

Meet the Parents

Parents' Weekend gives students a chance to show appreciation

By Amanda Trimble
THE BATTALION

One driving force on this campus that often goes unnoticed, is the parents who support, provide and influence their children who attend this university.

When Jesse-Larou Walsh, a junior math major, was on the Winter Spirit of Aggieland Committee, her mom came down to help decorate the campus with her three years ago on November 19, the weekend after Bonfire collapsed.

"After wrapping the poles on Main Drive, we had a bunch of maroon ribbon left over," Walsh said. "So we went over to the Bonfire site to put bows up on the orange safety fence. We were just going to put up a few, but we kept going."

Walsh said her mother sat in the polo fields making bows for her committee and for visitors for five hours that day.

"It was more my mom that kept us going," Walsh said. "We would say, 'OK, that's good enough,' but she said, 'No, no, I've got more, let's keep going.'"

Parents' Weekend starts today, and Aggie parents are traveling to meet their kids' friends and learn more about Texas A&M and its traditions, and some of these parents bleed maroon like their children do. This weekend is one of many during the year when they make the trip to Aggieland, whether it is to attend a football game or just be there for their kids.

"I think the coolest part is that they come up for the most random events," said Elizabeth Mudd, a senior sociology major. "They love the whole aura of A&M and just love to come be a part of it. I know they're going to miss coming up here when I graduate."

After Bonfire fell, Mudd's parents showed their support in her hometown. Instead of the normal Christmas decorations that year, her mother made a memorial maroon and white ribbon out of garland and lit it up with a spotlight for everyone to see.

"Every year they usually put a Christmas saying on the fence, but that year it was just the memorial," Mudd said. "When Bonfire fell, it affected both my parents very deeply."

Devoted Aggie parents are always making the extra effort to be involved with students and support A&M. Scott Jarvis, a agriculture education graduate student, said his parents drove nine hours to make it to every home game.

"They would come in to town and have cookouts for everybody on the Quad," Jarvis said. "They loved hanging out with the students and getting to know everyone. And of course, the greatest thing for a college kid is free food, so all my friends loved it."

When Jarvis' parents were named Parents of the Year three

years ago, his mom could not believe they had a chance of winning such an honor.

"We were at the awards ceremony and they were introducing last year's Parents of the Year," Jarvis said. "Mom laughed and said she'd never have a chance of winning something like that. I thought, 'OK, so this is going to be a big surprise.'"

Jarvis said what makes his parents special is the added support they give to his friends.

"They came down for everything me or my sister ever did. You name it, they were there," Jarvis said. "But what made them stand apart is that they were parents to so many other kids. They made sure everybody had parents down here whether it was my parents or their own parents."

Erin Walters, a senior finance major, said her parents are exceedingly devoted to her life at A&M. Last year during Parents' Weekend, Walter's parents were named Parents of the Year for 2001-2002.

"When they come up for a game, it's more like an event," Walters said. "They go to the march-in beforehand, stay through the entire game whether it's a close one or a blow out, and then always invite as many Aggie students as they can to dinner afterwards."

"It's not the football game that they look forward to as much as it is the chance to enjoy time with their children and their Aggie friends," Walters said.

Sometimes a parent's devotion to A&M and their children takes them to unlikely places. Cheryl Winkler, a sophomore political science major, remembered being away at Fish Camp for her 19th birthday.

"I was a Fish Camp counselor, and my parents drove up to Lakeview and totally surprised me," Winkler said. "I was so shocked."

Winkler's parents brought her a birthday cake big enough for her camp to share, complete with green fish and

green writing for her camp color.

"They brought the cake and then they left," Winkler said. "I asked them to stay and they said, 'No, we don't want to interfere.' All they wanted was to bring me the cake and wish me a happy birthday. They drove five hours just for that."

Often the dedication Aggie parents have for A&M comes from being A&M alumni. Winkler's father is Class of 1971.

"I think his love for A&M has been passed down to all of his kids," Winkler said. "Being here left an impact on his life and he wants it to be the same for today's students. He wants them to love A&M the same way he does."



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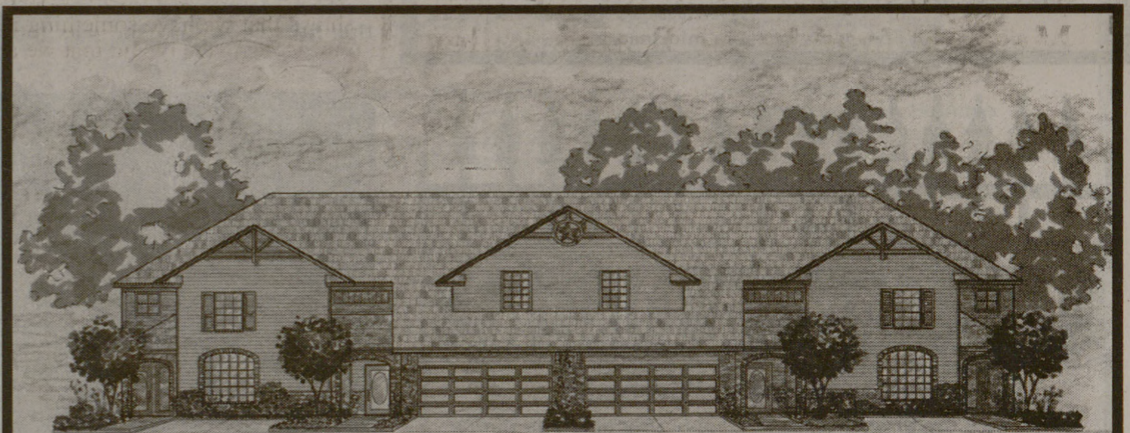


The President's home is located on Throckmorton Street across from Duncan Drill Field.



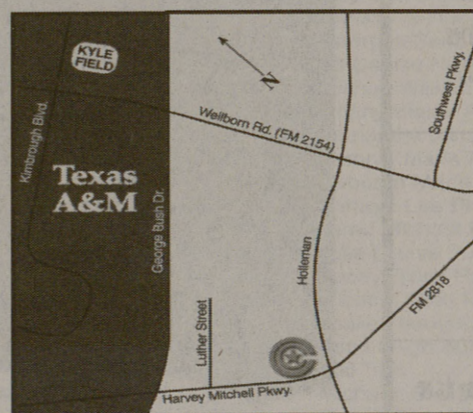
The Gilchrist-Southerland residence is located at 100 Throckmorton Street across from the Sanders Corps of Cadets Center.

Light refreshments will be served at both homes.



PARENTS' WEEKEND
APRIL 12-14

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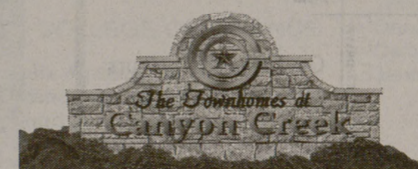


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