

REC LIFE

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2023



Rec Sports

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

HOWDY!

Howdy Aggies!

For those of you who have not met me yet, my name is Jeff Huskey, and I am the new Executive Director for Recreational Sports. I come to College Station with almost thirty years of collegiate recreation experience from various schools across the country. I am humbled to be walking in the footsteps of Rick Hall, Dennis Corrington, and of course, Mr. Penberthy.



It is an exciting time for Rec Sports. Of course, the addition of the Southside Recreation Center has been a huge addition to campus. With the addition of that 63,620-square-foot facility, we have eased the congestion at the main Rec Center, but it is still very busy. In fact, we have had well over 1.5 million “swipes” into our facilities this past school year!

Now that the Polo Road and the Southside Recreation Centers have opened, it is now time for us to refocus on our core facilities. The Student Rec Center, which opened in 1995, is in need of some much needed care, and we are planning to refocus on renovating and upgrading that facility over the next few years. The outdoor fields at the Penberthy Complex are also in need of some repairs and upgrades.

Although our facilities garner much attention, they are just bricks and mortar. What happens inside of those facilities is really where our department shines. We continue to be the largest employer of students on the A&M campus; over 1,000 students worked for Rec Sports over the past year. That was over \$2.3M in wages that went back to A&M students and over 19,500 hours in staff development/ training we were able to provide. One out of every eight students on campus played intramurals this year, we hosted the SEC Swimming and Diving Championships in addition to other large swim meets in our natatorium, and our thirty seven sport club teams competed all across the country. Several teams had major competitive successes, but all built friendships and camaraderie. Our outdoor program exposed many students to the natural resources of Texas. Our Fitness & Wellness area provided many specialty classes for groups across campus, and many Aggies took advantage of our personal training program. Lastly, we continue to host many special events and student organization meetings in our facilities.

As our department enters our 97th year, we plan to do a better job of reaching out to our alumni and friends. Look for information coming soon about our football tailgate next fall, our spring alumni reunion, and other special events throughout the year.

Thank you for being part of the Rec Sports family; we are proud of our past and look forward to a very bright future for the students of Texas A&M. If you ever have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thanks and Gig 'Em,

Jeff Huskey, Executive Director

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INTRODUCING



JEFF HUSKEY

Jeff Huskey joins the department with more than 28 years of experience.

With the new semester marks a new beginning for Texas A&M Rec Sports as we introduce our new executive director! Coming all the way from Santa Barbara, California, with over 28 years of experience managing recreation facilities and programs is Jeff Huskey!

In his previous role as the assistant dean for wellness and director of recreation at the University of California-Santa Barbara (UCSB), Huskey developed strategic plans, managed annual operating and capital investment budgets, and supported countless full-time, part-time, and student staff. As a proactive leader at UCSB, Huskey served on multiple committees and

initiated new procedures for the optimization of the department's workflow with an emphasis on student employment and facility planning.

"I worked for 22 years in the Department of Recreational Sports, so I know what a special place it is to work," said Tom Reber, executive vice president for the Division of Student Affairs. "Jeff Huskey was the perfect hire to carry on the rich tradition of Rec Sports at Texas A&M. I am so impressed with his experience and the ideas that he will bring to improve what we know is already an outstanding program."

Prior to his position at UCSB, Huskey held leadership positions at Colorado State University, Stephen F. Austin University, University of Tennessee, and James Madison University. Huskey's service to higher education and collegiate recreation have decorated his portfolio and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the college experience and the needs of students at universities large and small.

Huskey said, "I have been able to learn from those experiences that there are many different ways of doing things. What works really well at one university may not work at all at another."

He continued, "Being able to take a few ingredients from different places, programs, and people; be adaptable to your current situation; and then create the best possible experience for Texas A&M students is what we will always strive to accomplish."

Under his leadership, we aspire to refine our current services and develop exciting new programs to promote physical activity, wellness, and recreation for the entire Texas A&M community.

"We have a great staff of professionals in our department who are experts in their respective areas," Huskey said. "It is my job to provide

them an effective framework, to help get them the resources they need, and to remove barriers so they can provide the best possible service to all Aggies."

In his new role, Huskey will oversee all recreational facilities, programs, 40-plus full-time staff and over 1,000 student employees. We are excited to welcome Huskey to the department, along with his decades of experience and fresh, diverse perspective. He will be an asset to our team as we continue to provide the leadership and resources that allow individuals to live a healthy lifestyle in the Texas A&M community.

Huskey's entrance comes after the retirement of Rec Sports veteran Rick Hall, who served the department for 43 years.



"The Recreational Sports department at Texas A&M has a long and distinguished history. We are known across the country for being a leader in the field of university recreation, and I am honored to now be a part of that legacy," Huskey said. "I hope to be able to build on the history and traditions of the past but also bring some new and innovative ideas to the department."

EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR



Alyssa Munoz
(Marketing)



Martin Figueroa Alcayaga
(Strength & Conditioning)



Kayla Aston
(Intramural Sports)



Ciaran Farmer
(Aquatics)



Maggie Krahl
(Fitness & Wellness)



Dylan Love
(Strength & Conditioning)



Emma Lecheminant
(Outdoor Adventures)



Rachel Marshall
(Sport Clubs)



Raegan Malpass
(Human Resources)



Katelyn Rodriguez
(Facilities)



Caylyn Perry
(Business Services)

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Front Row

Emma Lecheminant (Outdoor Adventures),
Abby Somich (Intramural Sports), Makayla
Jenkins (Facilities), Marissa Hanson
(Business Services), Rachel Marshall
(Sport Clubs), Samuel Cerezo (Strength &
Conditioning)

Back Row

Katelyn Rodriguez (Facilities), Ansley
Thompson (Outdoor Adventures), Austin
Hebert (Intramural Sports), Joshua Puca
(Intramural Sports), Michael Heath (Sport
Clubs), Sean Moran (Facilities)

BACK INTO THE FOLD

Ryan Keller and Todd Grier return to the Department of Rec Sports

Todd Grier, *Outdoor Adventures*

Grier returned to Texas A&M Rec Sports last summer after over a decade of service in collegiate recreation, including at Texas A&M University-Commerce, the University of Nebraska, and University of Texas at San Antonio.

Grier's passion for the outdoors guided his occupational values; above all, he wanted to expand the outdoor community to include anyone and everyone, so when he was approached to become the new director of Outdoor Adventures at Texas A&M, Grier was pleasantly surprised.

Wisened with his years of experience, Grier assumed the director position in July 2022 and has since been responsible for overseeing the program that once employed him.

Grier said, "there's an excitement that students come to this campus with, there's opportunities that we can line up, and there's a lot of people around this campus that are like, 'how do we make that possible?'"

Ryan Keller, *Strength & Conditioning*

As an undergraduate during the mid-2000s, Keller worked for the Strength & Conditioning program under the supervision of Jerod Wilson. From attendant to supervisor to Strength & Conditioning's first-ever graduate assistant, Keller nurtured his passion for recreation at Texas A&M before venturing out on his own in 2011 at Florida State University.

At Florida State, Keller would continue to go beyond his degree and accrue certifications in other areas of recreation, but despite his departure from the state early in his career, Keller knew he always wanted to return to Texas, and he's happy to return to the old stomping grounds.

"[A&M has] the best strength and conditioning facility in the country, combining all the spaces that we have," Keller said. "I feel very proud to be asked back to it."

Keller joins a team of other Strength & Conditioning professional staff in DJ Scott and Federico Caballero and he is already hard at work in maintaining and improving exemplary service to patrons at our Rec Sports facilities.

NEW STAFF



Haylie Zavodny, Development



Esther Gagawala, Aquatics



Abbie Cunningham, Facilities



Ryan Keller, Strength & Conditioning



RUGBY

Like many of the 37 clubs within Texas A&M's Association of Sport Clubs, the Rugby Club is defined by its ability to excel in competitions and push the boundaries of what is possible for club-level play.

In the past year, Texas A&M Rugby dominated the Red River conference, which includes rugby teams from other nearby schools like University of Texas, University of Oklahoma, Baylor University, and Texas Tech University. Having graduated from their normal level of competition, Texas A&M Rugby now looks to compete in a higher level of play.

"We're in this middle ground between that competition and the schools like Life [University], Navy, Army - the bigger schools," said Cameron Cuilla, a sophomore at Texas A&M and treasurer-elect of the Texas A&M Men's Rugby Club. "We're still working up to be up there and compete with them better."

For Cuilla and his fellow team members, participation in club play has not only delivered the competitive spirit that continues to grow but also a brotherhood defined by a shared love of rugby.

"I love the sport in itself, but it also operates like a frat or Greek life for anyone. All of the guys hang out on the weekends," Cuilla said. "The people I hang out with in my free time are mostly Rugby guys...Rugby is all about the whole brotherhood thing."

This attitude has been instrumental in the maintenance and growth of the club. Texas A&M Rugby proudly welcomes any interested party in trying the sport, and their recruiting strategy of

meeting with high school players has made them a popular choice among incoming Aggies.

Cuilla said, "We've definitely grown, and it's nice. We had a big freshman class last year; I think we had 15 new guys join."

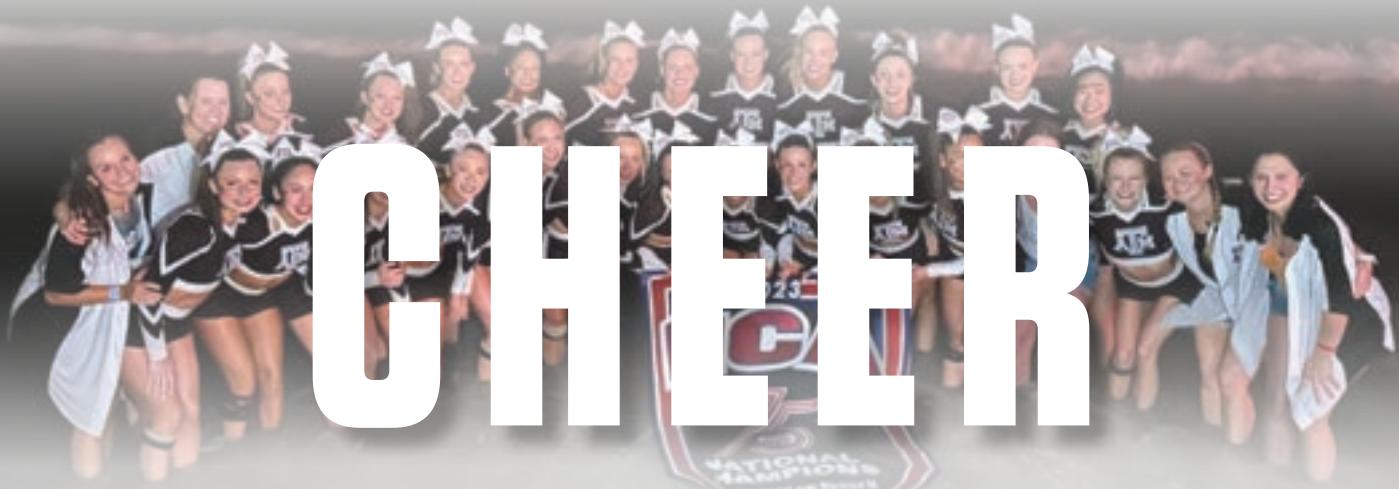
He added, "We're starting to get more and more outside [the state] people. We had a guy join from California this year who's pretty good, we have a guy on the team from Iowa who's pretty good," Cuilla said. "We have a couple guys from Singapore, actually."

And for the Rugby Club, each new class of teammates has come with a new opportunity to strengthen the bond between players.

"We have team barbecues, we had a crawfish boil this year, we just do a lot of different events like that to get people hanging out together, get to know each other, and become friends," said Cuilla.

As the club continues to grow and compete in higher levels of competition under the Aggie moniker, what remains a benchmark of the Rugby Club is its ability to foster community among existing and incoming Aggies. In addition, players within the Rugby Club are able to mentor newer players and train them into becoming the next leaders of the club.





At the beginning of April, the Texas A&M Cheer Squad traveled to Daytona Beach, Florida, for the NCA Collegiate National Championship. In the squad's division, Texas A&M Cheer competed against 25 other teams for the title. With such a stark competition, the squad was focused on perfecting the routine and giving their absolute best performance.

"The seniors who had won graduated last year, so none of us knew what it felt like to win and what it took to win," said Megan Dehls, vice president of the squad. "We went in with the intent to do our jobs, to be there for each other, and that's all we can do."

During competition, months of practice and dedication are tested and put on display for only two minutes and 15 seconds. Despite this intense and narrow display of their talent, the Cheer Squad stepped confidently into the competition, earning a top score of 98.5393, a new program record and the second best score in the overall competition.

"It was a feeling like no other," said Lauren Ellis, president of Texas A&M Cheer. "We were all holding our hands; we heard second place get

called out and we knew, but we still were just waiting for our names to be called. As soon as they called our names, we all just jumped up and hugged each other."

"Coming back this year, we had a fire," Ellis said. "Having the support of former students who were on the cheer squad made a big difference. They sent us messages throughout the year, and some attended our practices."

For many members of the Texas A&M Cheer Squad, earning this win was not only a testament to their efforts on the mat but also an indication of the team's chemistry, trust, and support of one another.

"This year we were more of a family, and we all had each other's back the whole year, and I think that's a big part of what helped us win this year," said Alleigh Necessary, second-year member of Texas A&M Cheer.

With a new program-best score and a third national competition in hand, the club has hosted a spring clinic for high school girls interested in cheer. In addition, they are actively preparing to defend their title next year.



50 YEARS OF SERVICE:

2023 is a big year for the Division of Student Affairs: this year, the division celebrates its 50th birthday, and in addition, Evelyn Dorsey received an award for 50 years of service with the Division of Student Affairs.



THE EVELYN DORSEY STORY

Dorsey's story with Texas A&M University begins in the early 70s during her work at the bookstore, then called the Exchange store. She started in a temporary position that soon became permanent, and after the new bookstore, called the Texas A&M Bookstore, was created, she spent the next 20 years serving the community from the aisles of the Texas A&M Bookstore, assisting students in their textbook and school supply needs.

Dorsey followed her coworker and friend, Lazell Curry, to the Department of Recreational Sports in the early 1990s, working out of the Reed building under the leadership of Dennis Corrington, though this would soon become a thing of the past as the Student Rec Center opened its doors in 1995. Dorsey, along with the rest of the professional Rec Sports staff, would occupy the Rec offices and complete their responsibilities from the newly constructed space.

Despite these changes, Dorsey continued to work with student staff each and every day. She excelled in portraying the discipline and integrity needed for superb leadership,

and in doing so, became integral to the development of thousands of student employees.

One such student, Facilities Supervisor Jordan Shimaitis, was happy to disclose just how much Dorsey's leadership has meant to her experience as a student employee of Texas A&M.

"Ms. Evelyn leads with confidence and positivity. She is a key part of the Rec Sports staff, and she sets an incredible example for the work ethic every employee should strive to embody. She works hard, and she does it with a smile on her face. Ms. Evelyn is a force to be reckoned with. She carries herself with this confidence that inspires confidence in those around her."

And though the university has changed so dramatically since her hiring 50 years ago, Dorsey is proud to retain a community with former and current Texas A&M staff over the years.

"Even at the bookstore, I worked with the students," Dorsey said. "I still have a relationship with a lot of the students that worked there at the bookstore. The calls that I've gotten when I got the 50 year pin from the different former students! To hear them say what I meant to them and the role I played in their lives!"

We are proud to see Evelyn Dorsey receive such outstanding recognition in light of her service to the Texas A&M community; while our facilities are but bricks and mortar purposed for recreation, Dorsey's example of commitment, service, and community building breathe life into each business day and demonstrate the Aggie core values in action.

"I look forward to seeing the students helping someone, doing something for someone else," Dorsey said. "When I've made someone else smile, when I've done something to help someone else, it gives me that warm, fuzzy feeling inside."

In more recent decades, Dorsey has seen the Department of Rec Sports undergo new leadership, develop two new facilities in the

Polo Road and Southside Rec Centers, and integrate a mobile app to facilitate program registration. In addition, Dorsey has made extraordinary memories seeing and meeting people from around the world.

"When they opened up the Bush Library, I had the opportunity to check people in and check credentials, so I had a chance to go out there," Dorsey said, "and all of a sudden, you look up, all of the living presidents were there - to be there and see all of them! Over in the tent where I was going to be, there was Kevin Costner, Cicely Tyson, and Arnold Schwarzenegger."



When asked about memorable moments from the last 50 years, Dorsey described her experience traveling overseas to understand the perspective of international students who leave their home country to study at Texas A&M.

Dorsey said, "I was on a committee called Passport to Learning, and we worked with a lot of international students from all over, while serving on this committee. We had the opportunity to go to Spain. That was in 2006, and that is something I will never forget."

She continued, "We stayed with host families, we had to figure out how to get to different places on our own, and we visited a lot of the schools there...I've always worked with students from other countries, and I always say 'put yourself in their place. If you were in that country, you would be going through what they are going through here,' and that is why I always try to do extra."

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Understanding
Yoga and Pilates

The Fitness & Wellness program under the Department of Rec Sports hosts a variety of classes for patrons to attend. For the unacquainted, many of these classes may seem incredibly similar. As such, a question you may be thinking is simply, “what’s the difference”?

YOGA

Derived from a philosophical practice in India, this fitness program gives participants the opportunity to strengthen muscles, improve flexibility and mobility, and relieve stress.

It also emphasizes breathing and flexibility through a series of postures, especially those sitting, lying down, or prone on a floor mat.

“It’s very spiritual in practice, but it has nothing to do with religion,” said Anna Taggart, the director of Fitness & Wellness at Texas A&M Rec Sports.

“Typically in a yoga class, you can expect to see elements that focus on meditation, breathing, strength, balance, and flexibility.”

At its most basic level, yoga classes at Rec Sports focus on listening to your body and moving in a way that feels best for it at that moment. You can find class offerings through the Rec Sports app!



Where yoga stems from eastern medicine, Pilates comes from the West, and while the former focuses on the body holistically, Pilates targets specific muscle groups, usually in the core region.

“The core has a very strong emphasis in Pilates, so we want to make sure that the core is strong before we move into a fire hydrant move or a donkey kick,” said Novey Arrieta, a fitness instructor at Rec Sports. “It’s just foundational.”

Pilates is a highly structured program from the mind of German anatomist Joseph Pilates; its nine principles guide the entire technique, and at Rec Sports, instructors take a traditional approach to the mat-based program.

“Pilates can make an absolute difference in your health without taking a toll on your body,” said Kourtney Bassett, Employee Wellness Manager at Texas A&M University. “You can do it every single day.”

PILATES

MANNING AN AQUATICS EVENT

This spring, Aquatics hosted a myriad of meets, including the SEC Swimming & Diving Championships, Speedo Sectionals, and Team Texas All-Star Dive Challenge, but what is unknown to most patrons is the sheer volume of work that occurs in preparation for events like these.

"It starts with the meet director," said Michael Phillips, event lead for Rec Sports Aquatics. "He sends us a file for what he wants – the requirements for the meet, how many swimmers there are going to be, how many bleachers he wants for the swimmers, how many fans to expect in the audience, the requirements for the pool measurements – things like that."

He used the SEC Swimming & Diving Championships as an example. "[Staff] were talking about that for a year before so we'd know February was SECs, and in the months leading up to it, we started talking about it more; Carlos [Garcia] and CJ [Stancheski] gave us a rundown of what was going to happen so we'd be prepared for it."

Phillips has worked with Aquatics as an event lead since fall 2022, and what keeps him going is the knowledge that his work and the work of his peers provide a supportive atmosphere for aspiring young athletes.

Phillips said, "Just knowing that you're swimming where collegiate people are – these

are Olympians in a lot of cases – I feel like that's kinda cool."

He continued, "Everything starts at the top from management; people in my position learn from Carlos and CJ, and everybody under us is learning from us, so it definitely bleeds through."

Phillips also gave special kudos to the lifeguarding staff, who routinely have to divide their attention to manage simultaneous events.

"We also have Rec Swim going on. That would normally be in the lap pool or outdoor pool while the 50m and the dive well are for the event itself. That goes on to our head guards," he continued. "The way they are able to maintain safety for Rec Swim as well as for the event [is great] - just lifeguarding staff as a whole."

Rec Sports Aquatics currently employs over 100 students to help programs and events like the SEC Swimming and Diving Championships run smoothly.



THE BYRD FAMILY

Becka '92 and Bobby '92 Byrd made a lasting impact on the Department of Recreational Sports during their tenures as student staff and continue to be involved with our department and the Texas A&M campus.

Becka started working for the department in 1989 as a part of the facilities operations staff, also working the front desk in the main office area in the Reed Building – what we would consider Member Services now. Bobby joined the staff a year later in 1990, working in the same capacities, eventually adding the title of student assistant for several staff members, including Mike Waldron.

The Byrds didn't just work for Rec Sports, they utilized our facilities and programs as well. Becka went to fitness classes and used the weight room, and Bobby was very involved in intramural sports. Bobby recalled participating in Masters Mile with a group of fellow staff members at the intramural track meet. Since the race was not about running the fastest, one of his group on one occasion had the idea of taking a trip to Freebirds prior to the event; Bobby denies that he was responsible, and looking back was emphatic that it was a poor idea.

Becka 'retired' from working in Rec Sports in 1992 as she focused on grad school and vet school. Bobby remained on staff until 1997 as he completed grad school. He even continued working occasional shifts when he was employed as an accountant at First American Bank in Bryan.

These days, the Byrds live in San Antonio – Becka is a veterinarian, and Bobby recently retired after 25 years with AT&T. The Byrds may no longer work for Rec Sports, but we did convince Bobby to serve on our Rec Sports Student Staff Scholarship selection committee the past two years. Additionally, their son continues the family legacy of working for Rec Sports.

When asked about the lessons from Rec Sports that they have carried with them, they said, "Empower



someone who demonstrates competence. Do not hesitate to trust them to handle responsibility just because they are young." The Byrds appreciated that "Rec Sports treats students as capable young adults. Once they are trained, the student workers become the face of the department for significant portions of the day. This reflects a great culture, based on trust, empowerment and high expectations."

In the summer of 2022, the Byrds were chosen as Fish Camp namesakes (session D Lime). Becka and Bobby related that being a Fish Camp namesake was fantastic, despite getting COVID. "We loved getting to know our co-chairs and counselors and were blown away by the level of dedication and hard work they put into being ready for Fish Camp."

They continued, "One of the key points we tried to share was that despite its size, or maybe because of it, there is something at Texas A&M for everyone. A willingness to try new things and meet new people, plus being open to new ideas and opportunities is a mindset that all of us could better incorporate into our lives."

Rec Sports is grateful that as they began their careers at Texas A&M, one of the 'somethings' that Becka and Bobby found was being a part of our family. We appreciate their ongoing interest and support for Rec Sports.

THE REF'S PLAYBOOK

With 1,000 student employees at the Department of Rec Sports, it's no surprise that upwards of 200 students work within Intramural Sports, but did you know that all 200 of these employees officiate sports across the program?

It's true! From kickball to e-sports to table tennis, students from across the university join together to officiate games and tournaments every semester, carefully managing game operations as their fellow Aggies compete head-to-head in their favorite sports.

As an intramural sports official, Madelyn Butler '23 got to oversee games in flag football at the Penberthy Rec Sports complex.

"I started as an official, became a supervisor, and then became the sport coordinator for flag football within intramurals," Butler said. "When I first started, I wanted to work on myself, with the conflict management, and just trying to meet a lot of people, be friendly, and then learn how to be confident. The more that I did it and as I became supervisor, I was really focused on making it a fun environment for everybody."

This attitude seems to be working as thousands of students each semester register and compete for various intramural champion crowns. This semester alone, nearly 100 sports granted such titles, inspiring participants towards a goal unachievable by regular attendance to lectures.

"For the people that come out there, that's their two hours of 'go have fun, go flashback to

high school when [they] used to play football or go hang out with all [their] friends from [their] org," Butler said. "Every group kind of comes out there and that's their break from school and responsibility."

By working as an official and guiding the game operations for various sports throughout Intramural Sports, students become the purveyors of safe and fun recreation for their fellow Aggies, and moments like those in this page's video feature become commonplace as Texas A&M University students mingle and compete in friendly contests against their fellow Aggies.

"It's almost like an unspoken rule; you're not talking about school when you're out there," Butler said. "You're really focused on your sport and what you're doing and learning and meeting people. It's really a cool thing."

Scan here to
watch the fun of
intramural sports!



WALK OF CHAMPIONS



The Walk of Champions brick campaign features bricks engraved with the names of students, employees, and friends of Texas A&M. Together we can ensure that the values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service are instilled in all Aggies.

Proceeds will help Rec Sports continue to offer high quality, inclusive programs, experiences, and facilities where future Aggies can maintain their well-being, test their limits, and gain leadership skills.

To learn more, Drew McMillen at
(979) 845-1887 or dmcmillen@rec.tamu.edu.



SEMESTER IN PHOTOS

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