

2019

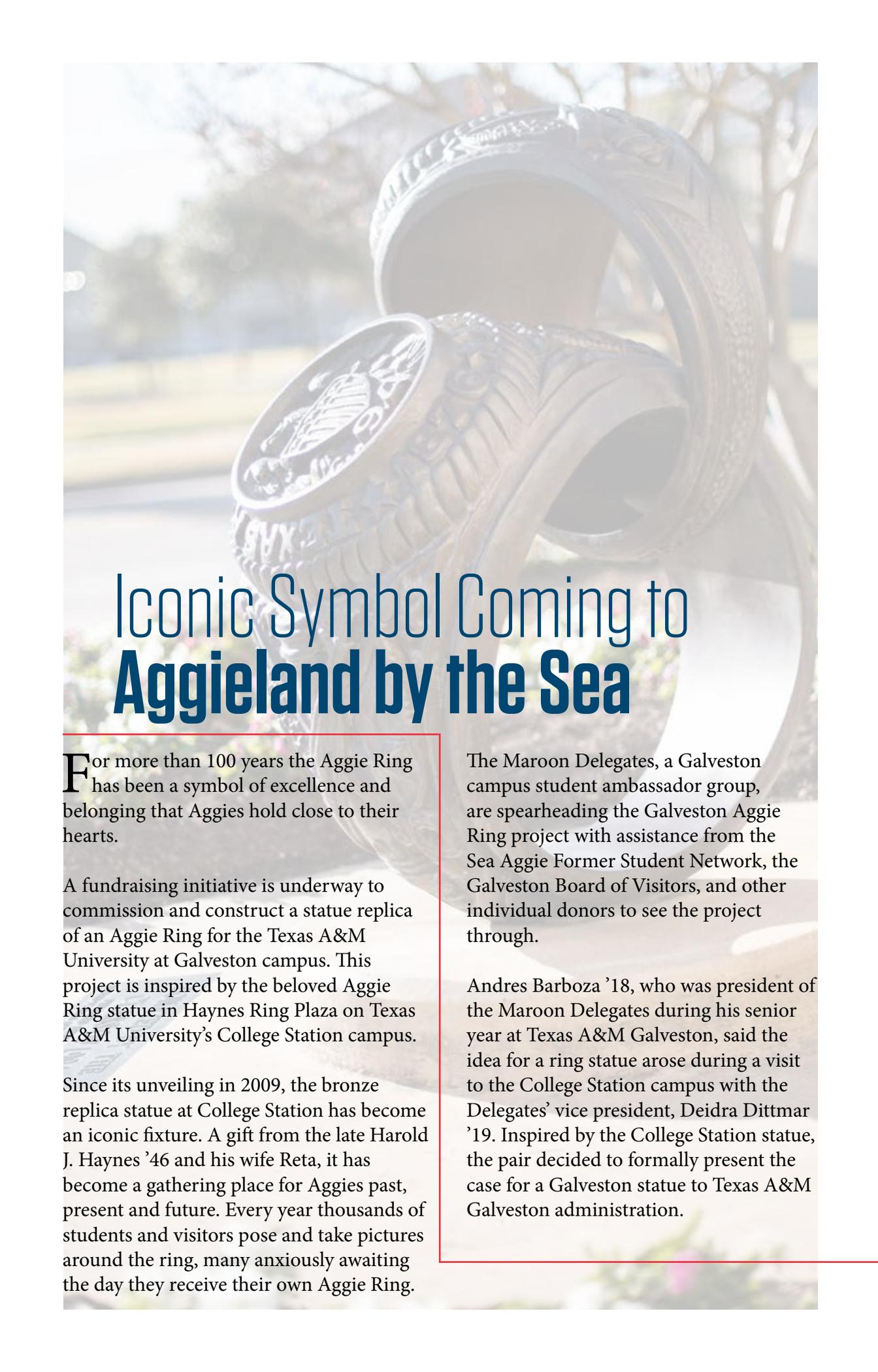


TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
GALVESTON CAMPUS.

Development Office  
Winter Newsletter



Texas A&M University at Galveston's first Yell Leader Todd Burford '95 poses with a current Yell Leader during a Ring Day Ceremony in September 2019.



# Iconic Symbol Coming to Aggieland by the Sea

For more than 100 years the Aggie Ring has been a symbol of excellence and belonging that Aggies hold close to their hearts.

A fundraising initiative is underway to commission and construct a statue replica of an Aggie Ring for the Texas A&M University at Galveston campus. This project is inspired by the beloved Aggie Ring statue in Haynes Ring Plaza on Texas A&M University's College Station campus.

Since its unveiling in 2009, the bronze replica statue at College Station has become an iconic fixture. A gift from the late Harold J. Haynes '46 and his wife Reta, it has become a gathering place for Aggies past, present and future. Every year thousands of students and visitors pose and take pictures around the ring, many anxiously awaiting the day they receive their own Aggie Ring.

The Maroon Delegates, a Galveston campus student ambassador group, are spearheading the Galveston Aggie Ring project with assistance from the Sea Aggie Former Student Network, the Galveston Board of Visitors, and other individual donors to see the project through.

Andres Barboza '18, who was president of the Maroon Delegates during his senior year at Texas A&M Galveston, said the idea for a ring statue arose during a visit to the College Station campus with the Delegates' vice president, Deidra Dittmar '19. Inspired by the College Station statue, the pair decided to formally present the case for a Galveston statue to Texas A&M Galveston administration.

Barboza envisions the ring statue acting as both a visual motivator for underclassman and a symbol of the ring's prestige.

"It would mean so much to see the ring represented in a central part of campus," he said. "It'll remind students what they're working toward every day and reinforce what it means to wear the ring as a member of the Aggie family."

Col. Michael E. Fossum '80, COO of the Galveston campus and a former astronaut, lent the project his abiding support. "Our students are proud Aggies in every way, and nothing more prominently displays that pride than the Aggie ring," he said.

"We have other items on our campus reflective of our heritage a premier sea component of Texas A&M's land-, sea- and space-grant mission, and it makes perfect sense to add an Aggie ring statue to those offerings."



*"Our students are proud Aggies in every way, and nothing more prominently displays that pride than the Aggie Ring."*

## Give Online

To donate to the Aggie Ring Statue project, visit the link below or contact Jason Tieman '97 at [jtieman@tamu.edu](mailto:jtieman@tamu.edu).

[give.am/MaroonDelegateAggieRingStatue](https://give.am/MaroonDelegateAggieRingStatue)



Taylor Greiger '23 and Stephen O'Shea '13 sailing off the coast of Cape Horn

## Student Transforms Pain into Veteran Support Programs

Taylor Grieger is in his first year of a degree in Marine Administration and is on track to graduate in 2023. He is a former United States Navy Rescue Swimmer with tours in Guam, Japan, Brunei, Australia, Philippines, Hong Kong, South Korea and many of the outlying islands sitting on the Marianas Trench. Grieger's experience of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has inspired him to advocate for other veterans and to find ways to smooth their transition to civilian life. In September 2017, Greiger and Texas A&M College of Liberal Arts graduate Stephen O'Shea '13, undertook a two year journey to raise awareness of veteran suicides sailing around Cape Horn in some of the world's most treacherous seas. The high school friends filmed their adventures which is the subject of a documentary "*Hell or High Seas.*"

### **Why Texas A&M University at Galveston?**

I visited other universities, but I always knew it would be Texas A&M-Galveston, I always wanted to go here. Before I enrolled, I spoke to a lot of the professors and other staff and have been really impressed with how helpful and friendly they are. I appreciate their willingness to work with someone like me who is not your typical 18-year-old student.

## **How are you helping other student veterans?**

There are a few different ways I'm trying to help other students who are also veterans. One simple thing is to update the Student Veterans' Lounge on campus. Right now, it's a pretty simple room with a couch, table and TV. We want to add more furniture, update it, make it more comfortable and have it become a place where student veterans want to hangout. We want to start simply by creating a place to be and work towards having resources and people on hand to help smooth the path for veterans. We want to make a community where they can get the help and support that they need.

Outside of my studies I work with Sailing Angels which is a sailing charity that helps people with PTSD through sailing programs. I'd love to work with them to get an offshore sailing team underway at Texas A&M-Galveston. The idea is to have a boat with a crew of 12 to 15 student veterans who can sail together as a team. At sea they would have time to talk with each other and to heal.

## **What is your long-term dream?**

I really want to create a community here in Galveston that supports veterans, helps them get back into civilian life and helps them have healthy bodies and minds. If I had unlimited money, time and resources, I'd have a whole fleet of sailing boats that each had a crew of 12 to 15 veterans sailing all over the world. We could extend it to others dealing with PTSD such as police and first responders, so we have a community of people who have similar experiences and want to help each other.

## **Why sailing?**

Living with PTSD can be hard and sometimes you feel it never leaves you. Adrenaline imprints those dark memories on your brain, so you feel you are back there reliving the moment. Sailing has moments of excitement when you are battling the sea that give an adrenaline rush but more importantly you can have quiet moments of great beauty. Seeing some of the most beautiful places on earth, dolphins and orca and those incredible sunsets and sunrises imprints new memories, gives you something to hold onto, and a reason to keep living.

## **How has your education helped you?**

In the U.S. we are pretty good at throwing resources at fixing problems but by the time vets call a hotline it is almost too late as they have already wrecked their bodies and their lives. Education can help shift the focus to prevention. For me it was important to understand what my body and brain went through in those six years as a Navy Rescue Swimmer and how the constant adrenaline changed my brain and body as I was always in fight or flight mode. I needed to understand the physical and physiological changes that made it hard for me to slow down and return to civilian life. It was like driving a truck at 70 miles an hour and then hitting a brick wall. Education helped me understand all this. It helped me to heal. I truly believe with education we can save lives.

**For more about Taylor Grieger visit [hellorhighseas.com](http://hellorhighseas.com) or learn how you can support veterans on the Galveston Campus, contact Jason Tieman at [jtieman@txamfoundation.com](mailto:jtieman@txamfoundation.com).**



Texas A&M Foundation President Tyson Voelkel '96, Col. Mike Fossum '80, Capt. Greg Tylawsky '84, Sherman Tylawsky and Texas A&M Foundation Board of Trustee member Bill Toler pose with a commemorative framed story written by the foundation about Tylawsky earlier this year.

## Former Student & Donor **Spotlight:** Greg Tylawsky '84

When Texas A&M Maritime Academy Cadets aboard the *T/S Golden Bear* completed their Summer Sea Term by sailing into San Francisco Bay the Aggie Network made sure they had a warm Texas welcome. San Francisco Bar Pilots are responsible for guiding ships through the challenging waters of the Bay and one of these pilots is Capt. Greg Tylawsky '84. When he found out cadets from his beloved Alma Mater were on their way he swung into action.

“When I was a Cadet, I loved my time on the ship and what it did for me,” he explained. “I wanted to honor the Aggies by making sure when they arrived at the Port, they felt like they were home.”

With help from Kylie Fahey and Karissa Moreno from the San Francisco Bay Area Texas A&M Club, and Rick Kline from the Texas A&M Foundation, Tylawsky organized a special welcome reception aboard the floating museum the *SS Jeremiah O'Brien* for Cadets, former students and other special guests.

Tylawsky underwrote the venue and his wife Dr. Sally Wei catered a special “Texas meets San Francisco” dinner that included a chili in sourdough bread bowls. “Everyone loved the chili my wife made, and no one could believe it was actually vegetarian. It’s certainly something to pass the muster with a vegetarian Texas chili,” he said.

Wine for the evening came from the Italics Winery which has another Texas A&M connection as Managing Partner Taylor Martin is a College Station former student. The reception event is just one example of Capt. Tylawksy's generosity and his reconnection with Texas A&M University at Galveston. Greg and Sally have created a planned gift that will establish an endowed scholarship to support full-time, out-of-state students pursuing an undergraduate degree in marine transportation toward a deck officers license.

"I hope our planned gift will inspire others to give too. The Maritime Academy helped me follow my dreams...It gave me my career, my everything. It sounds corny but I truly believe if you follow the Aggie values of telling the truth, being responsible and selfless service then you can achieve your dreams."

Tylawsky shared his belief in the Aggie way with 350 Texas A&M-Galveston students during a recent on campus talk.

"I can remember sitting in those chairs when I was a Cadet and having a Captain come and talk with the class and it seemed he was a million miles away from what I could achieve. I know not every Aggie will be a captain or go to sea, but we can all achieve our dreams and that's what I wanted them to understand."

It's also a message he is now passing on to his son Sherman '20. Following a family wedding in Dallas the pair visited the Galveston campus, College Station Campus and the George H.W. and Barbara Bush Museum.

"They were so nice to Sherman and they really encouraged him to think about

studying politics at Texas A&M. I remember after our museum visit Sherman and I were standing next to a bike stand of hundreds of bikes and Sherman said, 'Look Dad, not one of them is locked'. It made me remember how special Texas A&M is; I realized that I wanted Sherman to get his own ring and be an Aggie too."

Sherman '20, is working toward his Master of International Affairs at Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service.

*"I truly believe if you follow the Aggie [Core] Values of telling the truth, being responsible and selfless service then you can achieve your dreams."*

The Tylawsky's made a bequest in their living trust to support Texas A&M University. To learn how you can support Texas A&M through a planned gift, contact Angela Throne '03 at [athrone@txamfoundation.com](mailto:athrone@txamfoundation.com) or 979-845-5638 or request a free estate and gift planning kit.

There are a number of ways to support the Texas A&M Maritime Academy and Corp of Cadets. To learn more, contact Rick Kline at [rkline@txamfoundation.com](mailto:rkline@txamfoundation.com) or 409-741-4030.



## Giving Back to Industry Through Service: Mike Spiers '10

Mike Spiers '10 is the President of the Sea Aggie Former Student Network (SAFSN) and prior to that was a board member for two years. The San Antonio native has a degree in Marine Administration and after graduation he worked on the docks at New York and New Jersey for a year, an experience which he describes as a "real culture shock".

Following this experience, he moved to stevedore jobs working on both the vessel and terminal side for five years. He now has a very busy role for Terminal Link at Bayport Seabrook specializing in the container line - unloading and loading containers full of heavy cargo such as farm equipment and materials for the oil and gas industries.

Although Spiers was interested in ships and shipping from a young age, he said when he first came to Texas A&M University at Galveston, he had his sights set on transferring to College Station. He was won over by the focus on all things marine and became passionate about his degree in Marine Administration. "I really fell in love with the campus, found the right degree for me and have never looked back."

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### **What's been your focus as president?**

There's been a few areas of focus including strengthening the Network, encouraging networking between former students, strengthening ties between current and former students, working with industry, and helping ease the way for graduates getting into employment.

### **Who can join the network?**

You don't have to be a Sea Aggie or even an Aggie to join our network. We have seven to eight thousand members on our email network and many of them are employers, industry representatives or people who have an interest in the Galveston campus. Many employers want to be involved as they are so impressed with the caliber of the graduates, they will do anything to support

the campus. We are also reaching out to other Aggie groups so we can be closer to our Aggie family.

### **What are you most proud of?**

Last year we had our first fundraiser which was a charity golf tournament at a course in League City. It was so successful we had more than 187 golfers on the course, it was pretty crowded at one point, and we raised \$14,000 for a Texas A&M-Galveston endowed scholarship that will be offered through the Texas A&M Foundation.

Our board also started a Speaker Series with industry experts which is great for networking between former students and encouraging interaction with current students. We've had former students step up

and pay for tickets for current students to make sure they can attend.

### **How can people get involved in the Sea Aggie Former Student Network?**

We'd love them to join the Network and be involved in whatever way works for them. Lobbying has been another area of focus and we've worked with the university on an initiative to obtain a new training vessel for the Texas A&M Maritime Academy at Galveston. We encouraged people in the Network to reach out to their elected representatives. We'll be reigniting this project and asking folks to reach out again to Congress, so we don't lose our place in line for that new training vessel.

Also, in April [2020] we will have our second fundraising golf tournament so there's another way people can get involved.

### **Why is being a Sea Aggie so special?**

Texas A&M-Galveston is such a small campus and the professors and staff are so dedicated to helping students that it really makes a bonding experience. The industry is close-knit so you can continue to keep in touch with people you studied with. Also, I think Texas A&M-Galveston is where a lot of people grow up and really begin their lives. It's where I met my wife and I know many of my friends met their husbands and wives too. I have a nine-year-old son and a two and a half-year-old daughter and I hope they will both be Aggies. I just took them to their first Aggie Football game and I'm already teaching my son James all the Aggie tricks.

**Visit Sea Aggie Former Student Network online or email [seaaggies@aggienetwork.com](mailto:seaaggies@aggienetwork.com) for more information.**

## **Board of Directors**

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**Find us on** 

**@seaaggieformerstudentnetwork**

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# IMMORTALITY

## within a Tentacle's Reach

A jellyfish with the ability to rewind its life-cycle and avoid death may hold the key to helping people with genetic disorders such as muscular dystrophy, sickle cell anemia, and Huntington's disease.

Texas A&M University at Galveston's Dr. Maria Pia Miglietta has been awarded a prestigious grant to study cell regeneration and gene sequencing within a special jellyfish known as *Turritopsis dohrnii*, or *T. dohrnii*.

When faced with food shortages or other unfavorable situations, the jellyfish can revert to a polyp or one of its more immature growth states. This is the equivalent of a 50-year-old person transforming back into a 5-year-old, skipping adolescent, teenage and early adult years.

The process, called cell transdifferentiation, involves mature cells transforming into a different cell type, and reverting to a younger life-cycle stage. Miglietta's work identifies genes that might be involved in *T. dohrnii*'s life-cycle reversal and cell transdifferentiation.

"The ultimate goal is to understand the genetic machinery that allows *T. dohrnii* to revert its life-cycle and escape death, and to characterize the genetic underpinning of its cellular transdifferentiation," Miglietta explained.

Given the development of DNA-based technologies that introduce the possibility of gene editing this research could have future practical applications in regenerative medicine.

"Understanding how regeneration and cellular transdifferentiation work at the genetic level is crucial to regenerative medicine and to further our understanding of aging, senescence (cell aging and deterioration) and cell biology in general," she said.

The Early-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) National Science Foundation (NSF) is for \$294,725 and will extend from September 2019 to August 2021. During these months, Miglietta will work with marine sciences Ph.D. student Yui Matsumoto to produce genomics tools to understand immortality and cellular transdifferentiation in the medusa, or fully-grown *T. dohrnii*.

"We are very proud of Dr. Miglietta and her student. Their hard work of the last few years, scientific rigor and creativity have been rewarded with this NSF EAGER grant. We look forward to the future outcomes of this program," said Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, Regents Professor Antonietta Quigg.

To learn more, visit [tamug.edu/newsroom](http://tamug.edu/newsroom).

# Oh Buoy! Cadets Assist Global Ocean Monitoring Project



Texas A&M Marine Academy cadets have deployed 16 drifting buoys to collect real-time marine data vital to weather forecasting, search and rescue planning and other practical applications.

“The information collected by the drifters is the same data that creates the maps and charts our cadets are using for daily maritime operations,” said Captain Augusta Roth, department head for Texas A&M at Galveston’s Maritime Transportation Department. “The opportunity for them to contribute from the beginning in this process adds value and worth to their training, education and responsibilities once they become licensed merchant marine officers in the maritime field.”

The project is a partnership with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that saw 16 buoys dispersed between the Hawaii and Seattle leg of the academy’s seven-week international summer training cruise over the summer. The experience compliments the hands-on training cadets received aboard the ship.

The data collected goes to NOAA’s Voluntary Observing Ship (VOS) program, which is comprised of a global network of maritime partners who facilitate the collection of real-time weather condition data, which supports national and international maritime commerce agreements, weather forecast and warning programs, and provides key markers to aid in defining the global climate. The data also provides key markers to aid in defining the health of the global climate, identifying climate variables and measuring long-term climate changes.

**You can support our cadets by donating to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy Sea Term Fuel Endowment. The endowment supports yearly operation of the vessel by assisting with fuel costs. Fuel costs are included in cadet fees so by donating to the endowment you can help reduce training costs for cadets.**

[give.am/TAMUSeaTermFuelEnd](https://give.am/TAMUSeaTermFuelEnd)



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[TX.AG/MARDIGRAS2020](http://TX.AG/MARDIGRAS2020)



The George P. Mitchell Society is comprised of individuals and organizations committed to the well-being of our oceans by supporting marine and maritime research, education, training and more at the Gulf Coast's maritime university, Texas A&M University at Galveston.

Established in honor of George Phydias Mitchell, Fighting Aggie class of 1940; the spirit of the GPMS is to enhance the growth of the Galveston campus of Texas A&M University.

Funds are to be designated for student scholarships, maritime research, excellent faculty and student recruitment, campus beautification and for discretionary purposes as designated by the COO. For more information or to join, please visit: [tamug.edu/develop/Campaigns/MitchellSociety.html](http://tamug.edu/develop/Campaigns/MitchellSociety.html).

Membership to the society is an annual donation spanning the current calendar year. Membership levels are described below:

- General Membership: \$1,000 minimum (Membership consists of GPMS specific gift or gift(s) of \$1,000 or more to TAMUG.)
- Faculty/Staff Membership: \$500\*
- Student Membership: \$50\*
- Corporate Membership: \$5,000 minimum\* (The donor may name three individuals to GPMS membership, but only the corporate name will be published in membership rolls.)

\*All funds at these levels must be directly dedicated toward GPMS membership.

## JOIN TODAY!



GEORGE P. MITCHELL  
SOCIETY

# EVENTS

**01** Graduates pose with friends and family during spring 2019 commencement at the Texas A&M-Galveston Aggie Special Events Center.



**02** Students look to the stage during spring 2019 commencement.



**03** A student welcomes attendees of the spring 2019 commencement ceremony during her invocation.



**04** Cadets pose aboard the T/S Golden Bear during their 2019 Summer Sea Term.



**05** Texas A&M Foundation Director of Development for Texas A&M-Galveston Jason Tieman '97 and Associate Vice President for Development Rick Kline pose with hosts from the Panama A&M Club during the Summer Sea Term 2019 cruise and port reception in July 2019.



**06** Texas A&M Foundation Director of Development for Texas A&M-Galveston Jason Tieman '97 and former students JJ League '94 and Christian DeBlasio '96 pose during the San Francisco port call reception as part of the Texas A&M Maritime Academy's 2019 Summer Sea Term cruise.



**07** A student poses with her new Aggie Ring during Ring Day in September 2019.



**08** Maroon Delegates pose with Col. Mike Fossum during their annual tailgate at TAMU in October earlier this year.





**09** Texas A&M Maritime Academy cadets participate in March-In at Texas A&M University October 12, 2019.

**10** Members of the Sea Aggie Former Student Network pose at the Endowed Scholarship Reception in October 2019. They were recognized for establishing the Sea Aggie Former Student Network Endowed Scholarship to benefit current students.

**11** Texas A&M Maritime Academy cadets pose for a photo during the fourth annual Endowed Scholarship Reception October 23, 2019.

**12** Donors Beverly and Warren Bright visit with their endowed scholarship recipient during the Endowed Scholarship Reception October 23, 2019.

**13** The student recipients of endowed scholarships pose for a group photo during the fourth annual Endowed Scholarship Reception October 23, 2019.

**14** Levy Foundation Scholarship recipients pose with Keith and Marilyn McFtridge and other Levy Foundation recipients during their November 2019 Levy dinner event.

**15** Texas A&M-Galveston MART faculty Max Teare and Admissions Counselor Jeff English work the booth at the International Workboat Show in New Orleans December 4, 2019.

Texas A&M University at Galveston  
Development Office  
P.O. Box 1675  
Galveston, TX 77553

## A message from your Development Office:

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Greetings & Happy Holidays to All!

I can't believe the end of the year is here. From meeting new friends and old through our travels to the Hill Country earlier this year, port call receptions in Puerto Rico, Panama, Seattle and San Francisco, the Workboat Show in New Orleans, it has been a busy year.

It's the end of the year, but also the end of the decade and we have much to celebrate. Texas A&M University at Galveston has grown in leaps and bounds, erecting new buildings, graduating hundreds of students and giving so many of them opportunities they would never have had through your generosity and giving.

This Texas A&M-Galveston Development Newsletter for Winter 2019 presents a brief overview of highlights of what's going on at Texas A&M-Galveston, but there's so much more to see and experience with your own eyes, especially if it's been a decade since your last visit. Please call our office at (409) 740-4481 to schedule a visit and when you do, say hello to our new Development Office Administrative Assistant Madelaine Heaven, a 2018 graduate with a double degree in Marine Biology and Marine Fisheries. We're thrilled to have Maddie on board.

Thank you, once more, to all of you for making this year and decade a memorable one for Aggies by the sea. Whether you've attended an Endowed Scholarship Reception in the last few years, served as a member of the Board of Visitors or established an Endowed Scholarship for our deserving students, your impact has been made and will be felt for decades to come.

Merry Christmas and happy New Year from our family to yours and enjoy our latest TAMUG Development Newsletter.

Regards,  
Rick



**Questions? Please contact:**  
**Madelaine Heaven, Administrative Assistant**  
**[mheaven@txamfoundation.com](mailto:mheaven@txamfoundation.com)**  
**409-740-4481**