is. As a rodeo athlete herself, she can attest to how critical the animals’ health is and that their performance and success is strictly dependent on the animals’ physical well-being.

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## “AGCJ 409 was truly incredible, it was almost as if we were a staff on a TV show for a week.”

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Jankowski realizes that our society is becoming more and more removed from agriculture, which is the root of common misunderstandings and misinterpretations. By creating a way for people to see the day-to-day life of a professional rodeo athlete, she believes that there will be a better understanding of the sport and eliminate some controversies and confusion that people have.

Texas A&M offers a course titled Television Production for Agricultural Journalists, otherwise referred to as AGCJ 409. The course is intended to give students hands-on experience in creating an over-the-air television program. Students utilize the studios of KAMU-TV and the PBS station at A&M. Programs produced during the course are broadcast over the station.

Rodney Zent, a recently retired Texas A&M professor of 44 years, taught the course nearly every semester.

Zent said that students learn to work with equipment, create content, contact community guests and design a program record schedule.

“AGCJ 409 was truly incredible,”

Jankowski said. “It was almost as if we were a staff on a TV show for a week.”

Zent explained that in addition to the technical skills students acquire in the class, he believes that his students learn to work together, meet deadlines and overcome obstacles.

“From my standpoint, the biggest reward was to see a number of students each semester find their passion with this ‘show must go on’ kind of life,” Zent said. “Baylee might have been a bit overwhelmed at the very first, but her passion moved her forward quickly and I

could see she had fallen in love with the new skills she got to practice.”

Jankowski credits Zent’s television production course for her realization



PHOTO BY MARY DUBUISSON

of what she wants to do in the future. She said that before taking the class, she thought the idea of production was interesting, but she knew little about it.

“AGCJ 409 confirmed that this was the career I wanted to pursue,” Jankowski said.

Jankowski said she is committed to educating the public and advocating for what she is passionate about. She said that she wants to give back to the sport that has given her so much, and that’s evident in everything she says and does.

# Preserving a Legacy

by Lauren Bowman

The Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center, located on Texas A&M University's West Campus, has a special place in agricultural students' hearts. The building was founded in January of 1983, at which time it was only the meat science and technology center. In November of 1987, the building was dedicated in honor of E.M. "Manny" Rosenthal and named Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center.

Rosenthal, '42, was on the '41 meats judging team and turned out to be very successful in the meat business. Rosenthal had a love for Texas A&M and donated towards the school and the meat program.

Ray Riley '79, manager of Rosenthal, has been a part of Rosenthal for 34 years. He strives everyday to make the program better, and a learning experience for Ags.

"If you have the love and money to donate, you will get a building named after you," Riley said.

The Rosenthal center's purpose is to teach and conduct research through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in the area of meat and animal science. The Rosenthal center continues to be a hands-on teaching facility, demonstrating harvest to cutting retail cuts. A variety of classes and workshops are offered involving meat, such as beef, pork, lamb or a combination of all.

Over the last 10 years, the Rosenthal center has been involved with Texas barbecue by hosting two camps, The Barbecue Summer Camp in June and Camp Brisket in January. The camps serve to educate livestock producers, meat markets and retail stores. New and innovative ideas are discussed to promote the

beef, pork and lamb industries.

The Barbecue Summer Camp teaches kids how to tenderize, season, start a pit and most of all, grill a steak. Camp Brisket teaches kids about the brisket, how to slow cook and how to season. Riley plans to have the camps grow very large over the next few years.

The Rosenthal center is a very small processing center on campus that processes hogs, lambs, goats and cattle. They teach students about the harvesting process, dressing percentage and the fact that a 1,000 pound steer will not produce a 1,000 pound carcass. Students learn how to evaluate the carcass, yield and quality grades, as well as how to cut the carcass into resale cuts. The professors at the Rosenthal center are teaching students the process with the ultimate goal of remembering that a consumer's steak doesn't just appear on the table.

The Rosenthal center has a store in the same building that was founded in March 1983. The Rosenthal Meat Center store is open to the public and sells different cuts of meat, such as boneless ham, beef cuts, sausage, summer sausage and their famous beef jerky.

A parking garage now sits across from the Animal Industry building on Main Campus where a creamery used to be. The creamery retail shop offered sundaes, malts, shakes and hand-dipped scoops of ice cream. The Animal Industry building housed the original site where meat was processed. Due to its close proximity to the creamery, they also retailed the creamery's products. When the current Rosenthal center was built, the creamery decided to continue

to retail their products with the retail cuts of meat on West campus.

After the creamery closed in 1984, the Rosenthal store eventually moved to selling Blue Bell products and the hand-dipped malts and shakes. In 1995, a new creamery was built, but they were not going to sell ice cream like before. December 1999 was the last time the Rosenthal store sold hand-dipped ice cream and malts. Today, the Rosenthal store sells ice cream cups and popsicles.

In 2007, the New York Times recognized Texas A&M's beef jerky as the best jerky within their office. The Rosenthal center's beef jerky has also been featured on ESPN and CBS Sunday morning. The beef jerky's national exposure helps boost the demand.

The meat that is processed and sold at the Rosenthal store is simply a byproduct of the teaching and research conducted within the center. Selling the product helps compensate the cost of other expenditures.

In the Rosenthal store, they sell pre-cooked prime rib roasts, all types of sausage, beef snacks and dried sausage snacks. They have a seating area in store where students can come over and grab a fountain drink, sausage wrap, jerky and best of all, ice cream.

Meat judging is a huge part of the Rosenthal Meat Center due to the fact that the judging teams use the center for their practices. The teams rely on being able to use meat products left over from the research and teaching activities in the center.

"The meat is used in many ways such as teaching, meat judging teams, extension programs. The meat is very well utilized before ending up



in the retail store. All of the meat is processed under the state meat inspection and guidelines are followed very closely," Riley said.

The Rosenthal center is growing rapidly. There is talk of a new building within the next five years; however, it would not be located on West Campus due to space. Classes are still offered at Rosenthal in the one large classroom. The classes offered are animal science 107, 108 and 307. 107 and 108 are the two basic animal science courses and 307 is the basic meats class

"Students have changed, the humane handling of livestock, and most of all food safety," Riley said.

The one thing that hasn't changed over the years since Riley has been involved is that the meat is produced by Aggies.

Riley is very proud of what happens in the Rosenthal Meat and Science Technology Center and how unique it is not only to Texas A&M, but the country.

Visit the Rosenthal Meat Science and Technology Center on their Facebook, and give it a like. The store is open Monday- Friday 9 a.m -6 p.m. Stop on by one day and grab yourself a piece of the great Aggie Tradition.

The Center was dedicated in 1987, in honor of E. M. "Manny" Rosenthal, a former student of Texas A&M and chairman emeritus of Standard Meat Co.

The Rosenthal family stands outside of the center on dedication day, proudly representing their namesake.

Professor Davey Griffin teaches an anatomy class in the Rosenthal auditorium. The auditorium is equipped with rails connected to the cooler for easy transportation of fresh meat products to view in class.

Rosenthal Center Manager, Ray Riley, inspects a carcass in the cooler before it is transferred into the auditorium.



# Grandfather and Grandson Make Aggie Horse Racing History

by Bailey Mullens

Ty Malechek '19, third generation Aggie, lives by his passion to grow into a phenomenal human being. Malechek comes from a long lineage of Aggies with a history of professional horse racing. As the horse owners, Malechek and his grandfather Donald Adam '57, handle everything from breeding, stabling, upkeep, training, down to selecting the right jockey for the race.

"My grandfather has been racing horses for 26 years now, longer than I've been alive," Malechek said.

Malechek grew up around horse racing and remembers being inspired by his grandfather's horse racing enterprise.

"My grandfather is one of my greatest role models," Malechek said.

With many flourishing paths on the horizon, Malechek chose to follow the footsteps of his grandfather and attend Texas A&M University.

"I almost made a leap of faith to go to the University of Kentucky and get involved in the industry right away," Malechek said. "Then I realized my network's too great here in College Station."

Ultimately, Malechek decided to pursue a degree in agricultural leadership and development.

"What that major really does is heightens your self awareness of how you see yourself, how other people see you and who you truly are," Malechek said.

Leveraging his new found self awareness and adaptive leadership skills, Malechek and his grandfather were able to take their horse, My Miss Lilly, to the world renowned Kentucky Oaks Competition.

"Kentucky Oaks is purely the female Derby," Malechek said. "That's it. It's run the day before."

While less known than the Kentucky Derby by the casual fan,



PHOTO BY JOSEPH CHEEK

the horse racing community sees the Oaks just as important as the Derby.

"It's just as competitive," Malechek said. "Some would argue that it is more competitive because less horses can get into the race."

The Kentucky Oaks is a 14-horse race that takes place the day before the 20-horse Derby with a first place grand prize of \$1.6 million.

"When it comes to track dynamics it's almost the exact same race," Malechek said.

Malechek explained that horse racing is a big roll of the dice. Just



PHOTO BY CASEY JAY BENSON

a few steps can be the difference between the grand prize and second place

"You gotta get fortunate. You gotta get lucky," Malechek said.

Many times, races chalk up to pure chance, but Malechek revealed that luck isn't the only thing that is responsible for their success.

"Knowing that there is a God is important to me because there is something going on here that is much bigger than me," Malechek said. "Once we realize life is about something bigger than us, that's the first moment we are truly in control. We're in control of our choices, but not in control of the game. Destiny itself is completely up to God."

The second support in Malechek's life is his wife Meri-Margaret Manzeil Malechek.

"I took the stance to get married because I need somebody to hold me accountable," Malechek said. "I need somebody to balance who I am."

Horse racing history spans hundreds of years and Malechek plans to be a force for perpetuating the sport further. Malechek has a passion for horse racing and he ultimately wants to be an activist for the sport.

"I want to build up my own personal capital right now and be able to become one of the better owners of all time eventually," Malechek said. "That's my life goal."



# Q&A with Bennett Folsom

by Grace Miller

Bennett Folsom '21 proves that Texas A&M University students can find their passions and achieve their goals. Folsom first developed his passion for animals and agriculture in high school through his involvement in 4-H. Prior to coming to Texas A&M, Folsom's exposure to wool judging was minimal and his knowledge of wool was limited.

Folsom participated on the 2017-2018 Wool Judging team and helped coach the 2018-2019 reserve national champion judging team at Texas A&M.

*Q: How has judging/coaching been a turning point in your college career?*

A: Through the skills I learned during judging and coaching wool, there's no doubt in my mind that my success in college is directly tied to my time coaching and judging the team.

*Q: What specifically are skills you have gained from judging wool?*

A: The ability to look at a scenario and rank the possible outcomes is a valuable skill that I would not have if it weren't for judging. Beyond critical thinking and adaptability to a wide range of scenarios, it has greatly benefited my efforts in classes by being able to formulate a plan and engage myself with the task.



PHOTO BY DARCY FOLSOM

*Q: What are the benefits of being on any judging team?*

A: The benefits of judging teams whether it's wool, meats, or livestock is that it teaches our University students to put their thoughts into words cohesively while also making critical decisions under high periods of stress.

*Q: What did you learn about coaching peers throughout your time in judging wool?*

A: Coaching taught me a lot about patience, perseverance and the beauty of letting people learn by themselves and seeing their mind gain new knowledge by giving them a little bit of knowledge.



Ingenio



*Aggie dairy farmers fighting to survive a changing industry*

*Story and photos by Lauren O. Smith*

I-N-G-E-N-I-O-U-S. Ingenious. When used in describing a person, it means unusually skilled at inventing new ways to solve problems.

As technology evolves and populations increase, American agriculture pushes towards larger and larger operations to meet critical domestic and international market demands.

The term “commercial” describes dairy farms that milk herds of over 1,000 cows and export their milk to companies who produce dairy products, like Kraft, Tillamook and many others. Texas commercial dairy farms range from 5,000 to 60,000 cows, exporting thousands of gallons of milk per week to cheese factories, milk refineries and various other facilities.

As the industry grew, small dairies found themselves forced to choose between three options of survival: consolidate with other farms, sell everything and leave the industry or adapt their business to a new market. Survival as a non-commercial farmer in 21st century American agriculture defines ingenuity.

For two small family farms in south-central Texas, ingenuity expresses another part of the irrepressible Aggie spirit.

*Taking a Risk*

Bob Stryk, Fighting Texas Aggie class of '79, knows better than most the challenges faced by small, family-owned farms. He and his wife Darlene run Stryk Dairy, a dairy specializing in raw milk products out of Schulenburg, Texas. His father bought the farm in 1955,



where Stryk was born and raised. He only left the farm once when he attended Texas A&M University.

In the mid-1990s, a drought hit their farm hard and Stryk started to consider other options.

“We could have sold all the heifers and all the land, and completely got out of debt and bought us a little place in town,” Stryk said.

But he decided that he would rather be on the farm and stick it out.

A few years later, while still struggling to get by making seasonal cheese products and milking a few cows, a friend called with a wild idea—what about selling unpasteurized, or raw milk? At first, Stryk rejected the idea thinking the Texas Department of Health wouldn't allow it.

“They never told us ‘You can't do it,’ but they said, ‘You don't want to do it,’” Stryk said. “We also just took it that you couldn't; we never looked into it.”



However, with their farm perilously close to a financial cliff, the Stryks decided to take the leap, paying the \$800 fee to apply for a raw milk permit. They soon discovered a lucrative market and vast amounts of loyal customers who traveled long distances to support them. The rest is history.

“We're enjoying what we're doing again, for the last 15 years,” Stryk said.

Since starting to sell natural, grass-fed, raw milk, they've expanded into producing various dairy products with excess milk, such as cheddar cheese, plain and flavored, cheese curds, buttermilk, and sour cream.

But they're not the only dairy to adopt raw milk production to survive.

*The Transition*

Chad and Scott Chaloupka of Four E Dairy, classes of '99 and '04, realized the financial power of the raw milk





market through their neighbors and friends, the Stryks.

“In 2008 or 2009, when the economy went south, we had to find a way to keep our doors open,” Chad said.

Every day, they struggled to break even. They tried to expand into

a commercial market, investing in electronic milkers, purebred Jersey cows and more; but it still wasn't enough. They simply could not afford to compete with larger operations.

Their mother, Elyse Chaloupka, who managed their financial records, recognized their business model as unsustainable. She then called the Stryks after hearing of their success in marketing raw milk. At first, the Chaloupkas were concerned about being a competitor to their friends, but the Stryks assured them that this particular market had inexhaustible economic possibilities. The Chaloupkas then started to make the transition to selling raw milk, getting rid of the electronic milkers and high-tech equipment.

However, the transition to raw milk has proven a long one. In order to pay off the expenses accrued before they moved to raw milk, they also still sell to commercial companies.

“Right now, we're milking over 400 cows,” Chad said. “We have two herds: a commercial herd and a raw herd. We're trying to move as much as we can to the raw.”

He hopes one day to manage a herd of around 200 cows, only producing raw milk. He explained while it provides health benefits to their customers, the move to raw was prompted out of necessity.

“My guess is that in 5 to 10 years, there won't be a dairy less than 500 cows in Texas, unless you're doing something else,” Chad said. “You won't sustain yourself.”

In 2007, the Chaloupkas started the Rocky Creek Corn Maze, an 8-acre corn maze designed to provide the local community with good family fun and hands-on exposure to agriculture. A few years later, they developed partnerships with Mother Culture, a yogurt company out of San Antonio; Italian artisan cheesemaker Andrea Cudin, who manufactures his Lira

Rossa cheeses next to their milking parlor; River Whey Creamery, an artisan cheesemaker out of San Antonio; and soon an ice cream company in Austin.

### *Overcoming Obstacles*

These families prioritized staying on the farm, no matter the cost. Both farms tried the commercial route, keeping the land and scaling up their operation as much as they could afford. But in their situation, scaling up did not enable them to earn a living.

“There's a lot of expenses that people don't see, that you got to make back, and put a little in your pocket, something you can live on,” Chad said.

The basic economics of surviving in a changing industry required the farmers to find a market that would both pay for their expenses and provide them a livelihood. The raw milk market was the logical choice, and making the transition was easier than one might assume.

The Stryks and Chaloupkas found that their current operations needed little modifications for raw milk. Before the shift to raw, the Texas Department of State Health Services, or TDSHS, tested both farms for the quality of their milk, then sent it to pasteurization facilities for distribution in grocery stores.

Now, TDSHS experts inspect their facilities weekly or monthly and perform more stringent versions of the same pathogen and bacterial tests, before analyzing the milk to determine if it meets the same distribution standards.

In other words, raw milk from the Stryks and the Chaloupkas meet the same standards of health and quality as pasteurized milk from the grocery store.

Unpasteurized dairy has its advocates and critics, but the raw milk market saved these Aggies from a serious financial crisis.

“The chance we took kept us on the farm,” Stryk said. “That's the whole bottom line.”



# From White House Creative Director to Family Oriented CEO

by Hunter Woods

Kelsey Renee Lucas graduated from Texas A&M University in December 2012, a semester ahead of schedule. Lucas graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Leadership and Development with a minor in communication.

A product of the Sgricultural and Natural Resources Policy Internship Program, Lucas received a full-time job offer if she could complete her degree early.

Thanks to her dedicated advisor who helped her graduate early, she became a full-time reporter/graphic designer for three years before leaving to start her own graphic design business, Kelsey Lucas Graphic Design.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KELSEY LUCAS

**Q:** Tell us the story of how you went from an ANRP intern to working at The White House as a graphic designer.

**A:** I knew I wanted to intern on the East Coast because I loved when my family would visit extended family there, but I never thought of DC. I had my eyes set on NYC and blindly applied to about 15 internships in NYC with no network connection. I didn't get any of them and was heartbroken.

My advisor encouraged me to apply for ANRP and although the interview scared me to death with policy questions, I got in. One of my roommates during the program was later my bridesmaid. I also met my husband on Capitol Hill. We have a son, 2, and a one-month old girl.

Once in Congressman Kevin Brady's office, I got a lot of "press assistant" tasks. I drafted Tweets/

Facebook posts, took photos, staffed the congressman at events, attended hearings and wrote up talking points. It exposed me to the communications side of politics and I was in love.

While interning, I did a ton of networking coffees and kept a spreadsheet of contacts that I still have today. (This was all encouraged by ANRP program managers). I wasn't ready to leave DC in May and met someone who worked for an advertising firm. They eventually offered me an internship the summer before the 2012 election. One of their graphic designers quit and because I had some design skills, they thrust me into designing all of the direct mail pieces. It was long hours and stressful, but I learned so much. I ultimately worked remotely for them from Texas while I finished one more semester at A&M.

Later, I used the network I created from ANRP and applied for the Heritage Foundation's internship program. It was super competitive and paid. I would not have ever gotten in without the Aggie network.

Halfway through the internship I was hired on as a full time reporter/graphic designer. I stayed three years before leaving for my own business venture. I got a bonus every year, got to travel around the US for conferences and interviews, and had the best boss, Rob Bluey, ever. He believed in me and gave me a lot of responsibility quickly. It was challenging, but the best experience of my life. While at Heritage, I met Ory Rinat, Chief Digital Officer at the White House now. He later encouraged me to leave my business and work on his digital team at the White House as the Creative Director. I was three months pregnant. I loved working at the White House so much. It was stressful, chaotic and frustrating, but the team I was on and the experiences I saw were worth it.

Unfortunately, I want to do everything I do 10,000% and I couldn't be the star mom I wanted to be and the star Creative Director at The White House. I ultimately left after 17 months and went back to running my own business. It was a tough decision, but the right one.

**Q:** While working under the Trump Administration, what were some big



ARTWORK PROVIDED BY KELSEY LUCAS

projects that you personally worked on?

**A:** During my 17 months at The White House, I served as the Creative Director. I managed the creative process from concept to completion on 30+ campaigns and initiatives from the Trump administration. My biggest accomplishment was establishing a new, official streamlined style guide and logo that was implemented across the administration. I also created 30-50 social media graphics a week, designed Ivanka Trump's Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative logo, The Pledge



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KELSEY LUCAS

to America's Workers logo, the 2019 and 2018 Easter Egg Roll logo, the 2018 Fourth of July at The White House logo, all White House email product logos, and 17 other unique designs for different initiatives and events - both public and classified.


**Q:** What would you tell current students who are pursuing a degree in agricultural communications, leadership, or education?

**A:** Take advantage of the Aggie network and staff. I would not never applied for the ANRP internship if it wasn't for my advisor encouraging me. I had no interest in politics, but she encouraged me that the experience would be way more than politics. She was right.

Go to class. I miss learning every day. I miss the amazing professors. I miss a test being my biggest stress. Use the Aggie network. So many of my early network and contacts were sourced from Aggies.

For more information on Lucas and a view of her portfolio, visit her website at [www.kelseyrenee.com](http://www.kelseyrenee.com).







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# Farm Fresh Restaurant Striving for Authenticity

*by Madelyn Kennedy*

Ronin, a family owned and operated business, follows a “come and see” mindset. It is a farm-to-table restaurant in Bryan, Texas where everything is prepared daily on full display.

Amanda Light, co-owner of Ronin with her husband, Brian Light, said that people in today’s generations are so disconnected from their food sources, but Ronin strives to connect people back to their food on multiple levels.

“The intention and kind of the heart behind what we do is to bring people back to where their food comes from,” Light said. “We have an open kitchen for a reason and the idea is that at the farm and at the restaurant people can watch what we are doing because it’s all on display which not every restaurant has.”

Light said their customers are not connected just because they know their food was prepared fresh, but they actually watch the prep and cooking process from the chefs and how much love and care is put into each item that is placed on the plate.

“We have a teeny, tiny freezer here that’s smaller than your home freezer, and everything is made by hand from scratch,” Light said. “It’s nutrient dense and it makes you feel good, it’s more than coming to a restaurant and sitting down and mindlessly going through the motion of eating.”

*What else makes Ronin unique?*

An aspect that the owners made sure to incorporate was the idea

of getting to know your neighbor. The farm style restaurant tables are designed for strangers to sit close to one another in hopes they will get to know one another on a personal level.

Light described the community aspect through the use of long, communal tables where people gather and end up getting to know the person sitting next to them, unlike traditional seating at any other restaurant.

“Stranger or best friend, you’re sitting next to somebody that you may not ever speak to otherwise,” Light said. “You get to make a friend and connect with people on a different level than what we are used to when we are so tied to our cell phones.”

At the restaurant, there are two tables in the main dining room that seat 24 people each. The tables are suspended from the ceiling, making them easily moved up and down for flexibility of space. In the second dining room, there is more traditional seating for guests who are seeking a more intimate evening or only get out every once in a while and want more privacy.

“We hope people experience community and good food in a different way than what we are used to,” Light said.

*History of Ronin- Grab some wine!*

While between jobs, the Light’s were given an opportunity to cater a wedding of 250 people.

Amanda expressed how much fun they had but also that her eyes were opened to a need in the community

for something different in town.

“Barbecue and tacos and all that stuff is great, but we were doing some fun foods,” Light said.

Shortly after, they began the search for a commercial facility they could operate out of. They vowed they would never open a restaurant and were unlucky in the search for a commercial kitchen.

Light mentioned looking inward at the farm property to see if operating out of there was an option.

“There was one building in particular that had a giant concrete pad, like a big barn,” Light said. “So we took that barn and converted it into a commercial kitchen, got that licensed and began operating out of there in September 2012.”

Light said that because they lived there, they had no intentions of opening to the public. Business was running slow, so they decided to contact everyone they knew to invite them to a multicourse dinner in the forest with desert in the garden, later calling it the Full Moon dinner.

“People loved the dinners so much, we ended up doing it the next month and the month after that, and here we are in our ninth year of dinners,” Light said. “They happen once a month as close to the full moon as possible.”

Four years later, the Light’s were approached by their now landlord wondering why they didn’t have a restaurant with how incredible their food was. Little did he know, they were on the prowl looking to open a restaurant.

Light said it was one of those

meant to be moments when the property they wanted but seemed out of reach was being developed by the gentleman who approached them.

“We didn’t want to open in a strip center, we wanted to open in a place with character and history,” Light said. “Downtown Bryan is such an amazing community of small and family owned businesses, and we wanted to have that with the restaurant.”

They were approached in 2015. Soon after, they began fundraising and planning to take action on the 108-year-old building for their restaurant.

Light said they jumped through all the necessary hoops for the next two years, then underwent construction for the next 11 months. Almost three years later, Ronin opened in May 2018.

### *A day in the life*

Everyday looks different depending on the week or particular day. There are about 40 to 45 people on staff between the restaurant and the farm.

Light said that they employ many Texas A&M and Blinn students who express that they are never bored while working.

“I am usually parked in front of the computer, in a client meeting or in a meeting for other varying aspects of the business,” Light said. “My husband does all of the farming with a couple other helping hands, so he raises the pigs and the chickens and the vegetables then brings them here (the restaurant) and they get prepped and cooked and served to people.”

Zoie Seabaugh, server at Ronin, explained that working there has been a really fun and unique experience. She said she feels valued by her employers because of how hands-on and involved they are.

“Working at Ronin is really cool because we get to learn about all the different inner workings of the farm and the restaurant,” Seabaugh said. “It’s not just a job, we get to take part

in what we are serving people and be interested in and excited about it.”

In addition to the Full Moon dinners, Ronin also hosts weddings, special events and farm tours for educational purposes.

Light explained some of the little ways they plan on growing. Soon, they hope to offer produce to the public regularly within the next year.

“Over the summer, we were at the farmer’s market pretty regularly because we had such an over abundance of produce,” Light said. “We are hoping to be able to do that again.”

### *An agricultural business with a liberal arts degree*

Light received a women’s and gender studies degree from Texas A&M and believes she uses it every day and in every way. She believes that just because you got a certain degree, doesn’t mean you’re stuck doing something only in that field.

“I think the use of a degree is a multifaceted thing,” Light said. “Your degree should teach you more than ‘This is my degree, and this is my task.’”

Light said that she has always been a food person because she has been working at restaurants since she was 12-years-old. She always knew she wanted to grow food for her family before Ronin was ever a thought.

“For as many errors and failures, we’ve had just as many triumphs and wins and exciting accomplishments, which is part of the reason why we continued it and decided to expand it to what it has become,” Light said.

Never be afraid to follow what you love. Even if it seems overly ambitious, just work towards it and keep going. This pertains to everything in life. Find something and do it, you ever know what might come of it.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY RONIN

## Sometimes Animals Can Teach You More than a Human Ever Could *by Sydney Price*

Julia Giannelli '21, a wildlife fisheries science major, recently completed an internship at the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center. Giannelli learned about communication from the most unlikely sources, animals at her internship.

*Q: Why did you choose to pursue a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science?*

*A:* Originally, I wanted to go to vet school for exotic game animals. I realized after my first semester that taking care of the exotic populations is more than veterinary medicine. I switched my emphasis from vertebrate zoology to ecology and conservation. Personally, I think conserving the Earth's natural habitats and ecosystems should be a major priority to make sure future generations can experience the world we live in today, and hopefully a better one.

*Q: What led you to your internship at The Winnie Carter Wildlife Center?*

*A:* One day at lunch, I got a department-wide email about the internship at The Winnie Carter Wildlife Center. I emailed back and expressed my interest about the internship. Next thing I knew, I was training to work at the center.

*Q: What did you learn from working at The Winnie Carter Wildlife Center?*

*A:* One of the biggest takes from working there is



PHOTO BY MOLLY KENNEDY



PHOTO BY MOLLY KENNEDY

working with other people. I wasn't taking care of the animals by myself, we were a team of people trying to provide the best place for these animals to live in. To accomplish this, there was a lot of communication and teamwork involved.

*Q: How will you apply this to your future in ecology and conservation?*

*A:* Ultimately, a lot of career fields pertaining to ecology and conservation have to do with federal and state agencies, whether it be dealing with policy or working for the actual agency. The other option is with private companies and institutions. That being said, you can't communicate verbally with animals. Learning animal behavior patterns and husbandry was a big thing at the Wildlife Center. Whenever an animal was distressed from a passing car or other external factors, I learned how to deal with these situations. Surprisingly, it was the animals who taught me how to be a better communicator with people. Being able to verbally communicate with people and non-verbally communicate with animals allows me to continue learning and to provide the best care possible to any and all animals.

The Winnie Carter Wildlife Center serves as a teaching facility for students to learn about wildlife and exotic animal management, behaviors and more. To learn more about The Winnie Carter Wildlife Center, visit [vetmed.tamu.edu/wildlife](http://vetmed.tamu.edu/wildlife)

# How a Single Turn Opened Doors

by Bianca Calderon

Bright-eyed and full of hope is what most students are like when attending their first career fair, hoping to hit the jackpot with a company to start their career.

However, for agricultural economics graduate Ashleigh Fleming '16, that isn't what happened right at the start.

Fleming currently works for John Deere as a product manager for Tillage in Des Moines, Iowa. She describes her journey of ending up at John Deere as a unique story.

Fleming remembers her first College of Agriculture and Life Sciences career fair as an eye opening experience.

"I was meeting with a company at the career fair. It wasn't going very well," Fleming said "I gave them my resume, and he actually ended up crumbling it up and throwing it in the trash in front of me because I was only a freshman at the time."

The unfortunate fate of being rejected led freshmen Fleming to make her way out of the career fair feeling defeated. Little did she know that she was about to bump into her future career, literally.

"I walked around the corner, and I'm about to leave," Fleming said. "I bumped shoulders with this guy and we both hit each other, and he

dropped all his stuff. We then started a conversation with each other. He just so happens to work for John Deere and was recruiting for them." That bump at the career fair later

Construction and Forestry in their pricing department. After interning for Deere throughout college, Fleming began her post-graduate life as a Marketing Rep for Deere.

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“ It just so happened that he worked for John Deere and was recruiting.”

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During her time in her marketing rep development program, Fleming held different roles that prepared her for post development program jobs.

"My first job after the marketing rep program, I was a sales promotion coordinator which was definitely one of my favorite jobs," Fleming

said. "I helped support shows and sponsorship within the entire southeast region of the United States."

Career fairs can be nerve-wrecking and insightful, but most importantly, they are great for creating a new network outside of the classroom.

Fleming offered some advice to students that are unsure about the career fair or don't think its for them.

"Just get out of the box and do it, otherwise I wouldn't have been where I am today without going and just talking to a company," Fleming said.

Allow yourself to step outside of your comfort zone. Experiences are gained when you least expect them.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ASHLEIGH FLEMING

# Blossoming into His Own

*by Sydney Price*

The sweltering heat from the southern Rio Grande Valley sun beats down on the backs of children playing outside. Large mesquite trees dot the landscape and create the only solace from the summer warmth.

A small child sits on the ground. He prepares to cook another



PHOTO BY MARTIN GUERRA JR.

masterful meal from the materials on his grandparents' land. He pulls the soil around him into a pile and begins to search for his ingredients.

He gathers leaves from the mesquite trees, grass and some of his grandmother's hibiscus flowers. Carefully, he stirs the materials to make his well known specialty, plant soup.

His father watches from the barbeque pit, braving the heat with his son. His mother looks on from the comfort of the air conditioned mobile home.

For Marty Guerra '21, this memory captures the beginning of his love

for horticulture.

His grandparents' mobile home sits in the middle of a little patch of land. Guerra remembers visiting every Sunday and seeing different crops growing on the small ranch.

"From the get go, I was always involved with plants," Guerra said. "My environment revolved around plants, basically."

Guerra struggled to choose this love of plants when thinking about his upcoming major and college choice while in high school. Growing up in McAllen, Texas, his school encouraged him to pursue STEM careers rather than other jobs.

According to the 2019 McAllen Economic Profile, over 65% percent of the population had not attained a professional degree. The National Center for Education Statistics contrasts that, showing that almost half of Americans have an associates degree or higher.

"Back home the counselors didn't necessarily force you to take all these science and math classes," Guerra said. "But understanding we come from a low income area, of course they are going to push the students to go for the best career they can so that they can be set."

Guerra decided to pursue nursing to give himself what he thought was his best future.

"I believed that science

and STEM and the medical field were the way to go because you're guaranteed a job at some point," Guerra said. "I was more focused on sustainability for myself for the future."

Guerra attended University of Rio Grande for nursing but began to question his decision as he started his classes. He confided in his biology professor to find some clarity.

"I was sitting there miserable; I didn't think that this was the future I wanted, and I didn't know what I was doing," Guerra said. "I talked to her and she helped me realize that nursing was not for me and we delved into the idea of career paths I had never explored."

Guerra turned to his mom to get an idea about what college and major he should choose. She reminded him of the beautiful garden he had been maintaining in their backyard, and this steered him to horticulture.

"She was like 'You love plants, would you like to study plants?'" Guerra said. "I said 'I want to be around plants and want my life to

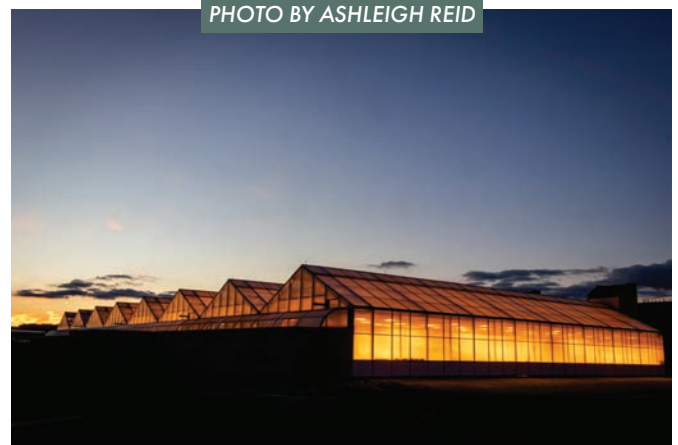


PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH REID

revolve around plants.”

Two weeks after deciding on horticulture, Guerra was driving home and spotted a Texas A&M office not far from his home and decided to visit. This visit inspired him to apply to the college and follow his dreams of horticulture to College Station, Texas.

Guerra had heard stories of other universities having instances of students with differences having a hard time acclimating. As a person of color and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, would this college that he heard about accept him for everything that made him unique?

“Being a minority in general, you hear about places that aren’t as accepting as other places,” Guerra said. “I did have my reservations about leaving the Valley, but my parents encouraged me to go and see what it was like.”

Guerra said he learned through his time at Texas A&M that people are accepting of all different types of backgrounds.

“I have met very great people who are very different from me who I

was initially scared to talk to. Being raised around so many other kinds of people, my irrational fear of being judged for looking this way, talking this way, or acting this way made it hard to talk to people,” Guerra said. “Turns out, they treated me like just another student in that room; and

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“ I want to be around plants and want my life to revolve around plants.”

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if they get a closer bond, then I’m another friend in that room.”

Jonathan Olivares ‘21, a student pursuing a horticulture minor, echoed the comments of Guerra.

“I think it’s just like a big family, it’s always nice to see each other,” Olivares said. “Our instructors are there for us, and they care for us.”

Guerra sees and appreciates the diversity that exists in the horticulture department. It’s easier

for him to feel accepted while being surrounded by the many different backgrounds present in the department.

“Being here at A&M is a way for me to experience something away from home,” Guerra said.

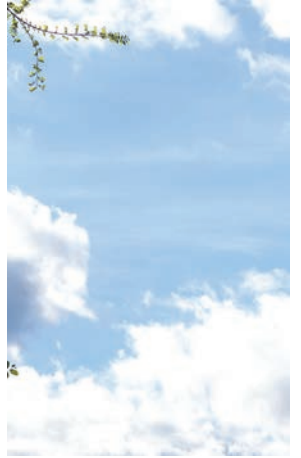
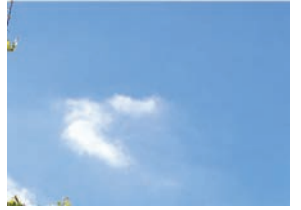
“The horticulture department is full of different kinds of people, different kinds of backgrounds and different beliefs; and I get to meet different kinds of people every day.”

Guerra continues to strive towards a profession that he is proud of and passionate about. He explained that hard work abolishes any belief that his career choice won’t be profitable enough.

“I’m proud of myself for being able to come to the conclusion that you can do what you love as a profession. It just takes hard work to get where you want to be,” Guerra said. “I get to see how far I can go with, quote on quote, just plants.”



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH REID



*Behind the scenes at the Leach Teaching Gardens*



# WHAT'S GROWING IN THE GARDENS?



*by Judge Gwyn*



project that began as a dream among Aggies now exists behind the Agriculture and Life Sciences building. After 20 years of planning, The Gardens at Texas A&M University officially opened in the fall of 2018.

Since they have been in Aggieland, The Gardens have provided an outdoor space for students to get away from stress. In addition, the interactive features of The Gardens allow professors and students to conduct research and class discussions in a real-world setting.

Though The Gardens are a new addition, the need for a larger space came sooner than expected. With this successful start, The Gardens plan to nearly quadruple the size of their current location in the next few years.

### *Dreams to reality*

Texas A&M is one of two land-grant schools in the state of Texas. Part of the mission of a land-grant school includes giving back to the community. The Gardens provide a unique opportunity to give back to the students and people of the community in one setting.

Construction of The Gardens began in 2016, and completed phase one in the summer of 2018. When The Gardens officially opened in the fall of 2018, the vision finally became reality.

Joseph Johnson '88, manager of The Gardens, graduated from Texas A&M with a Bachelor of Science in horticulture. Since his time as a student, The Gardens have been a fantasy for many Aggies.

"We've always dreamed about The Gardens," Johnson said. "I graduated in horticulture in '88. Even back then, we talked about, dreamed about, having gardens here on campus."

Though The Gardens were a popular dream among faculty and students, the university did not get serious about developing them until 1998.

"After 1998, the board of regents designated about 40-acres of property to be gardens and greenways on west campus," Johnson said. "That kind of really started generating the idea of really having gardens."

For Johnson, the opportunity to come back to Texas A&M and be part of the development team for The Gardens was a dream come true.

"To actually see it come to fruition now is amazing," Johnson said. "When I got the call, or heard about the position, I definitely came running."

### *Commitment to education*

Phase one of The Gardens brought many new educational opportunities for not just Texas A&M students, but also local students from around the Brazos Valley.

With The Gardens expanding from the existing lot of 7 acres to 27 acres in their phase two plans, more activities and opportunities will be available for local students.

Michele Abney '94, education coordinator and Texas A&M AgriLife extension service associate, taught science at a local middle school before her time at The Gardens. The chance to work with people of all ages was an opportunity she could not pass up.

"It was a tough decision to leave my classroom, but I am very glad that I did," Abney said. "I still get to do education, but I get to teach from pre-K kids to 90 year



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH REID

olds; it's wonderful."

The Gardens currently host a multitude of different activities and events for local students across the Brazos Valley. Phase two presents Abney with the opportunity to work with a designated education center and garden spaces designed specifically for youth engagement.

"We will be building an education center where we are



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH REID

going to have training rooms that I can get messy in," Abney said. "I am excited about getting kids' hands in the dirt in a place where I can do that."

The education center will provide a place for kids across the region to come learn and have fun with agriculture. In addition to the education center, The Gardens plan to develop a growing-good-kids garden into their phase two plans. This specific garden will provide an invaluable opportunity for families across the region.

"I am very excited about the growing-good-kids garden," Abney said. "It's such a good opportunity to spread the message of gardening to young children."

To build off the principles that the growing-good-kids garden will teach students, The Gardens plan to add an outdoor kitchen for healthy-eating demonstrations.

"We are definitely going to have a demonstration kitchen where we can show how you can use fresh herbs and vegetables and eat healthy," Abney said. "Then have right near the garden all the herbs and vegetables growing."

### *If you build it, they will come*

Even with the successful launch of The Gardens and the continual increase in engagement from the community, a large portion of campus still does not know about the opportunities it offers.

The purpose of phase two involves creating an increase in engagement from all students at Texas A&M, while further developing the vision set forth by the board

of regents in 1998.

Cady Auckerman '00, director of The Gardens, said she sees phase two as an investment in that vision and a commitment to furthering agricultural resources for students.

"Once there is a building on a space, that is not going to become a green space," Auckerman said. "So to me, the most important thing we can do is make an investment in the hearts and the minds of our students."

To increase engagement from students, The Gardens staff plan to incorporate exotic flower varieties, demonstrations and an outdoor amphitheater.

"We are planning to sort of bring back that spirit of gathering and togetherness in a place where students and the community can come together," Auckerman said.

In preparation for phase two, The Gardens staff made it a priority to engage with the departments across campus to receive their input on what they would like to see implemented.

"We have spent since July meeting with groups of students, faculty, administrators talking about what might support teaching, might support research," Auckerman said. "We have gotten a lot of input which is exciting."

A big part of phase two is modifying some of the issues that phase one presented, such as parking.

"One of our issues that we currently have with The Gardens is we don't have on-site parking," Auckerman said. "Phase two will solve that problem."

Ultimately, the main goal of phase two is to establish The Gardens as an essential part of the experience at Texas A&M.

"What I would like to see is people considering The Gardens as part of the fabric of their Aggie experience," Auckerman said. "When they think back to what they did on campus, they saw the century tree, went to the MSC and they had a great time in The Gardens."

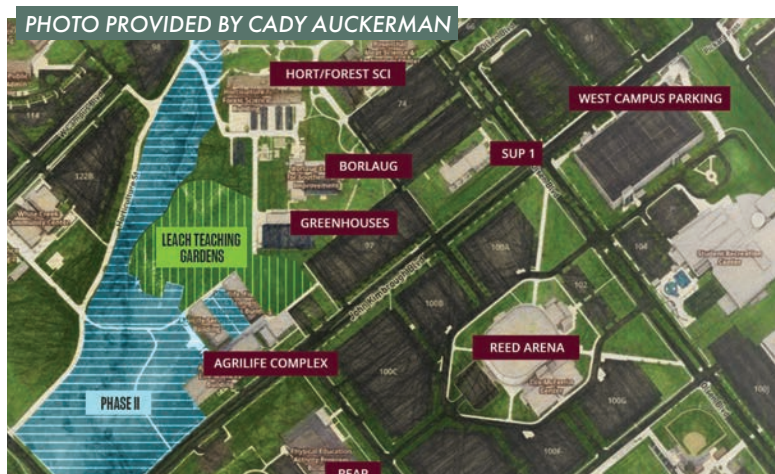


PHOTO PROVIDED BY CADY AUCKERMAN

# Trotting to Texas

by Riley Wilkie

Tina Christie '21 calls San Juan Capistrano, California home, but she spends most of her time traveling all over the nation and the great state of Texas competing on the Texas A&M University Western ride Equestrian team.

Christie grew up in Southern California where her family owns Sycamore Trails stables, a boarding center for horses. From a very young age, she contemplated sitting in her father's office or going out and riding the horses. She decided to ride; and from then on, a life filled with equestrian showing and riding would be Christie's reality.

Growing up, she showed horses through the National Reining Horse Association in California; this was just the beginning of Christie's journey in the equestrian world.

A trip to Texas became a high priority for Christie, as she knew it was where she could thrive in the world of riding. She made her very first trip to Texas when she was only 13-years-old to meet her future English Equestrian riding trainer. For years, Christie went back-and-forth between California and Texas to train.

Her passion grew as she fell in love with the equestrian community. As Christie made a trip to Texas A&M to decide where she would attend school, she fell in love with the campus and knew it was the perfect place for her to fulfill her dreams.

"As I talked to the TAMU coach, it just clicked," Christie said.

While attending Texas A&M, Christie decided to pursue a degree in agribusiness. This degree would support her aspirations to ride, be with horses all the while guiding her to a career centered around animals

and agriculture.

Christie does not regret her decision to come to Texas A&M, as she found the perfect community for her lifestyle and passion. Something unique about the equestrian team is how close they are. The equestrian community is a tight knit group in general, but this Texas A&M team is even closer. Through this tight knit group, Christie became roommates and found her best friend on the equestrian team.

Just like every other sport at Texas A&M, there is something unique about being a part of the equestrian team that Christie finds so special.

"It is just such a different and special sport." Christie said. "It truly is unlike any other sport we have here at Texas A&M or anywhere else."

Christie rides, which is one of the two equestrian riding styles. She competes against different universities in the SEC, just like any other sport. When competing, each equestrian rider is up against one other rider from the opposing team. They compete on a randomly selected horse and the highest scoring rider wins the competition.

California is not just a hop and a skip away for Christie. She must fly and flights become expensive. Christie only gets to go home under extenuating circumstances. Being so far away from home only makes it that much more special to reunite with her family and loved ones from her hometown.

Being far away from home is often tough for Christie, but she has found a home away from home right here at Texas A&M with her equestrian team.

"My best friends are my teammates, and we are very close,"



PHOTO BY KAYLEE NAYLOR

Christie said. "It's nice because I have a little family right here."

Christie is not the only one on the team who is from another state. In fact, more than half of the team does not call Texas home.

There are three girls on the team from southern California, just like her, who she knew prior to joining the team.

The equestrian community derives from all over the nation, and Texas A&M gets to host riders from all different backgrounds on this unique team.

As big as the equestrian world really is, Christie described it as a very small one because of all of the connections and relationships in the industry. Other university equestrian teams are very close as well, Christie mentioned.

A certain dedication is required with this sport. Christie has spent most of her life investing herself in the presence of horses and competition.

Some may get burnt out on certain sports they have played their whole life, but Christie has found her passion and wouldn't give it up for anything.

"I truly don't think I would be the person I am today without this in my life," Christie said. "It has made me a better person for sure."

After graduating, Christie wants to stay in Texas to further her career. From studying at airports to keep her grades high, to competing across the nation, Christie enjoys every minute of her crazy ride.

# BEEF FAJITAS

## Ingredients needed:

- 2 pounds of Rosenthal marinated beef fajitas
- 2 bell peppers cut into thin strips
- 1 white onion cut into thin strips
- 1 can of olive oil (optional)
- 1 lime cut into wedges

## Directions:

1. Spray grill with olive oil to prep for the fajitas and vegetables.
2. Grill fajitas over medium heat for 4-5 minutes, or until it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F.
3. Remove fajitas from the grill and set aside in an aluminum pan to preserve heat.
4. Place pre-cut bell peppers and onions in foil and onto the grill.
5. Grill onions and bell peppers and cook for 4-5 minutes.
6. Slice the steak against the grain on a cutting board, add it back into the pan with finished vegetables and squeeze half the lime wedges over the pan before serving.



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ARRIAZOLA

**Prep time:** 10 minutes  
**Cook time:** 20 minutes  
**Total time:** 30 minutes

# BEEF & CHEDDAR SLIDERS

## Ingredients needed:

- 1 pound of thinly sliced roast beef
- ½ cup barbecue sauce
- 1 dozen King's Hawaiian Dinner Rolls
- 8 slices cheddar cheese
- ½ cup butter
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce

## Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Toss sliced roast beef with barbecue sauce.
3. Split each dinner roll. Place roll bottoms in a 9x13x2-baking pan. Top rolls with barbecue roast beef. Top roast beef with cheese slices. Place roll tops on top of cheese.
4. In a small saucepan combine butter, brown sugar, mustard, Worcestershire and poppy seeds. Bring to a boil and pour over sandwiches.
5. Bake for 20-30 minutes, or until the tops are brown and crispy.



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ARRIAZOLA

**Prep time:** 10 minutes  
**Cook time:** 20 minutes  
**Total time:** 30 minutes

# Inspiring All, One Lecture at a Time

by *Justin Davis*

“Alright gang, let’s get started,” a familiar voice echoes through the classroom of Deborah Dunsford’s, Ph.D agricultural communications and journalism classes. However, ‘Dr. Deb,’ as she is called through the halls of the Agriculture and Life Sciences building, did not always see herself teaching in a college lecture hall.

As a young girl growing up in the Flint Hills of Eastern Kansas and the daughter of a Goodyear tire employee, Dunsford saw herself becoming a vet.

Her involvement in 4-H and FFA inspired her to pursue a career caring for animals. She enrolled in a cattle breeds class where she was the only girl in any of the vocational agriculture classes. When she first applied for agriculture classes, it was a different time for women and she was denied. With the help of the school’s agriculture teacher, she was eventually granted enrollment in vocational agriculture classes.

She progressed through FFA and received a state farmer degree in Kansas her senior year. Her ag teacher entered her into a journalism writing competition that same year. After weeks of studying

and preparing, she won the contest. Her love of agricultural writing grew from there.

The next fall, she attended Kansas State University to study and become a veterinarian. However,

moved to the Western Kansas High Plains Journal.

After several years, she moved to College Station, where she decided to get a master’s degree in English. While pursuing her

degree and working as a teaching assistant, Dunsford discovered her love of teaching and later received a Ph.D. in English.

Dunsford never thought about being a teaching assistant. At the time, she needed a job and had no idea what would happen. After sharing the news with her family, they expressed that they always saw her as a teacher. She has always enjoyed her students; and as much as she enjoys writing, it is more than that.

She also enjoys teaching

people to write about agriculture. An interesting aspect of Dunsford’s career is that she has never taught anywhere except at the college level.

“I never have taught anything but college. It is kind of a happy accident that I ended up teaching ag journalism. I have nothing against teaching K-12. I admire all teachers that teach children. I, however, never have.” Dunsford said.

Before she ever returned to

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“ People should not get hung up on one idea of what their life is going to be like and miss out on opportunities right in front of them.”

---

she discovered that her true passion was to become an agricultural educator. During this time period, horticulture was the only option for a female ag teacher, but by the next fall, she found herself as an agricultural journalism student.

Upon graduating, she worked for farm papers on the eastern and western plains of Kansas. Dunsford started her first job in Eastern Kansas for the Grass and Grain journal; and after a few years, she

College Station to teach, Dunsford worked for Fleishman-Hillard, a public relations firm ranked in the top ten public firms in the world. The work she encountered in this position proved to be very different from the world of agriculture she had grown used to. During her time with the company, she worked with a client-based herbicide company where she handled 'odds and ends' for companies. She based her decisions and work on the client's point of view rather than her own.

In the late 1990s, she worked for Biggs-Gilmore as the Director of Public Relations primarily on advertising campaigns. After a few years, she realized she wanted to return to her true passion and moved back to teach agricultural communications and journalism courses at Texas A&M.

Dunsford cultivated a familiar and consistent teaching style her first few years and has carried it through with all of her students the past 20 years at Texas A&M.

She remains laid back and presents a mutual respect between herself and her students. She stays up-to-date on current events and topics in the world to form



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE

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**“ I have only ever taught college, which is odd. But I greatly admire those that teach K-12.**

---

connections with her students.

For as long as Dunsford has taught, she has inspired students for years. Countless times a year, Dunsford is approached by current and former students that inform her that she made a huge difference in their life. Her response to this is as

humble as ever.

“I could never understand what I did,” Dunsford said. “All I would do is give them the confidence that they did not know was already in them.”

A former student said she inspired him to go into videography while she was teaching a media writing course one summer. In the course, she required a short segment video to be shot to help the students learn the basics. The student also credits his love for Adobe programs to Dunsford.

“I impacted him in ways I never imagined were possible,” Dunsford said. “I have had students go on to do incredible things and excel at so much. I can't take any of the credit for any of it because it was all them. They just didn't know that it was in them.”

She still seeks out new technology and new teaching styles that are useful. Her goals are to learn enough new technology to market the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications department and the program of agricultural communications and journalism.

Dunsford offers a great deal of advice to her students throughout their years at Texas A&M, but one thing she hopes to emphasize is the importance of being open-minded.

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*Spring 2020 forged a new understanding of teamwork for the AgriLeader's staff. In the middle of our semester, we were forced into the safety and isolation of our homes by COVID-19. However, the indefatigable Aggie Spirit prevailed. This edition of the AgriLeader represents our staff's ingenuity,*





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*persistence and dedication to carry on in the midst of great hardship. Through Zoom, Google Hangout, GroupMe and many other tools, we accomplished the difficult task of producing a quality publication with Aggie pride. Thank you for making history with us, as we navigated uncertain and troubled times.*

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# College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

*Honoring Our 2019 Outstanding Alumni and Outstanding Early Career Alumni Award Recipients*

## Outstanding Alumni



### **Dr. Roger Q "Jake" Landers Jr. '54**

Seen as the quintessential land steward by his supporters, Dr. Jake Landers remains highly active in range management at 87, following 57 years of impactful research, teaching, outreach and mentorship. Dr. Landers graduated from Texas A&M University with his bachelor's in 1964 and his master's in 1955, in range management and forestry. He joined Texas A&M AgriLife in 1979 as an extension range Specialist at San Angelo. He became director of the Youth Range Workshop, an annual camp on grazing management for high school students; this year marks his 40th year as director. Dr. Landers received the Sustained Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Range Management in 2016 and was voted Menard County Citizen of the Year in 2015.



### **Dr. Terry A. Howell Sr. '69**

During Dr. Terry Howell's long and prominent career in irrigation water management, he has distinguished himself internationally as an engineer, a mentor and a leader. He studied agricultural engineering at Texas A&M University, earning his bachelor's degree in 1969, master's in 1979, and doctorate in 1974. He held academic positions at several universities along with a 34-year career with USDA-ARS, where he served as acting director of the Conservation and Production Research Laboratory at Bushland. In 2017, his name was added to the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Science Hall of Fame for "innovative and impactful scientific contributions to our nation and the world."



### **Mr. Murray H. Edwards '73**

Mr. Murray Edwards has a long history of success in agriculture that began while growing up on a ranch in Clyde and serving as the Texas State FFA President. He earned his bachelor's in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University in 1973 and an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1975. Mr. Edwards is the epitome of a successful entrepreneur, creating an irrigation company in California, purchasing Alderman-Cave Feeds in Texas and managing many other businesses over the years. He actively supports the Texas A&M Rural Entrepreneurship Program and numerous Texas A&M AgriLife Extension activities including the Master Marketer Program, Tomorrow's Top Agricultural Producer Program and The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers.



### **Mrs. Jenny Cearley Sanders '04**

Mrs. Jenny Cearley Sanders advocates for the importance of agriculture, land stewardship and natural resources at the local, state and national levels. She currently serves as the outreach and communications manager for the Texas Agricultural Land Trust. She became interested in conservation after joining Texas A&M University as a research technician. She went on to earn a bachelor's in rangeland ecology and management and master's in wildlife and fisheries sciences, both from Texas A&M. While working with Temple Ranch, Mrs. Sanders and her team were awarded the national-level 2011 Leopold Conservation Award from Sand County Foundation and the 2007 Lone Star Land Steward Award from Texas Parks and Wildlife.



### **Ms. Elizabeth Ann Borchers '08**

Ms. Elizabeth Borchers' exquisite floral displays and leadership have brightened many lives in Texas and around the world. She currently serves as the floral manager of the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. While a student in Texas A&M's horticultural sciences program, she was selected as a student to create permanent silk floral arrangements for the George Bush Library and Museum's White House state dinner display. She now manages a large team in creating floral displays for all events and décor at the Biltmore Estate, including dazzling, historically correct décor that allows visitors from around the world to see the Gilded Age mansion as it appeared in George Vanderbilt's lifetime.



### **Dr. Zachary Joseph Rambo '10**

Dr. Zachary Rambo oversees global research and technical sales in his role as the global swine team research leader at Zinpro Corporation, where he has risen quickly due to his breadth of knowledge and ability to create teams. He received his bachelor's and master's in animal science from Texas A&M and a doctorate in swine nutrition from Purdue. While competing on the livestock judging team at Texas A&M, he earned the title of Livestock Judging Team All American. As a graduate student, he coached the livestock judging team and was named National Coach of the Year in 2008 and 2009. He has received many other awards, including the Outstanding Young Alumni Award from the Department of Animal Science and the NACTA Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award from Purdue.

To learn more and view videos about our Outstanding Alumni, visit [tx.ag/outstandingalumni](http://tx.ag/outstandingalumni)



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