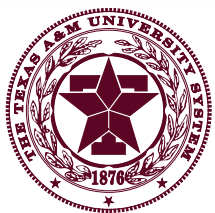


Chancellor Sharp aims high

BY AMY HALBERT AND REBECCA WATTS



How does a man from a tiny farming community in South Texas become chancellor of one of the largest and most complex higher education systems in the country? Hard work and a lifelong dedication to public service.

John Sharp has come a long way since his early days in the South Texas town of Placedo. It was there he learned the value of hard work and education from his parents, an oil field worker and teacher. After high school, he attended Texas A&M University where he served in the Corps of Cadets and was elected student body president. He graduated in 1972, and has built upon the lessons learned from his early days in Placedo, and at Texas A&M, to create an impressive portfolio of public service to the state of Texas.

He has a track record of making a difference. With more than three decades of public service to his credit, he has served in the Texas Senate and Texas House of Representatives, as Texas Railroad Commissioner and as Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

As comptroller, he received numerous accolades for his focus on government efficiencies, and as Texas Railroad Commissioner, he championed reforms to the state's trucking regulations and the development of new natural gas markets.

For the past 11 years, he has been working in the private sector as a principal with Ryan LLC, the largest state and local tax consulting firm of its kind in Texas. But his eagerness to return to public service led him to apply for the chancellor position.

"I missed it," he says simply. "I didn't take this job for the money and I didn't do it to add another title behind my name. I did it because I want to make a difference. What makes this system great is the faculty, researchers and students. Our job is not self-preservation, but to support those three," Sharp says. "The A&M System is a gem that needs more polish to tell our amazing story."

Telling that story is one his primary goals. From the regional universities to the agencies that make up the A&M System, Sharp's plans include making sure that each A&M System member receives the coverage and credit they deserve in serving the state of Texas and the nation through high-quality education, selfless service and groundbreaking research.

Continued on page 7

Geosciences professor develops system to better predict droughts

BY KAREN RIEDEL



A Texas A&M University geography professor is developing a drought-prediction system that could benefit anyone involved in agriculture, land management and tourism. The National Science Foundation has funded Dr. Steven Quiring to develop a robust soil-moisture dataset for the U.S. Great Plains, the first of its kind for one of the country's most fertile but fickle climate regions.

The Great Plains circles the country from the Rio Grande to the Canadian border, about 15 percent of the land mass of the United States. The region's economic impact accounts for more than \$40 billion in agricultural production; however, despite its geographical size and economic impact, the region has no uniform method to monitor the amount of moisture in the soil.

"The content of moisture in the soil plays a critical role in the global carbon cycle, in weather and in climate patterns," Quiring says. Drier soil means less moisture escapes into the atmosphere, triggering more radiant heat to be returned to the soil and exacerbating already dry conditions, he explains. "In other words, drought begets drought."

Soil characteristics such as compactness, vegetation, and the angle of slopes and subsequent run-off further complicate the picture. Quiring says knowing the amount of moisture in the soil at any given time is one of the keys to predicting oncoming droughts.

"The data will help in forecasting what crops to grow, what kinds of seeds to buy, what ground cover to use," he says. "People can decide if they need more crop insurance in the coming year. They can purchase feed ahead of time to lock in the price or they can adjust their levels of stock." Having this knowledge in advance could prevent the \$30 billion in agriculture production lost during the drought in 1988.

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Dr. Steven Quiring measures the soil moisture content in the parched Central Texas ground. Quiring says that the content of moisture in the soil plays a critical role in weather and climate patterns.



New A&M-San Antonio campus fulfills long-held dream

BY JILLIAN REDDISH



It was San Antonio's late Senator Frank Madla who first dreamed of establishing an institution of higher learning on the city's historically underserved South Side. More than a decade later, the doors of Texas A&M University-San Antonio's inaugural building on its main campus opened Aug. 24 to welcome students on their first day of class.

"This building is truly worthy of our students and the Texas A&M name," says Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, president of A&M-San Antonio. "Every aspect of this building is focused on the needs of our students – their voice shines through, and our avenue of bricks with the names of our first 5,000 graduates proves to them that they can achieve their dreams. One day, they lend their name to a brick; tomorrow, they could lend their name to a building!"

The cornerstone of future campus expansion, the building's architectural inspiration is firmly rooted in the development of the university and the diverse cultures that historically shaped San Antonio. The sandstone exterior is the same stone used centuries ago to build San Antonio's Franciscan missions, complemented by locally made brick and brightly colored tile imported from Mexico. The decorative screens that shade the building's three-story windows are a version of "hojalata," the folkloric Mexican tinwork historically found in the area. Efficient

Continued on page 7

Notes from the Chancellor



JOHN SHARP

As a lifelong public servant, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to return to what I love—serving the public. And what better way to serve the citizens of the state of Texas than as chancellor of The Texas A&M University System, and to work among the best in the world in higher education, specifically teaching, research and service.

Taking the helm of such a large and diverse system is a bit daunting, but I'm up to the challenge. I have already begun spending a lot of my time getting to know the 19 members that make up our system. I want to understand each member and what they do so that I can help the citizens of Texas realize how exceptional the A&M System truly is.

We continue to experience record growth across the A&M System. Texas A&M University, our flagship and my alma matter, welcomed more than 50,000 students this fall, the most in its history. Texas A&M University-San Antonio has moved into the first building on its new campus on the South Side of the city, and Texas A&M University-Texarkana, which recently made the transition into a four-year institution, is starting an athletics program. It's an exciting time to be part of the A&M System and to see all that is happening at our universities, agencies and health science center.

I admit that I came into this job already a bit biased, because I believe the A&M System is already a great system. But I also believe it can be even better. In all of my years of public service, I have never been accused of thinking small; thus, it makes sense that one of my goals as chancellor is to make the A&M System widely recognized as the best system of higher education in the country.

I know that this is a lofty goal, but my confidence is backed by faith in our members and the leadership team we have in place. I know that together we can achieve this goal. In my mind, we already have. ■

John Sharp

Around the System



Keith Maxwell, regional president of Extraco Banks, and Thomas Sinkey, vice president of Extraco Banks, recently presented a \$5,000 donation to Texas A&M University-Central Texas for scholarships. From left: Dr. Marc Nigliazzo, president of A&M-Central Texas; Clarence Enochs, student body president; Maxwell; Alison Rex, communications specialist for A&M-Central Texas; Dwayne Moorehouse, student body vice president; and Sinkey.

Texas A&M at Galveston Ocean and Coastal Studies Building awarded LEED status

Texas A&M University at Galveston's Ocean and Coastal Studies Building was recently awarded the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold building certification. The 110,000-square-foot building was designed by WHR Architects, and is the largest marine research facility on the Texas Gulf Coast. The building achieved LEED Gold certification for its comprehensive set of strategies with regards to sustainable site design, energy and water efficiency, use of sustainably harvested and local materials, and a high indoor environmental quality for its occupants.

Texas Transportation Institute researchers receive awards at annual meeting

Researchers from the Texas Transportation Institute recently won awards from the Institute of Transportation Engineers. ITE's 2011 Coordinating Council Best Project Award went to *The Traffic Engineering Council Technical Committee on Pavement Marking Patterns Used at Uncontrolled Pedestrian Crossings: An Informational Report*. TTI research engineer Kay Fitzpatrick chaired the committee and assistant research engineer Marcus Brewer was a committee member. Teens in the Driver Seat® won the 2011 Transportation Achievement Award in Safety. Program director Russell Henk was presented the award at the ITE Annual Meeting in St. Louis Aug. 15. This is the second time that ITE has awarded Teens in the Driver Seat® with the achievement award.

West Texas A&M makes U.S. News national rankings

U.S. News and World Report has ranked West Texas A&M University among the best regional schools in the western United States for the second year. The rankings are split into four regions and are based upon graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, selectivity, financial resources, and alumni giving.

Texas A&M receives \$14.4 million to study gulf oil spills

Texas A&M University researchers in the College of Geosciences and the Dwight Look College of Engineering are the lead investigators in a \$14.4 million project that will investigate the transport and eventual fate of petroleum fluids that have erupted at depth, such as those from the Deepwater Horizon spill last year. Joining Texas A&M in the project are 10 researchers from the University of Texas at Austin, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley, North Carolina State University, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, University of Hawaii, University of Maryland and Georgia Institute of Technology. As the lead university, Texas A&M, through its College of Geosciences, will direct the grant.

Texas Engineering Experiment Station researchers awarded more than \$2.2 million for nuclear research

Texas A&M University nuclear engineering professors and Texas Engineering Experiment Station researchers Dr. Marvin Adams and Dr. Paul Nelson have been awarded three research grants of more than \$2.2 million from the U.S. Department of Energy. Nelson, professor emeritus of nuclear engineering and current associate director for International Programs of Nuclear Security Science and Policy Institute, received two grants and Adams received the third. The grants were part of \$39 million awarded to support up to 51 projects at colleges and universities across the country through the Nuclear Engineering University Program.

A&M System works with members to prepare for emergencies

BY REBECCA WATTS



The Texas A&M University System Office of Safety and the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) have teamed up to develop programs that provide the resources, knowledge and manpower to prepare A&M System universities for emergencies. These table-top exercises enable a quick and efficient response by administration and emergency personnel so that the universities and their students stay safe.

"It started with a couple of universities asking us to help with getting some exercises to test their emergency management plans," said Gary Jackson, a risk management coordinator with the A&M System and coordinator of the project. "The concept is a combination of emergency response and business continuity."

A table-top exercise can vary between talking through an emergency response scenario to performing a live-action scenario response. A&M System universities are required to perform a walk-through table-top exercise each year and a live-action table-top every other year. Continually refining these exercises ensure that universities are prepared to

respond quickly to emergency situations and prevent a complete collapse in operations.

"Our role right now is to coordinate and work with TEEX and help them when they need it," Jackson said. "We've done four for the universities involving scenarios that range from a complete power outage to an aircraft crash."

Texas A&M University, Tarleton State University, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and Texas A&M University at Galveston have all undergone a live-action table-top exercises within the past year. Jackson said that several other A&M System members have expressed interest in utilizing the newly created program. The Office of Safety has a budget that allows assistance to three or four universities per fiscal year. Eventually the Office of Safety will be solely responsible for performing the table-top exercises.

"What we're hoping to do is have some of the CEOs and CFOs generate some interest and excitement in doing these things," Jackson said. ■

REBECCA WATTS is a communications specialist for The Texas A&M University System Office of Communications.





Texas A&M Health Science Center med students learn from rural patients

BY LINDSEY BACON BERTRAND



Geographically, the first-year medical students haven’t traveled far, only about 15 miles from the College of Medicine campus in Temple, but tonight they enter a different world. Tonight they meet a few of Holland’s citizens, people whose needs often go beyond just basic healthcare.

“The families’ stories are just incredible,” says Dr. Ruth Bush, associate dean for education at the TAMHSC College of Medicine Temple Campus. “By simply meeting with the families, we are answering their questions about healthcare, developing treatment plans and breaking down the barriers to care.”

The idea is simple: match first-year medical students who need clinical experience with families in rural areas who might not otherwise have access to basic medical care.

In September 2010, armed with a grant for an outreach program to rural communities, Dr. Catherine McNeal, associate professor of internal medicine at the Temple campus, solicited several nearby communities to participate. Cynthia Gunn, superintendent of Holland ISD, stepped up and offered her school for the pilot program.

Together they identified five families in Holland (population 1,100) with special healthcare needs. For instance, in one blended family, a grandmother with guardianship of her adopted grandchildren came with questions and misconceptions about eligibility for healthcare coverage. Another family wanted to learn more about well-child check-ups. Another, how to best manage a chronic condition.

Under the guidance of Bush and McNeal, 15 medical students began meeting monthly with each family in groups of two or three at the Holland elementary school.

They were joined by faculty members and mentors including a geriatrician, internist, internal medicine hospitalist, hospital chaplain, pediatrician, the Holland school nurse, and a pediatric social worker with more than 35 years of experience.

The medical students reviewed the families’ medical histories, asked questions and interacted with the children. Then faculty and mentors met regularly with the students for debriefings to discuss what took place and introduce new topics and ways to talk to the families.

“To have this experience as a first-year medical student is a privilege, and I appreciate the opportunity to spend time outside of the school library to practice communication skills and problem-solving strategies,” says first-year medical student Alison La. “I appreciate the trust that ‘our’ families have for us, regardless of the fact that we are first-year students.”

Now in its second year, the rural health rotation continues to attract families and medical students thanks to help from faculty members, Holland ISD and more than a dozen volunteers. Ultimately, the TAMHSC College of Medicine hopes to make this rural rotation part of the longitudinal curriculum, allowing students to continue shadowing “their” families throughout all four years of medical school. ■

LINDSEY BACON BERTRAND is communications coordinator for the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine’s Office of Institutional Advancement.

Medication Assistance Program responds to Texans’ health needs

BY BREANNA RYE

Every day, many Texans are faced with a dire decision—pay their bills and put food on the table or follow the doctor’s orders and refill their prescription medications. Faced with an otherwise daunting predicament, some residents are now finding relief through a Texas A&M Health Science Center program committed to helping ease this burden.

The TAMHSC-Coastal Bend Health Education Center Medication Assistance Program has brought relief to thousands of residents. For the most recent fiscal year, it helped over 3,800 South Texans obtain more than \$1.9 million in lifesaving medications.

“People are struggling with their finances and the economy,” says Guadalupe Reyes Jr., director of the TAMHSC-Coastal Bend Health Education Center in Corpus Christi. “Unfortunately, we have received many stories from our clients where patients have turned down their medications because they couldn’t even afford a \$5 co-pay.”



Naida Rios (right), an outreach worker with the TAMHSC-Coastal Bend Health Education Center Medication Assistance Program, meets one-on-one with clients to assess their prescription needs and eligibility.

While many pharmaceutical companies provide certain medications at little or no cost to the uninsured and those that meet federal poverty guidelines, the applications to receive such medications are lengthy and complex. The Medication Assistance Program staff, with their knowledge and training, provides patients with the necessary assistance to successfully maneuver through the process. Sandra Garcia, Medication Assistance Program coordinator, says each client’s circumstances are unique.

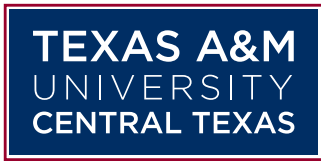
“They may meet the federal poverty guidelines, or they may take five medications that end up costing them \$1,000 a month,” Garcia says. “We’re here to help.”

The program serves individuals of all ages, with an overwhelming majority falling into the 46-65 range. Cardiovascular and diabetes medications make up more than half of all medications received. Assisting these patients with their prescriptions now can reduce the impact of more serious and costly complications in the future. ■

BREANNA RYE is a communications specialist for the Texas A&M Health Science Center Coastal Bend Health Education Center.

VetSuccess program helps ease transition into student life

BY ALISON REX



Transitioning from an active duty service member to a civilian college student can pose difficult challenges for a veteran. Texas A&M University-Central Texas is trying to help ease that transition through the implementation of their VetSuccess on Campus program. The program is a collaborative effort between the university and the United States Department of Veteran Affairs to provide comprehensive assistance to student-veterans during their transition into college life, ensuring a higher success rate.

VetSuccess provides education and guidance on veteran benefits and financial assistance, emotional, physical and financial health, and tutoring assistance, among a variety of other services aimed at easing the transition into college.

Candy Lopez, a full-time, experienced vocational counselor with the VetSuccess program, is housed on the A&M-Central Texas campus as a one-stop liaison for veterans, active duty military and their eligible family members. “Early intervention and outreach is key,” says Lopez. “If we can make sure that our veterans are being supported, then we can relieve a lot of outside stresses.” Reducing these stresses provides veterans with a greater opportunity to be successful in their courses.

A&M-Central Texas is one of only eight universities in the country to offer this program, which opened its doors on campus in March 2011. The university’s close proximity to Fort Hood makes the program a necessity and helps to properly serve the diverse student body.

“Having been with the VA for 20 years, I think it is one of the best outreach programs they have ever done,” Lopez says. “I provide much more than educational benefits: I help veterans with any need they have – this program is very encompassing. I have one student veteran who recently said to me, ‘Every time I come in your office I either walk away smarter, or with more money in my pocket, or both.’” ■

ALISON REX is a communications specialist for Texas A&M University-Central Texas.



A&M-Central Texas vocational counselor Candy Lopez assists student-veterans like Stephen Cowens with their transition into college life.

Recent Appointments



DR. MARGARET KATHERINE BANKS has been appointed vice chancellor for engineering for The Texas A&M University System and dean of the Dwight Look College of Engineering at Texas A&M by the Board of Regents. She also was named director of the Texas Engineering Experiment Station. Banks currently serves as head of the School of Civil Engineering at Purdue University, and her appointment begins Jan. 10, 2012. In addition to serving as Bowen Engineering Head for the School of Civil Engineering, Banks currently is the Jack and Kay Hockema Professor at Purdue. She served as director of the EPA Hazardous Substance Research Center, as associate director of the NASA Center for Advanced Life Support, and as co-director of the 21st Century Center for Phytoremediation Research, all headquartered at Purdue. Banks is the author or co-author of more than 150 journal articles, proceedings papers, and book chapters, and has made more than 200 scholarly or technical presentations before professional and related groups.



RAY BONILLA was named general counsel for the A&M System by the Board of Regents in September. Bonilla previously was a partner in the Austin law firm of Ray, Wood & Bonilla. Prior to that, he served as general counsel for the Texas Comptroller's Office, where he was the primary legal advisor to the comptroller in his role as the state's chief tax administrator and chief financial officer. Throughout his career, Bonilla has represented a wide range of governmental entities, businesses and individuals on issues involving state and local taxation, open government, elections, ethics, and procurement. The A&M System's general counsel is responsible for all legal matters affecting the system and provides legal counsel to the Board of Regents, chancellor and CEOs of the A&M System.



DR. MARGARET GRAY-VICKREY was appointed provost and vice president of academic and student affairs for Texas A&M University-Central Texas by the Board of Regents in July. Gray-Vickrey brings 15 years of experience from a Fort Myers, Fla., institution with more than 12,000 students. She had previously served as associate provost and associate vice president for the Office of Curriculum & Instruction at Florida Gulf Coast University since 2005. She has also served the university as interim provost and vice president, interim director of the School of Nursing and interim dean of the School of Health Professions. She was appointed associate professor for the School of Nursing in 1996 and professor in 2001.



DR. LAWRENCE E. WOLINSKY was named dean for the Texas A&M Health Science Center Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas by the Board of Regents in June. Wolinsky previously served as the associate dean for academic programs and personnel in the UCLA School of Dentistry. Wolinsky also was a professor in the section of oral biology, having joined the dental school faculty in 1980. As dean of the Baylor College of Dentistry, Wolinsky's responsibilities include promoting excellence in dentistry education, graduate education and research through recruitment of high-quality faculty; ensuring space and resources for all programs; and overseeing curriculum, student affairs and educational policies.

Community garden is the gift that keeps giving

BY CHRISTI LANDRY

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

To most people, peas, tomatoes and corn are merely vegetables that take up space in your pantry, refrigerator or on a dinner plate. But for many, these simple veggies mean the difference between hunger and nourishment.

Residents in Smith County are reaping the nutritious benefits of the East Texas Food Bank Community Garden Project in Tyler. The garden is a collaboration between Smith County sheriff J.B. Smith, Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program Smith County agricultural agent George Green, 12th Court of Appeals judge Sam Griffith, and members of the East Texas Food Bank.

Smith conceptualized the garden project in early 2010. With statistics showing one in four children, one in five adults and one in seven seniors in East Texas are at risk of experiencing hunger, Smith teamed with the East Texas Food Bank with the idea of growing fresh produce to stem the risk of hunger. He approached Green, who had previously worked with the Tyler Growers Association and the East Texas Food Bank on other agricultural projects.

"We met all throughout the year and asked what fresh produce are the highest in demand with clientele the food bank serves. We found that fresh peas are in high demand," Green says.



U.S. Senator John Cornyn (second from right), tours the Tyler East Texas Food Bank Community Garden Project with Cooperative Extension Smith County agent George Green (left), Smith County Sheriff J.B. Smith and Judge Sam Griffith.

One year later, the garden has provided the food bank with peas, tomatoes, squash, okra, corn, green beans, potatoes, and bell peppers. The first harvest yielded 23,000 pounds. Green said Smith has charged the group with growing 30,000 pounds, enough to fill a semi-trailer truck.

"Thanks to the generosity of the Smith County Sheriff's Office, Smith County Agricultural Extension Office and Judge Sam Griffith, the garden will provide fresh nutritious food to hungry children, families and seniors," says Dennis Cullinane, executive director of the East Texas Food Bank. "Fresh produce is always in high demand and this project will allow us to increase the nutritional value of food that we provide to the hungry."

While the produce is a welcome addition to the food bank, it has also served as a catalyst to spur children into growing their own food and eating healthy. Students in the after-school program at Greater Purpose Youth Center have created their own garden after receiving produce from the community garden.

"At Thanksgiving time, we delivered fresh greens. They loved it. From that they got so excited that they wanted to start a garden of their own. Now you have kids that have a garden of their own," Green says. "They've grown their own tomatoes, greens and peppers. You get them in the mindset of producing their own food and you have them eating healthy. That is the beauty of this whole thing."

Recently, U.S. Senator John Cornyn paid a visit to the four-acre garden. He toured the project, calling it a great example of what can be done in the state and hoped that it could be replicated throughout Texas.

Green feels the project is a model of a successful public and private partnership. "With this project, we can impact lives by providing fresh produce to those in need. We can teach and educate with the different techniques, varieties and methods of growing. This can be used as an example for others to teach and grow their own gardens," Green says. ■

CHRISTI LANDRY is a public relations specialist for Prairie View A&M University.



AgriLife Extension tours introduce restaurateurs to Texas growers and producers

BY PAUL SCHATTEBERG



The Texas Department of Agriculture and Texas AgriLife Extension Service have been working together to bring chefs, restaurateurs and others in the food service business face-to-face with agricultural producers statewide, inspiring them to buy locally grown products.

"For the past few years, we've been teaming up with AgriLife Extension on chef's farm tours which bring those who decide what's going to be on restaurant menus to area agricultural operations to see what they're growing and how it's being produced," says Ken Weidenfeller, a TDA regional director overseeing 44 counties. "People in the food service industry have limited time to visit potential suppliers, so we try to make it easier to connect them with producers in their respective areas."

The daylong tours consist of several stops at diverse agricultural operations, including fruit and vegetable producers, egg, chicken and quail farms, bakeries, food processing facilities, dairies, breweries, and other

agribusinesses. Tours take place primarily in and around counties with large urban populations, and participants range from small, family-owned restaurants to large, elegant dining establishments.

Dr. Connie Sheppard, AgriLife Extension family and consumer sciences agent for Bexar County, who helps coordinate the tours in her area, says other positives related to buying locally include nutritional, environmental and economic benefits.

"Buying produce locally and seasonally provides fresh food at the peak of its nutritional value. It also cuts down on transportation and helps support local economies, keeping jobs in Texas," she says. "For area producers, the tours provide opportunities for business and personal relationships, and for the chefs and restaurateurs, they provide sources for high-quality, local agricultural products. But ultimately it's the consumer who benefits the most by getting fresh, wholesome, nutritious, and delicious food." ■

PAUL SCHATTEBERG is a media relations specialist for AgriLife Communications.

Tarleton is home to the dairy center of the future

BY KURT MOGONYE



The Southwest Regional Dairy Center is a \$11.2 million, state-of-the-art complex, and the only research and education dairy facility within The Texas A&M University System. The center is the result of a unique public-private partnership with Dublin, Texas-based 360 Ag Management. The dairy management firm works in conjunction with the university's faculty and Texas AgriLife Research and Texas AgriLife Extension Service faculty as producer-operator of the center.

"This facility makes Tarleton distinctive for its part in providing solutions that promote sustainability in the dairy industry," says Dr. Don Cawthon, dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. "The capabilities and technology in the center, combined with our partnership with [360 Ag Management] gives us access to thousands of cows that can be gathered for specific research projects."

The 95,000-square-foot facility includes a 24-cow rotary milking carousel with radio frequency identification capabilities, hospital and commodity barns and a 300-cow free-stall barn. Center director Dr. Barry Lambert, an associate professor in the animal sciences department at Tarleton and a dairy science specialist with AgriLife Research,

says the dairy center will serve as a hub for various research projects, from studies by entomologists to reduce breeding grounds for flies, to trials by nutritionists who plan to study optimum levels of nutrients in feed.

The center also is environmentally friendly. Energy recovery systems derive bioenergy from waste produced at the nearby Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center and can convert two tons of manure into 100 gallons of ethanol with a waste product yielding a high-value, concentrated fertilizer. Recycled water flushes waste from free-stall barns into a lagoon where the water is re-circulated onto nearby crop fields. The proposed second building phase includes a bottling facility and creamery to produce products such as cheese and ice cream.

"We want this facility to be the go-to place for students across the U.S.," Cawthon says. "Our university will stand out nationally in regard to the up-to-date technology that is currently available to the dairy industry, the institutions which are teaching and conducting research, and with our outreach program and demonstration projects." ■

KURT MOGONYE is a communications specialist for Tarleton State University.



The new dairy facility features a 300-cow free stall barn and a 24-cow rotary milking carousel.



Student Spotlight: Philip Balli

BY STEVE HARMON



Texas A&M International University sophomore Philip Balli may be singlehandedly realizing TAMIU's international mission—he's already logged over 16,000 miles in university study/travel and will add thousands more.

Balli is one of two Texas students selected as a Fellow in the 2011 Institute for International Public Policy, a six-year fellowship offered by the United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation. The fellowship commitment includes participation in three summer institutes, a study abroad program, an internship, language study, and graduate school.

Balli recently completed a seven-week summer program in Washington, D.C., at Howard University. He spent the bulk of his course time focusing on global economics, international affairs, research method, and policy making.

"It was an intense experience, and I was initially overwhelmed. But there's a strong sense of community and bonding. Most importantly, our cohort shares a common vision of future careers in international relations, which is very powerful," Balli says.

Balli's capstone course looked at issues related to human rights and security, and included a presentation on child soldiers. The concluding Q&A was attended and critiqued by four U.S. ambassadors.

Balli's travels have only just begun. His next stop for the spring semester will be Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia, for a study abroad session targeting emerging identity in North Africa. He also plans to coordinate an independent study course with TAMIU anthropology professor Jacklyn Jeffrey.

Traveling and studying has become synonymous with Balli's TAMIU education.

"I was blessed to participate in study abroad trips to both Taiwan and Ghana, and each helped me to establish a clearer path to international relations. My major shifted from music to communication, which I feel better aligns with my career aspirations," Balli says.

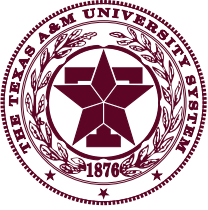
He noted that while his frequent global travels as a TAMIU student have inspired him and set the stage for his future career, they've also had practical applications.

"I've become really good at packing," he says. "It's all about rolling versus folding." ■

STEVE HARMON is director of the Office of Public Relations, Marketing and Information Services for Texas A&M International University

A&M System presidents head back to the classroom

BY REBECCA WATTS



Two Texas A&M University System presidents have stepped out of their offices and into classrooms to reconnect with their passion—teaching. Prairie View A&M University President Dr. George C. Wright and Texas A&M International University President Dr. Ray Keck are holding the dual responsibilities of administrator and professor.

"It is no surprise to me that the men leading two of our universities would want to return to what brought them to their posts to begin with—their love of teaching," says John Sharp, chancellor of the A&M System. "I have absolute faith in all of our presidents and their ability to challenge the traditional view of administrators, especially while we navigate the changes occurring in higher education."

Earlier this year Wright began reviewing his history lectures. He rewrote most of them and has spent considerable time reading in preparation to teach American history to 300 freshmen this fall.

"Attendance has been excellent with students coming to class early and filling every seat in the room," Wright says. "I have enjoyed interacting with the students, with any number of them remaining after class to talk with me about the reading assignment and various points I made in the lecture."

Wright has not taught in 13 years, but he has continually been involved in academics with research projects. He also is writing a book in addition to his teaching and administrative responsibilities. But his new role has reinforced his belief that teaching is where his heart lies.



PVAMU president Dr. George Wright is teaching American history to a freshman class of 300 this fall.

"Years ago, when I taught full time, I felt it was an honor to be a history professor and have the opportunity to teach my classes," Wright says. "Now, I feel even stronger about this. As a professor, I hold a position of trust, one where I am educating students about their past, challenging them on many of their beliefs about American history, and above all, engaging in conversation with them about historical figures and events. I was correct years ago when saying that being a professor where one gets to have this type of interchange with students is the very best job in society."



TAMIU president Dr. Ray Keck will be teaching a music class in the spring.

In Laredo, when President Keck isn't performing administrative duties, he is translating rare Spanish texts from the golden age of Spanish literature or playing the pipe organ. In the upcoming spring semester, he'll be passing his love of music on to a small class of future organists.

Keck, who holds a doctorate in romance languages and has over 30 years of experience playing the organ, has taken on a class three times in his 10 years as president. "I have always considered myself a teacher first, administrator second," says Keck. "Teaching is the fundamental activity of all universities. And to teach is, for me, a source of great joy, stimulation and growth."

Keck and Wright believe that holding an administrative and teaching position has strengthened their commitment as presidents of their respective universities.

"A president who teaches keeps alive that fundamental link to the heart of the university," Keck says. "The act of learning and of imparting what one learns remains the most important activities on a university campus." ■

REBECCA WATTS is a communications specialist for The Texas A&M University System Office of Communications.

Check out a video feature on this story at news.tamus.edu/extra/category/quest

Fighting the fire before it starts

BY LINDA MOON



Baseball legend Nolan Ryan, Texas Agricultural Commissioner Todd Staples, and Big 12 football coaches Mike Sherman, Mack Brown, Art Briles, and Tommy Tuberville have joined ranks with the likes of

Smokey Bear, to remind Texans that they, too, can help prevent wildfires. The messages are particularly poignant with the Lone Star State mired in an unprecedented drought and facing dangerous wildfire conditions that have been relentlessly plaguing the state for months. With no end in sight, Texas Forest Service is putting an increased emphasis on wildfire prevention education.

“More than 90 percent of all wildfires in Texas are caused by people,” says Tom Boggus, Texas Forest Service director and state forester. “If people cause them, they can be prevented.”

According to a recent study by the Southern Research Station and the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Florida, wildfire prevention education was directly linked with reducing wildfires started by people.

Since the wildfire season started on Nov. 15, 2010, Texas Forest Service and area fire departments have responded to more than 27,500 fires that have burned almost 4 million acres. Often these fires are ignited by something seemingly harmless—outdoor grilling, dragging safety chains behind a trailer, or even welding.

“It’s always important to be careful, but now more than ever before, we really need people to be aware—especially if they’re doing anything outside that might cause a spark,” Boggus says. “Our job is to protect the state of Texas, but we can’t do it alone.” ■

LINDA MOON is communications manager for Texas Forest Service.



View Texas Forest Service wildfire prevention public service announcements at texasforestservice.tamu.edu
Read the Florida study, “Net Benefits of Wildfire Prevention Education Efforts” at treeseearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/34905

A&M-Texarkana’s Young Writers Program seeks to prove importance of writing well

BY BOB BRUGGEMAN



Regent Elaine Mendoza (left), Dr. C.B. Rathburn III, president of A&M-Texarkana, and Dr. Doris Davis, founder of the Young Writers’ Program, visit during the Young Writers’ Program at the A&M-Texarkana campus.



The art of writing is in danger of drowning in a sea of text messaging, Facebook postings and cyberspeak. But Texas A&M University-Texarkana’s Young Writers’ program is proof that young people are still interested in learning what it takes to write well.

“The purpose of the Young Writers’ Program is to help students become good writers, as well as to give them opportunities to write all kinds of pieces, not just those types of writing tested by the state,” says English professor Dr. Doris Davis, who founded the program 22 years ago.

A recent National Assessment of Education Progress report found that the best students in the United States are “poor, disorganized writers.” Students in Texas rank 37th in the nation in writing skills, and A&M-Texarkana’s program seeks to stop this trend. The Young Writers’ Program complements the writing instruction in public schools by offering a structured setting, and helps students identify with the enjoyment of writing to enable them to see the value in becoming effective writers.

To be admitted, local students must be recommended by their teachers, and are then selected by a committee from the university. More than 300 applications are received each year, but there is space for only half that many. For two weeks in June, second graders to high school juniors spend their mornings writing with master teachers. They also have the chance to hear from well-known authors from across the United States who share their experiences in order to stir the students’ imaginations.

At the conclusion of the program, the young writers present their work during an assembly before an audience of fellow students, teachers and parents.

“By learning to write in various genres, the program promotes the enjoyment of writing,” says Dr. Brian Billings, associate professor of English and current director of the writing program. “Interest in the Young Writers’ Program continues to grow each year, and I am pleased that so many students see the value in becoming effective writers.” ■

BOB BRUGGEMAN is communications manager for Texas A&M University-Texarkana.



Predicting droughts

Continued from page 1

Quiring’s quest began during childhood on a family farm in Manitoba, Canada, where his grandfather and other relatives raised both grain and cattle on dryland farms. He saw firsthand the impact weather has. “I learned early on how a family’s livelihood is at the mercy of weather conditions,” he says.

Quiring carried his interest to college, where research for all three of his degrees focused on different aspects of agricultural drought monitoring and prediction. He sees the NSF project as the next logical and critical component in his pursuit to better understand the role that climate systems play in the daily lives of humans. “It is better to study drought,” he says, “than to be subject to it.”

He is already deep into the first phase of the project and has lined up graduate students to help in his research. His team is polling state climatologists, extension agents and operators of observation networks to determine what kinds of soil-moisture measurements are available and in what form.

The next step will be to standardize the observations, establish quality control and homogenize the process.

Quiring says that the third phase, two years down the road, “is where the real science begins.” He and his team will pull the data together and identify the best methods to disseminate it.

The five-year study also gives Texas A&M students a unique opportunity to develop research projects in drought monitoring and forecasting. In addition to learning communities centered on the subject, Quiring will teach a freshman seminar, “Death and Destruction: How Drought Changed History.” ■

KAREN RIEDEL is a communications manager for the College of Geosciences at Texas A&M University.



Check out a video feature on this story at news.tamus.edu/extra/category/quest

Corpus Christi businesswoman ‘pays it forward’ to deserving students

BY STEVEN PASCHAL



A&M-Corpus Christi President Flavius Killebrew and Lena Coleman-Wilson.



Wilson. “All you need to do is trust in God and treat people right. And remember, blessings are received to be passed on.”

Throughout her life, Coleman-Wilson has followed that credo. The latest example of her commitment is the initial \$200,000 gift she presented to the Island University in May to establish the Lena Coleman-Wilson Hope Scholarship for deserving students who are pursuing a degree from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. To be eligible, students must meet admission requirements; however, potential is also factored into eligibility.

“We created the Hope Scholarship to help students who don’t have the highest GPA but do have the ability and drive to improve academically,” says Coleman-Wilson. “There are so many exceptionally bright students applying for scholarships that something needed to be done to help qualified students who aren’t getting the top scholarships, but who need financial help to get their foot in the door.”

The Hope Scholarship isn’t Coleman-Wilson’s only gift to the university. In 1996, she created the non-profit LC Foundation and set aside a percentage of the money for scholarships for Coastal Bend high school graduates to attend Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. In August 2010, she presented university President Flavius Killebrew with \$100,000 to help fund student scholarships, faculty enrichment, and activities and programs that build on community engagement. She believes that the Momentum Campaign launched by Killebrew will allow more talented, bright students to attend the university.

“I advise young people to attend Texas A&M-Corpus Christi because of the excellent education it provides,” says Coleman-Wilson. “I have seen the results. When young people graduate, they are equipped with the tools for a successful career.” ■

STEVEN PASCHAL is news-editorial manager for Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.



Chancellor Sharp

Continued from page 1

Another goal is to expand the A&M System’s research capabilities by aggressively recruiting the best and brightest researchers.

“Not enough people know what we do and I want to change that. I want people to know about our researchers who are working to cure cancer and our Forest Service that is helping to save lives. Lots of people don’t know that the Texas Forest Service is even a part of the A&M System,” he says. “But they will.”

Sharp says he is a firm believer that change comes from the bottom up, and from the people who are doing the work—in the labs and the classrooms—not from the ivory tower. “There is a lot of potential out here,” he says, “and a lot of good ideas that are not being listened to. I’m going to listen.” ■



New A&M-San Antonio campus

Continued from page 1

lighting fixtures conserve energy while a “state of the future” water collection system means that the Xeriscape landscaping is self-sustaining for irrigation, reflecting the university’s commitment to sustainable water and energy research.

Students were met with a breakfast of coffee and pastries on their first day of the semester, provided by the donors of the campus land, the Verano Land Group. Staff members greeted students on their way to classrooms, including the school’s first science lab designed for chemistry and biology classes. The new university library was a busy spot as students logged on to access assignments posted electronically or searched for a book to begin research. Another popular spot was the new café, the university’s first in-house food service that currently doubles as a student center.

A highlight of the day for many was looking through the brick walkway paved with the names of over 3,000 of the university’s first graduates. The section is reserved to honor the first 5,000 graduates,

a goal that will soon be reached as A&M-San Antonio continues to experience unprecedented growth.

Though the 91,000-square-foot building can provide teaching space for up to 720 students at one time, it was clear before construction was half complete that enrollment had significantly outgrown the first building of the main campus. Between 2009 and 2010, A&M-San Antonio was the fastest growing university in the state, and the need for additional facilities was evident. To secure additional space for future growth, the university leased two buildings at Brooks City-Base, formerly the Brooks Air Force Base, to house the School of Business and part of the education program. The university plans to eventually expand to a full four-year residential campus while still catering to non-traditional students. Plans for future campus construction are already in the discussion stages as A&M-San Antonio is projected to become the second largest campus in The Texas A&M University System.

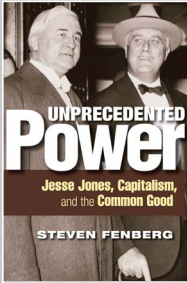
The university will officially welcome the community to its new building with a formal grand opening ceremony held in conjunction with Veterans Day on Nov. 11. San Antonio’s distinction as Military City, USA is a major influence in A&M-San Antonio’s commitment to embrace students and their family members with ties to the military, and will play a role in shaping the development of its campus. Rooted on the city’s South Side with views of the San Antonio skyline and the South Texas countryside, A&M-San Antonio is changing the landscape of Texas forever. ■

JILLIAN REDDISH is a communications specialist for Texas A&M University-San Antonio.



Check out a video feature on this story at news.tamus.edu/extra/category/question

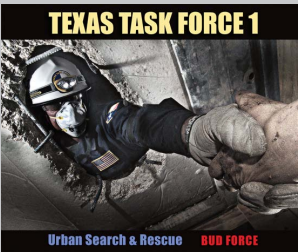
Texas A&M Press Top 5 Books



Unprecedented Power
Jesse Jones, Capitalism, and the Common Good

BY STEVEN FENBERG

Fenberg tells the story of Jesse Holman Jones, the Houston businessman who went to Washington as an appointed official and provided the pragmatic leadership that salvaged capitalism during the Great Depression and militarized industry in time to fight and win World War II.



Texas Task Force 1
Urban Search and Rescue

BY BUD FORCE

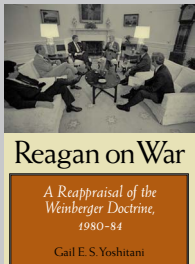
Photographer Force gives us an intimate picture of Texas Task Force 1 at work as he follows the team on their major deployments and documents their specialized equipment and training, including time spent at the unique facility known as Disaster City®.



Together We Can
Pathways to Collective Leadership in Agriculture at Texas A&M

BY EDWARD HILER & STEVEN BOSSERMAN

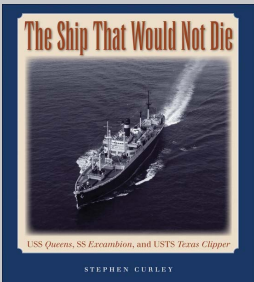
Together We Can recounts effective strategies for institutional change and focuses on collective leadership within the land-grant university system, with reflections on Hiler’s long and successful career in academic leadership.



Reagan on War
A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980-1984

BY GAIL E. S. YOSHITANI

Yoshitani uses three case studies from the Reagan administration’s first term in office—Central America and two deployments in Lebanon—to analyze how the administration grappled with using military force in pursuit of national interests.

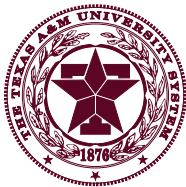


The Ship That Would Not Die
USS Queens, SS Excambion and USTS Texas Clipper

BY STEPHEN CURLEY

Filled not only with meticulously researched technical and historical data about the ship’s construction, service record, crew procedures, and voyages, *The Ship That Would Not Die* also features lively anecdotes from crew members, passengers and officers.

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A&M-Kingsville researchers explore the butterfly effect

BY JASON MARTON



Dr. David G. Hewitt, a professor with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, feeds a deer raised within the institute.



The southwestern United States is rich with animal-based industries such as cattle and pork, and with exotic wildlife like nilgai antelope and feral pigs. As wild animals roam about, they have contact with other wild animals and insects carrying disease, gradually becoming carriers of multiple ailments. Free to reproduce, the number of wild animals carrying diseases grows, and they gradually encroach onto the living and grazing areas of domestic livestock.

Suddenly, one tick carrying the fatal disease of cattle fever has the potential to endanger thousands of heads of cattle and alter a nation's food supply.

Researchers at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute know a lot about these wildlife interactions. The non-profit organization functions as a unit of Texas A&M University-Kingsville's Dick and Mary Lewis Kleberg College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences, and seeks to provide science-based information for enhancing the conservation and management of wildlife in South Texas and related environments. Since 2004, the institute has been a regular partner with the Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center, a federal research organization dedicated to resolving human/wildlife conflicts.

The two organizations met simply enough. The institute asked the NWRC for their assistance in examining the university organization's research facilities, and to provide insights on how to construct research aviaries. The groups then moved beyond aviaries to discussing a wildlife situation both had been studying,

the nation's rising feral hog population. They realized that by combining their resources, they could examine this wildlife issue and others related to managing and eradicating wildlife diseases affecting livestock.

From 2004 to 2010, the NWRC brought a Southwest field station to the A&M-Kingsville campus to study wildlife diseases like cattle fever; pseudorabies, a neurologically-based virus; and brucellosis, a disease carried by feral pigs that can affect reproduction. It was the first time the NWRC had a field station specializing in wildlife disease issues.

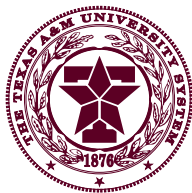
A&M-Kingsville alumnus Dr. Tyler A. Campbell served as the field station leader. He and the NWRC field station staff worked closely with the faculty and researchers of the institute during their time on campus. "The field station took its small staff and leveraged that into 17 experts at the university," says Dr. Allen Rasmussen, dean of the Dick and Mary Lewis Kleberg College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences.

The collaboration has gone beyond disease study to related wildlife issues. Some of those include charting the movements and range size of nilgai to delivering vaccine to white-tailed deer and gray foxes.

A field station is not currently on campus, but the collaborative research between the institute and NWRC continues in earnest. Rasmussen says studies on feral hogs and cattle fever tick eradication are scheduled to go on for several years and have national impact. ■

JASON MARTON is assistant director of public relations for Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

QUEST



THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

NOVEMBER 2011 VOL. 3, ISSUE 2

AgriLife Research develops thriving plants even in Texas' unpredictable climate

BY ROBERT BURNS



The Texas Superstar® program predates *American Idol* by 13 years, but the concept is essentially the same: pick the best and brightest talent. Started in 1989, the Superstar® program is only for talented plants, not people, says Dr. Brent Pemberton, Texas AgriLife Research horticulturist and chair of the Texas Superstar® executive board.

Every year, the Superstar® executive board designates plants that are not only beautiful, but also perform well for consumers and growers throughout Texas. Superstar® plants must be resistant to high Texas temperatures, require minimal soil preparation and need little to no pesticides. They must also be easy to propagate, which ensures the plants are widely available throughout Texas, and reasonably priced.

Nominations for the Superstar® program come from executive board members and suggestions from the horticultural community. The plants for the program are chosen after undergoing extensive trials at Texas AgriLife Research sites throughout Texas, including College Station, Lubbock, Overton, and San Antonio.

"These sites represent major differences in ecological zones near major population centers in the state," Pemberton says.

Despite its benefits to consumers, the program is still trying to build consumer awareness. A 2010 survey by Texas A&M University found that only 15 percent of Texas consumers were aware of the Texas Superstar® brand, but 88 percent of those aware of the brand said they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the products' performance.

Pemberton said Superstars® are technically a marketing assistance program that benefits the commercial horticultural industry as well as Texas consumers. The program is credited for a \$15 million increase in wholesale plant sales during the last 10 years, a success story Pemberton attributes to a partnership that includes AgriLife Research, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas A&M departments of horticultural sciences and agricultural economics, the department of plant and soil science at Texas Tech University, the Texas Department of Agriculture, and the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association. ■

ROBERT BURNS is a communications specialist for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

More information on the Texas Superstar® program can be found at texassuperstar.com



Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo

A out-of-state plant breeder thought the brilliant, hot fluorescent fuchsia of the Pink Flare hibiscus too gaudy for Tennessee. But in 2010, Texas Superstar® executive board members decided the variety would play well in Texas, especially in the southwest where sun washes out more subtle colors.