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Families of students recognized at Muster who did not earn an Aggie Ring receive a special ring crest.

Ring crests offered to families of students honored at Muster

By Bethany Irvine

△ Last weekend's Aggie Ring Day signified a celebration of tradition for 4,811 students and their families. But for loved ones of the 10 current students who died throughout the 2014-2015 academic year, their sons-and daughters never had the chance to order or receive their Aggie gold.

The Association of Former Student's Ring Remembrance Ceremony aims to provide a measure of this tradition to the families of the deceased. The ceremony takes place on the afternoon of Muster, and Aggie Ring crests with the student's name are presented to each family in order to mark their time at Texas A&M.

Thomas Bratcher, general studies sophomore, died in August and is one of the students who will be commemorated at the ceremony. Bratcher was a member of Squadron 2 in the Corps of Cadets. He was involved with his church and was a member of the Corps basketball team. Thomas Bratcher lived through selflessness; an index card taped to his bathroom mirror read, "It's not about me."

His mother, Theresa Bratcher, said the ring crest represents a tangible piece of Thomas' time on campus.

"It's definitely an important thing to have the ring that Thomas would have had," Theresa Bratcher said. "It's a great way to honor his memory."

Theresa Bratcher said the entire university system, including the Association, has been very supportive through this difficult time.

"With all of the honor and tradition, that's why Thomas was drawn to A&M in the first place," Theresa Bratcher said. "You can tell they really care about preserving Thomas' memory."

Kathryn Greenwade, vice president of the Association of Former Students, said the program emerged in 2000 and came at the request of students' parents.

"Parents wanted something to remind them of their child's time in college but

the requirements of the Aggie Ring did not allow us to give them a ring," Greenwade said. "That's when we developed this program to provide a piece of the ring to the parents so that they could have a keepsake of their loved ones' time here at Texas A&M."

The Ring Remembrance Ceremony begins at 1:30 p.m. in the Clayton W. Williams Jr. Alumni Center. The students' families are presented the medallions and treated to a short reception during which they are able to connect with members of Texas A&M's Traditions Council.

"We have Traditions Council students who assist us in the presentation," Greenwade said. "What would typically happen is a student's name will be called and someone will take the piece, walk it to the parents and present it to them."

Alexandra Gonzalez, agribusiness senior and Traditions Council chairman, said her involvement in the 2012 Ring Remembrance ceremony was very memorable, as she worked with the same family during both Silver Taps and Muster.


"The family came in and immediately recognized me," Gonzalez said. "It was much more comforting for them to see a familiar face. During the ceremony I presented the mother the crest and it was very special to her, knowing that this is part of the Aggie Ring her son would have earned."

Gonzalez participated in the Ring Remembrance ceremony for three years and said it is important for the student body to be involved.

"Having the students present them the crest makes it very personal and is representative of the Aggie family," Gonzalez said.

Greenwade said she believes the Ring Remembrance Ceremony embodies A&M's core value of respect, and is a tradition that will carry on for years to come.

"It is something that we are honored to do, something that is meaningful to the Association and the Aggie family," Greenwade said.



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