

Students given chance to say 'thank you' to community through service on Saturday

Story by Amy Daugherty • Photo Illustration by Guy Rogers & Sallie Turner

"One big day...One big thanks...One Big Event." What started in 1982 with six Texas A&M students cleaning out a local cemetery has transformed into the largest single-day student-run service project in the nation, and this Saturday will mark its 18th year.

The Big Event was originally proposed by Joe Nussbaum, an executive vice president in The Student Government Association. Nussbaum's original idea was a one-day community service project for Texas A&M students.

He envisioned The Big Event as a way to thank the Bryan-College Station community for supporting A&M students throughout the year. Nussbaum presented his idea to the Student Senate, and The Big Event was born.

Since its inception, The Big Event has grown larger and more popular thanks in part to strong organization and public involvement.

Tiffany Tsumpis, community interest committee member and a sophomore biomedical science major, said merchants in the area play a large role in The Big Event's funding.

"We go to local businesses and ask for support to help us out throughout the year," Tsumpis said. "With the money, we buy paint and new supplies and save money for the next year."

Tsumpis said there are over 500 projects to be done this year. She also noted that it is not necessary to belong to an organization to help out.

"People come individually and in groups and we match people up," Tsumpis said. "It's a good

way to meet people. Any Aggie who wants to come out can help."

She said The Big Event does not just benefit the less fortunate.

"We don't just help the needy, but also the elderly," Tsumpis said. "They [the elderly] love us to come out and keep them company."

Bowie Hogg, student involvement committee sub-chair and a sophomore business management major, said the committees work many extra hours each day.

for a garage sale."

Hogg said The Big Event rarely says no to a job.

"We've never just turned down a job," Hogg said. "Every job we get we try to do. Any job we can physically do, we do. We get interesting job requests."

Ashley McAlpine, a Big Event staff assistant and a sophomore industrial engineering major, said she plays a part in The Big Event's job search and match-up process.

"We [staff assistants] come on at the semester and help out checking job sites," McAlpine said. "We determine how many jobs there are and how many people and supplies we need."

McAlpine said the job request process is easily accessible and The Big Event makes every effort to fulfill the requests.

"The job sites are anywhere on campus," McAlpine said. "You fill out a job request form and as long as you get it in on time, we'll get someone out there."

McAlpine said she volunteered last year and loves being a part of The Big Event.

"Last year we raked leaves and we dug up rocks out of a yard," McAlpine said. "I love it and I really enjoy working with all the people and working towards something. I can't wait to see it all pay off on Saturday."

Tsumpis said she finds her work with The Big Event very rewarding.

"It's amazing, going out and helping people," Tsumpis said. "It's the one chance we have to go out to the Bryan-College Station area and tell them 'thank you.' We're really proud of it."

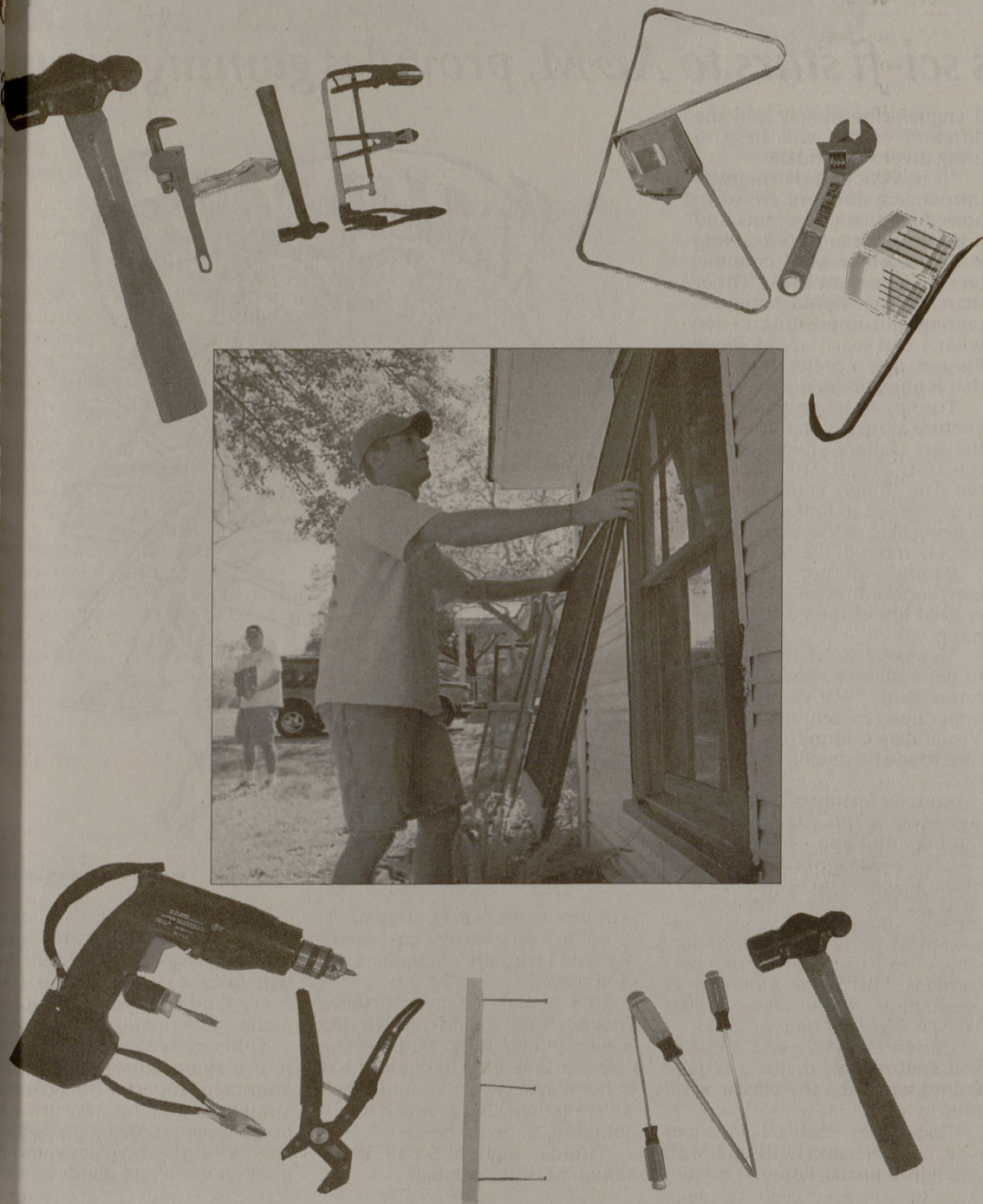
"We go to Margaret Rudder's house each year and clean windows."

— Bowie Hogg
Student involvement committee sub-chair

"What our committee does is if jobs aren't finished, we break up and work from three until six to finish jobs," Hogg said. "At 4 p.m. our whole committee is gone. We work the whole year on it [The Big Event]."

Hogg said nearly 4,600 students are signed up to participate this year. The projects taken on range from painting to laying concrete.

"The majority [of the jobs] are painting, inside and outside," Hogg said. "We do lots of garden work, we cleaned gutters last year. We do everything. We go to Margaret Rudder's house each year and clean windows. We rake leaves. We're going to a church this year and helping them set up



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