MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW FOR
HOMECOMING & PARENTS’ WEEKEND
FEBRUARY 1 - 2, 2008

60 Years Strong!
Time for Celebration.

Homecoming and Parents’ Weekend is an ideal
time to renew acquaintances with classmates from
years past, engage yourself in learning how far the Is-
land University has prospered, and enjoy entertaining
events and special ceremonies that make everyone
proud to be Islanders. Parents of current students
find this a special time to get into the Islander spirit
as they watch their sons and daughters being honored at
the Official Ring Ceremony and spend a delightful evening
of top student talent at the renowned Islander Revue. And
on Saturday, Feb. 2, you can watch exciting hoops action
when the Islander Men’s Basketball team score big against
the Roadrunners of UT-San Antonio, and we celebrate with
the 60th Anniversary Sock Hop.

Mark your calendars and make your plans.
It’s a full weekend including:

- Reunion Group Presentations
- Islander Alumni and Parents Awards Brunch
- Campus Tours
- National Alumni Annual Meeting & Elections
- Meet the Prof Social
- 60th Anniversary Sock Hop
- Official Ring Ceremony
- 60th Anniversary Sock Hop
- Athletic Hall of Honor Dinner
- Islander Revue
- More details to come your way.

Keep up with the latest news on Homecoming and Alumni Events at:

www.IslanderNetwork.com
As president of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, I am proud of the University’s tremendous impact on job opportunities, the arts and culture, public education and the quality of life in the Coastal Bend.

While the community’s investment in the University made many years ago laid the framework for a two-way relationship that benefits us all, we should recognize how the University is personally invested in the greater community. Perhaps it’s as simple as thinking of the Coastal Bend as the University’s backyard laboratory, a beautiful convergence of the classroom, research and volunteerism.

Community engagement is one of the unifying themes of the University’s Momentum 2015 initiative. Engagement takes many faces, from student organizations volunteering to clean beaches and paint houses for Habitat for Humanity to wilderness programs developed by faculty and staff to teach people about our complex ecosystem.

Our faculty and students rescue marine animals, test water and air quality, and measure our fragile coastline. Our scientists provide the National Weather Service with detailed data for making forecasts. We train teachers and turn teachers into school administrators. We present musical and theatrical performances. Faculty and future nurses provide immunization and nutrition information, glucose screenings, and blood pressure checks at area events.

For 10 years the Early Childhood Development Center has prospered with its comprehensive, dual-language approach to teaching. And we’re now into the second year of the University Preparatory High School in Flour Bluff. The University holds Family Math Nights in area schools and literacy programs in the community. The Antonio E. Garcia Center works with families whose children are at risk and offers wellness and nutrition classes, as well as reading classes for adults.

The University’s business faculty conduct economic and tourism marketing studies and review the effects of projects on the environment. They also help non-profit organizations obtain much-needed grants.

The Art Museum of South Texas combines with the Weil Gallery and the Islander Art Gallery to bring the work of world-renowned artists to the community. The film department collaborates with South Texas Public Television to showcase cutting-edge short films and videos through the annual production, The Territory.

Increasing the community’s understanding of the economic market, enhancing public education, supporting families, providing health and wellness education, helping to keep the precious balance between the environment and the population, and developing arts and cultural awareness make for a long list for engagement within the community, as it should.
As the calendar rolls on and another year of school begins for students of all ages, it’s important to recognize the many opportunities to stay involved with your alma mater. Giving to the annual fund and attending homecoming events, graduations, or sporting events, among many others, help cultivate the relationships that make up our alumni family. And though we are so proud to see the phenomenal growth of our university take place, it’s vital that we as alumni grow our engagement as well.

Whether you were a full-time student in your early 20s or a part-time student in your 50s, I encourage you to maintain a relationship with your university. A great way to do this is to go to www.IslanderNetwork.com. This is a great tool for Islanders all over the country to stay in touch with classmates and keep up to date on Islander activities as well as many other alumni events.

Your time as a student may have ended, but I hope that your time as an active alum has just begun. “Go Islanders!”

Larry Olivarez, Jr. ’01

Have You Heard

Richard Rodriguez ’00 Criminal Justice is a special agent with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Federal Investigative Services in Houston. Richard recently completed his sixth year as a federal employee and enjoys his job very much. He is happily married, with two wonderful children.

Jennifer Catalani ’06 MA Psychology has worked with Nueces County Mental Health Mental Retardation for the past several years. Jennifer is now a facility investigator for Adult Protective Services.

Stephanie Salinas ’06 BS Biology is currently pursuing a master’s degree in counseling. She is excited to announce her engagement and plans to wed in April 2009.

Noel Vella ’82 BS Biology is director of development in the Office of Institutional Advancement at A&M-Corpus Christi. His son, Matthew, graduated this year from Foy H. Moody High School and is attending Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Marc Crespell ’95 MS Management moved home to Sitges, Spain, last year and is working with Dell. Marc and his wife had their second child, Christian, in February. His daughter, Kirsten, just turned 3.

Daniel Owen ’06 MA Psychology works at the Skyview Unit of the University of Texas Medical Branch Correctional Managed Care.

Dana Spaeth ’84 BBA Marketing and Management is a national accounts sales manager with PepsiCo. She recently won Pepsi’s “Ring of Honor” top sales award. She is married and has two children, Cassidy, 10, and Craig, 5. Her nephew, Anton Spaeth, is a third-year business major at A&M-Corpus Christi.

Alicia Gallegos-Gomez ’05 MS Curriculum and Instruction is a speech pathologist and educational diagnostician. She is a consultant in the area of Alzheimer’s and dementia for in-home training and communication skills to assist family members and caregivers to maintain the quality of life.

Alicia Valdez and John Hill enjoy their meal at the Islander Shrimp Boil Send-Off Party Tuesday, Aug. 7, at the Performing Arts Center. The shrimp boil, which welcomed incoming students to the Islander family, was sponsored by the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Alumni Association, the Parents’ Council and Islander Moms.

Evon English
Director of Alumni Relations
6300 Ocean Dr. USC 101
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
361.825.5787 or toll free 1.877.482.6822
Evon.English@island.tamucc.edu

THE ISLANDER • 2 • Fall 2007
Quest for a Pay Phone Leads to Successful Political Career for Alumnus Bob Gammage

Since graduating from the University of Corpus Christi more than 40 years ago, Bob Gammage has distinguished himself and his alma mater with a record of public service that has taken him from the state legislature to the nation’s capitol, and back to the Supreme Court of Texas.

But, as he reflects on his career, Gammage realizes that his life might have taken a completely different course if it hadn’t been for a seemingly insignificant incident back in 1963. That’s when Gammage, who had never even considered a life in politics, knew he had found his calling.

Although he wasn’t a member of the student senate, Gammage was asked to serve as the student ambassador to the office of University President W. A. Miller. One of his first tasks was to get a pay phone installed in the married student housing quarters so residents and their spouses who were looking for work could communicate with prospective employers. His first attempt was rebuffed by the University’s business manager. Undeterred, Gammage went directly to the president.

“President Miller marched out of his office and went directly to the business manager and told him to get a phone installed right away,” Gammage recalls. “I got a lot of satisfaction from being able to help the married students and I remember thinking that getting things done is a good way to live.”

Gammage earned his law degree from the University of Texas and an L.L.M. from the University of Virginia. He then joined the Army, doing a stint in Korea. He later became a captain in the Naval Reserve, where he served in the Intelligence Service and the Judge Advocate General Corps.

After returning to private life and setting up a law practice in Houston, Gammage was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1971. He immediately distinguished himself as one of the “Dirty Thirty,” a coalition of Democrats and Republicans whose insistence on pursuing the prosecution of state officials involved in the Sharptown Stock Fraud Scandal led to the bribery conviction of House Speaker Gus Mutscher and effectively ended the political careers of Gov. Preston Smith and Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes.

As a state senator from 1973 to 1976, Gammage championed open government reform and healthcare legislation. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1977 and, in 1979, was named Texas assistant attorney general. He was elected to the Texas Court of Appeals in 1982 and won election to the Texas Supreme Court in 1990. He returned to private practice in 1995, but reentered the political arena in 2006 as a candidate for governor in the Texas Democratic Primary.

When he speaks about the Island University today, Gammage still radiates the same pride of accomplishment that he felt when he was a student in the early 1960s.

“It takes a lot of time and effort on the part of many people, but what is on the island now is what we dreamed the University could be someday,” Gammage says. “Thanks to its outstanding faculty, diverse student population and its beautiful setting, the sky’s the limit for the Island University.”

Bob Gammage played football for the University of Corpus Christi more than 40 years ago.

RIGHT: Bob Gammage served as state senator from 1973 to 1976, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1977 and was named Texas assistant attorney general in 1979.
Already the first All-American in school history, Shadrack Songok became the only Islander athlete to win a national title when he won the 10,000 meters at the NCAA national Track and Field Championships in June.

The historic event also marked Songok’s third All-America performance in two years. The Islander junior finished fifth in the 5,000 meters at the NCAA Championships as a sophomore to earn All-America honors and, in spring 2006, was named to the All-America Cross Country team.

Several Islander athletes who excelled in their individual sports last spring have garnered honors for their performance in the classroom by being named to prestigious all-academic teams.

In track and field, distance runner Shadrack Songok and discus thrower Hickel Woolery were named to the 2007 United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Men’s Division I All-Academic Track and Field team.

Songok boasts a 3.33 grade-point average in chemistry. He was selected to the 2006 USTFCCCA All-Academic Cross Country team and was the Southland Conference Scholar-Athlete of the Year in track and cross country. Woolery, who placed 11th in the discus at the NCAA Championships, has a 3.28 grade-point average as a biomedical science major. Woolery also finished second in the discus at the Jamaican National Championship and competed in the Pan Am Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in late July. Fellow thrower Brent Bartz was named to the SLC All-Academic Team in track.

In baseball, Islander catcher Josh Plumaj boasted a perfect 4.0 grade-point average throughout his collegiate career. Plumaj just missed becoming the third first-team Academic All-American in baseball when he was named to the CoSIDA/ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America team. He was the lone representative for the Islanders on the Southland Conference All-Academic team.

To qualify for the USTFCCCA All-Academic team, an athlete must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.25 and obtain an NCAA automatic or provisional qualifying mark for the most recent indoor championships or an outdoor regional qualifying mark in their respective event.
UNIFORMS

Academic Teams

Men’s tennis player Andrey Kumantsov was named the 2007 Capitol One Southland Conference (SLC) Men’s Tennis Student-Athlete of the Year, while teammate Raul Morant-Rivas was named to the SLC All-Academic team.

Kumantsov, the lone senior on the team that won the 2007 SLC championship, has a 3.35 grade point average in finance. The Tula, Russia, native was named the SLC Player of the Year after achieving the highest individual ranking in school history at No. 31.

Morant-Rivas, who is from Barcelona, Spain, holds a 3.54 grade-point average in music. He became the first player in school history to qualify for a NCAA postseason tennis tournament when he advanced to the 2006 indoor and outdoor singles championships.

In women’s tennis, sophomore Erica Iriarte was named to the SLC Capital One All-Academic Second Team after posting a 3.81 grade point average in art. The San Jeronimo Lidice, Mexico, native has twice made the Islander Athletic Director’s Honor Roll and was named to the 2007 Southland Conference Commissioner’s Honor Roll.

Andrey Kumantsov was named the 2007 Capitol One Southland Conference Men’s Tennis Student-Athlete of the Year.

NEW FACES ON THE ISLAND

Perry Clark, a 28-year veteran of the coaching wars who has turned around two major college programs, is the new Islander head basketball coach. Clark spent the last three years as a commentator with Fox Sports Network and ESPN.

As a rookie head coach at Tulane in 1990, Clark led the Green Wave to a 15-13 record. In 11 seasons, he compiled a 185-145 record with three NCAA postseason appearances. He was named the NCAA Division I Coach of the Year in 1991 by the United States Basketball Writers Association and UPI. In 2000, Clark took over a faltering program at Miami and coached the Hurricanes to a 65-54 record over four seasons.

Softball coach Jake Schumann spent the last four seasons at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, where, last year, he guided the Javelinas to a 34-22 record. He coached the Javelinas to three 30-win seasons and the most by any coach in the school’s history.

Baseball coach Scott Malone comes to the Islanders after spending three years as an assistant coach at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. While at UNLV, he oversaw all aspects of the Rebels’ recruiting efforts and served as the team’s hitting instructor.

Tennis coach Steve Moore has been named Director of Tennis and will now oversee both the men’s and women’s programs. Last season, Moore was named SLC Coach of the Year after leading the Islanders to the conference championship.

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While things are looking up for the women’s basketball program, Coach Robert Robinson won’t know just how much better his team will be than a year ago until the second Saturday in December.

On Saturday, Dec. 8, the Islanders will take on the Texas Longhorns at 1:30 p.m. in the American Bank Center. And while the traditional powerhouse Longhorns are coming off two rare mediocre seasons by their standards, an Islander victory could be just what the young team needs to get the season off to a fast start.

“This is a great opportunity for us,” said Robinson, whose team will be hosting the Longhorns for the first time after three trips to Austin. “The game will be a huge draw for the city and our fans. It should be an exciting environment for women’s basketball in Corpus Christi. I think the team will be ready for the challenge.”

While the Islanders have just one returning starter in center, Elisa Beagle, they do return a trio of sophomores — Shaye Montgomery, Diandra Torres, and Dezirée Green — who gained valuable experience as freshmen reserves. Junior Sarah Davidson, who started four of the team’s first seven games before suffering an injury as a sophomore, and Mercedes Cooper, Lauren Smith and Faryn Bills are healthy after missing last season.

The Islanders will rely heavily on the experience of Beagle, a junior post who started nine games and played in 28 as a freshman, while playing in all 31 with 26 starts as a sophomore. In her second season, Beagle, who averaged 5.6 points and 5.9 rebounds a game as a freshman, scored 10.4 points a game while grabbing a team-best 7.8 rebounds per contest.

“Elisa is a powerful player who made an impact in the middle in each of her first two seasons,” says Robinson. “With a year in the league under her belt, I expect her to be a force for us in the paint this season.”

Robinson added a group of talented recruits for the upcoming season that will help the Islanders to fill the void left by the departed seniors from 2006-07. The group is led by all-state performer Jade Davis. Davis is joined by Nyeshia Adams, Jocelyn Taylor, and Adrienne Scott.

Elisa Beagle, pictured during a game last season, will take on the Texas Longhorns Saturday, Dec. 8, at the American Bank Center.
Successful Season Yields Bumper Crop of Recruits for New Islander Men’s Basketball Coach

Perry Clark’s biggest challenge after taking over the Islander men’s basketball program is to rebuild a team that is coming off the most successful season in the University’s history. But, despite the loss of four starters, with the stable of athletes he has at his disposal, he’s not “rebuilding” as much as “reloading.”

At the core of the Islanders 2007-2008 season is 7-foot, 265-pound center Chris Daniels, last season’s Southland Conference (SLC) Player of the Year. Daniels led the Islanders to the SLC Championship and the team’s first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance. Daniels, who averaged 15.3 points and seven rebounds a game, briefly flirted with entering the NBA after being named to the honorable-mention All-America team, before deciding to stay on the Island for his senior season.

Clark has a reliable group of five returning backups, including senior Manuel Johnson. And, with nine new talented faces taking the court this fall, the Islanders should be strong contenders to repeat as SLC champions.

“We are extremely pleased with our recruiting class. To come in this late and get the quality of players we did is a tremendous tribute to my staff,” Clark says.

Finding a point guard was an immediate concern when Clark hit the recruiting trail. He believes he got a good one in Tim Green, a 6-3, 190-pound point guard from Highland Community College in Freeport, Ill. While with the Cougars, he led his team to two regional championships and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) championship game. He was an all-conference performer, the Most Valuable Player of the NJCAA Tournament and an NJCAA All-American.

“We felt like we really took care of some immediate needs when we signed Tim,” Clark says. “He’s a veteran point guard with big time experience and proved himself a winner in both high school and junior college.”

The Islanders also picked up a big scorer in Shannon Shorter, a 6-4, 205-pound shooting guard from Westside High School in Houston, where he averaged 22 points, 13 rebounds and five assists per game. He was named to both the all-district first team and fourth team All-Greater Houston.

Clark dipped into the bottomless talent pool that is Chicago high school basketball for his final two recruits and came up with two all-state players. Combo guard Antonio Topps comes from Leo High School, where he made the All-State team after averaging 18 points, four rebounds and five assists a game as a senior. Demond Watt, a 6-6, 205-pound forward from Thornton Fractional North High School, averaged 18 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks. He was named to the all-state team as a junior and senior.

The four signees join freshmen Michael Behrens, Isaiah Jackson, Filip Toncinic, Kevin Perkins and Justin Reynolds on the roster. In addition, Clark has hired former Iowa assistant Billy Garrett as associate head coach. Brian Merritt, who spent last year at Hampton University in Virginia, spent the three previous seasons as an assistant coach, scout and recruiter at the University of Louisville.

Chris Daniels was last season’s Southland Conference Player of the Year.
Smokers who try to give up cigarettes may suffer from episodic memory lapses due to nicotine withdrawal, according to a recently completed study by the Department of Psychology.

The study found that exposure to nicotine through tobacco use causes structural changes in the brain, especially those areas associated with memory. The result of this rewiring is that the brain relies on the presence of nicotine to function normally. When nicotine is withdrawn, these brain areas are not functioning at their normal level.

“Episodic memory is central to daily functioning,” says Dr. Paul Merritt, assistant professor of psychology, who headed the study. “It’s how we remember where we parked our cars, what happened in this morning’s meeting, and in some ways, what we are supposed to do later in the day – pick up the dry cleaning.”

Data collected by the University’s Psychology Department in summer and fall 2006 showed that 25 participants had an average reduction in memory performance of 20 percent following 24 hours of tobacco abstinence as compared with smoking normally. Data also found initial evidence that males and females may differ in the effects of nicotine withdrawal on memory.

“Changes in cognitive functioning play an important role in why people fail when they attempt to quit smoking,” Merritt says. “Understanding this process and incorporating this knowledge into treatment regimens is critical in the battle against tobacco use.”

Merritt points out that the findings offer an opportunity to understand the biology of memory functions and to potentially reveal treatments for memory loss by targeting the same neural pathways as nicotine. He stresses that further study must be conducted to determine if episodic performance improves after a period of time.

“Understanding this impairment is a central concern for smoking cessation efforts. Individuals may have difficulty quitting smoking because of a reduction in their memory, while many report feeling ‘spacey’ during withdrawal,” notes Merritt.
Cowboy Christmas to Ring in Holiday Season

The Furgason Bravo! Series for the Performing Arts will ring in the holiday season on a festively nostalgic note when cowboy poet and musician Michael Martin Murphey brings his innovative “Cowboy Christmas” show to the Performing Arts Center Tuesday, Dec. 4, at 7:30 p.m.

The concert, which played to sold-out audiences in Murphey’s two previous appearances at the Performing Arts Center, is one of four in the 2007-2008 Furgason Bravo! Series for the Performing Arts. Murphey, who initiated his annual Christmas tour in 1987, topped the record charts in 1975 with his ballad “Wildfire” and is one of the most respected singers/songwriters in both pop and country and western music.

Murphey’s “Cowboy Christmas” is the second of four eclectic concerts in this year’s Furgason Bravo! Series. The Alley Cats, America’s premier doo-wop group, opened the season in September. On Tuesday, Feb. 12, the world famous Glenn Miller Orchestra will present “Celebrating America in a Patriotic Mood,” with an evening of favorite anthems. “The Best of Second City: One Nation, Under Blog” tour will wrap up the series on Saturday, April 5, with a hilarious combination of skits and improvisations.

For more information on the Furgason Bravo! Series for the Performing Arts go to http://pac.tamucc.edu/bravo0708.html.

Islander Lights to Illuminate Campus for Holidays

The campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will shine along Ocean Drive and across Corpus Christi Bay when the switch is thrown on the second Islander Lights Celebration Friday, Nov. 30, in front of the Performing Arts Center. Last year, in conjunction with the evening’s festivities, the University’s Office of Student Affairs and campus organizations collected nearly 1,000 children’s presents and $1,157.50 for the Wishes and Dreams Toy Drive.

The buildings of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi came alive when University President Flavius Killebrew and Charles Patton, president of AEP, threw the switch to illuminate the campus during the first “Islander Lights” celebration. The second annual Islander Lights is set for November 30 outside the Performing Arts Center. The new University holiday tradition is part of an evening of festivities that will include food, entertainment and an opportunity to donate to the “Wishes and Dreams” toy drive.
The Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a $1.5 million endowment to support teaching and research fellowships for scientists from Mexico and Cuba.

The Furgason Fellowships, named in honor of retiring HRI Executive Director Robert Furgason, were made possible by a pledge of $1.5 million from the families of philanthropist Edward Harte and attorney Jonathan Hornblower.

“The countries that depend on the Gulf of Mexico must work together to assure the long-term economic and ecological sustainability of the region,” says University President Flavius Killebrew. “These generous fellowships from the Harte and Hornblower families are a major step forward in our goal to erase all boundaries and work together to better manage this vital asset for today and tomorrow.”

“The Harte Research Institute was created in 2000 to encourage a tri-lateral approach to understanding and protecting the Gulf of Mexico’s ecosystem, which is a vital component of all three nations’ economies. Currently, Jorge Brenner-Guillermo and Ivonne Cruz, doctoral students from Mexico, are working with HRI researchers. Through the Furgason Fellowship program, other scientists from Mexico and Cuba will work with the HRI in the future.

“This program fosters cooperation, collegiality, and collaboration among the marine scientists in the nations around the Gulf of Mexico,” says Harte. “None of the science institutes from the United States, Cuba and Mexico can make much difference operating independently, but together they can address the critical problems related to the Gulf and together seek appropriate solutions.”
Dr. Robert R. Furgason, executive director of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, has announced his retirement effective Dec. 31.

Furgason served as the University's president from 1990 to 2004 before becoming the first HRI director. Since its inception in 2004, the HRI has become the premier research institute for advancing the long-term sustainability and conservation of the Gulf of Mexico. Through its trilateral relationship with Mexico and Cuba, the HRI has established an agenda to promote excellence in conservation, research and innovative public policy.

“The work of Bob Furgason will remain in the hearts and minds of many,” says University President Flavius Killebrew. “His vision and hard work laid a strong foundation for us to build upon as Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi takes its place among the nation’s leading universities in marine research and policy.”

Philanthropist Edward H. Harte, whose $46 million endowed gift paved the way for the Institute’s creation, says that Furgason, while president of A&M-Corpus Christi, participated in the incubation of the ideas behind the Harte Research Institute.

“Bob Furgason has been pivotal to the establishment and success of the Harte Research Institute,” says Harte. “He has been part of everything we have done, and we owe him a great debt.”

As head of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, Furgason was instrumental in bringing leading oceanic experts from the academic, government and private sectors to Corpus Christi for the first State of the Gulf of Mexico Conference in 2005. The Summit, the first of its kind to address issues specifically related to the Gulf, drew more than 300 participants. In addition, HRI researchers are collecting data for the 50-year update of “Bulletin 89–The Gulf of Mexico–Its Origins, Waters and Marine Life” which was originally compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1954.

“It has been my pleasure and privilege to be part of the University over the years and to work with many dedicated faculty, staff and students,” says Furgason.

Within the community, Furgason and his wife, Gloria, have been tireless champions for the performing arts, leading fundraising efforts to expand the South Texas Institute for the Arts and to build the University’s $18 million Performing Arts Center. Each year, the Bob and Gloria Furgason Bravo! Series for the Performing Arts brings internationally known artists to the center.

GIVING OVER AND ABOVE

Joe and Ruth Sheinberg created a lasting partnership with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi several years ago by establishing an endowed scholarship for undergraduate students. “Scholarships are often the key to bringing the best and brightest students to A&M-Corpus Christi, and an endowment makes a lasting gift,” the Sheinbergs say. This year the Sheinbergs strengthened their scholarship endowment through a generous gift using funds from an IRA. “We love this University, and we believe in going over and above to support many generations of students.”

If you are over 70-1/2 years of age, you can make a special “over and above” charitable gift from your IRA up to $100,000 through the end of 2007. Because this IRA rollover is not included in your income, the gift will be tax-free and have no impact on your other charitable gifts.

Learn more about life-long giving opportunities at: tamucc.giftlegacy.com or (361) 825-2763
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to reflect your master’s degree free of charge.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Alumni Association
Heart Gallery Photo Exhibit Gives Hope to Children Seeking Adoptive Families

The dozens of photographs selected for display during the Heart Gallery of South Texas each year reflect the hopes and dreams of children who wake up each morning wondering if this could be the day—the day that some caring family welcomes them into their home.

This year’s Heart Gallery, featuring photo displays of children seeking permanent homes, will open in early November at Jezebelle’s at the Art Center of Corpus Christi. The exhibition, which coincides with National Adoption Month, is a collaborative project between the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Spaulding for Children and the University’s Community Outreach Department.

The Heart Gallery highlights children who are considered more challenging to place because of their age (nine years or older) or because they are part of a sibling group that wants to be placed together. Visitors can view framed 12 inch by 16 inch photos and read a short biography of the child.

“Many of these children have been waiting for three years or more for that day to come, but it hasn’t come yet,” says Carole Peterson, director of Workforce Development and the adoptive mother of a teenage girl.

Photos for this year’s Heart Gallery were taken by graduate student Jennifer Arnold. In order to capture the children’s vitality, the photos were accompanied by biographical sketches written by students in Dr. Tom Murphy’s professional writing class. Arnold was unprepared for the attachment she developed with her subjects.

“This is not an exhibition about me and my photography, but an exhibition about the children,” says Arnold. “I am blessed to have been able to use my skills as a photographer to educate our public regarding the overwhelmed and underfunded foster care system. These kids have been through so much that it really makes me appreciate my family and realize how lucky I am.”

ABOVE: Graduate student Jennifer Arnold arranges a photo with Felix, a young boy included in the upcoming Heart Gallery exhibit.

BEHIND: Ashley (right), who hopes to be adopted, looks over Jennifer Arnold’s shoulder to see a photo preview.
Beta Theta Pi recently assisted in painting a home for Habitat for Humanity.

Volunteerism Strengthens Community and University Bond

The sun is just starting to rise on a winter morning when Seamus Nelson pulls up to a Habitat for Humanity house ready to work. The tall, lanky Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi senior wears a T-shirt, tattered jeans and work boots.

On this particular Saturday, the Student Government Association president met his Beta Theta Pi brothers to tackle a house-painting job for a deserving family.

“We’re all trying to fight that frat boy image through the philanthropy and fundraising we do in the community,” says Seamus, a 21-year-old speech communications major. “Projects such as this are good for the public to see, and they let people know that Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is playing an active role in making a better community. I want people to recognize my name, the name of my fraternity, and remember us as always willing to help.”

For inspiration, Seamus abides by the credo of three-time world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali: “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”

BACKYARD PHILANTHROPY

The house painting project is only one of several philanthropy/fundraising undertakings by Beta Theta Pi, which was recognized for the “Most Outstanding Philanthropy Project" at the 2006-2007 Greek Awards for its Third Coast Classic fishing tournament benefiting the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The tournament is just one of hundreds of collaborative connections the University supports to boost the quality of life for Coastal Bend residents and build a thriving urban environment.

Beta Theta Pi recently assisted in painting a home for Habitat for Humanity.
Examples such as these prove that education and community work hand-in-hand as students, faculty and staff step outside the classroom to utilize their backyard as a laboratory. And with enrollment soaring to 8,600, the University is playing an ever increasing role in the city’s cultural, social and economic well-being. Today, approximately 100 religious, academic, social and professional service groups thrive on campus.

**OMEGA PHI ALPHA TEACHES BALANCE**

One of the most active sororities is Omega Phi Alpha, which requires its members to participate in approximately 15 service projects per semester. Only one exception is granted for emergencies, says sorority president Selena Armendarez.

“There hasn’t been one day that I haven’t done something for OPA,” says Selena, who juggles 16 semester hours and two part-time jobs. “Being in an organization such as Omega Phi Alpha has taught me how to balance everything in my life.”

Last school year, among other projects, the sorority prepared and served a dinner for the Women’s Shelter of South Texas residents; donated wrapped gifts for the Good Samaritan’s Operation Christmas Child; and participated in the Adopt-a-Beach cleanup. Selena says nonprofit organizations have never turned down her offers to help.

Helping others is a family affair for the 20-year-old Freer native whose parents have volunteered with their church for many years. While Selena was still in high school, her older sister Adriana, a past Omega Phi Alpha president at A&M-Corpus Christi, recruited her to help with the sorority’s service projects. By the time Selena came to the Island University, volunteering was something she did naturally.

Her favorite project is the annual Special Olympics Bowling Tournament, where she presents awards, assists bowlers when needed and receives hugs.

“Working with these kids touches my heart,” Selena says through tear-filled eyes. “They appreciate how we cheer them on, and their excitement is contagious.”

**CLASSES EMPHASIZE SERVICE LEARNING**

Selena took part in other service learning projects while a student in Dr. Alan Hansen’s small group communication course. The class focuses on service learning, meeting the community’s needs and producing civic-minded students.

“We have to make students realize that part of their education is having that sense of responsibility and belonging that comes with being active in the community,” Hansen says.

Service work is required in the small group communication class, but is optional in Hansen’s intercultural communication class. However, two-thirds of Hansen’s students do volunteer work for the Fighting to Rid Gangs in America Foundation, an after-school program on Corpus Christi’s west side. Students take concepts learned in class and devise interactive activities for the kids.

Recently, small group communication students held a Fighting to Keep Kids Healthy in America Day, which included nutrition and exercise workshops. They also developed promotional materials for the Head Start program, which provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families.

“These organizations are starved for help,” stresses Hansen. “I’m fortunate to be able to spot the needs of an organization and have access to students interested in fulfilling those needs.”

Other collaborations include working with the Gulf Coast Humane Society, Haas Middle School’s Family Life Center, Ronald McDonald House and Camp Aranzazu for youths with disabilities. While most groups contributed 35 hours a semester, others have exceeded 125 hours.

**GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP HELPS LOCAL NON-PROFITS**

Dr. Charles Etheridge, who teaches a grant writing workshop, is one of several technical and professional writing program professors utilizing the service learning approach.

Students do their part during a recent beach cleanup.
“The students use the skills from class in the real-world environment,” says Etheridge, associate professor of English. “It’s an engaged learning experience for students, and at the same time it benefits the community.”

Since 2005, Etheridge and his students have written successful grant applications totaling $253,000 on behalf of the Food Bank of Corpus Christi. The students acquired a $47,000 grant from Kraft Foods to build a room-sized refrigerator and a $5,000 grant from the Ed Rachal Foundation to purchase fitness equipment for the Kids Café to help prevent childhood obesity and diabetes.

Individuals, Etheridge, who this year received the Bill Crook Award for his work on behalf of the Food Bank, wrote a $160,000 grant to the Meadows Foundation that paid off the new Food Bank building. The grant saved the non-profit organization from having to dip into emergency funds.

“When I learned the grant was approved, I jumped so high, I could have broken a rib,” says Food Bank Executive Director Bea Hanson.

“Dr. Etheridge and his students have opened opportunities for me to obtain grants that I otherwise may not have had time to write. I have more time to be out in the community and do more future strategic planning because we’re growing very fast.”

Recent graduate Annette Benson has flexed her grant-writing muscle both in Etheridge’s class and on her own. She penned a successful $7,000 grant for the Corpus Christi Literacy Council to fund a curriculum to help learning-disabled adult learners. And, after graduating in May, Benson completed a $5,000 grant for the Neighborhood Centers of Corpus Christi to fund their upcoming summer camp for children in the city’s West Side.

“The grant writing class opened the doors for me to help out in my community,” says Annette, 25. “Had I not taken the class, I don’t think I would have put myself out there.”

WEST SIDE CENTER PROVIDES FAMILY SERVICES

Deep in the heart of the city’s West Side, 8-year-old Jamie Solis puts the finishing touches on her painting, a bright yellow sun with a smiley face. Jamie is one of several kids designing a poster for the Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority during a summer art camp co-sponsored by the Art Museum of South Texas and the Antonio E. Garcia Arts and Education Center.

Each year, the Garcia Center provides desperately needed family services to hundreds in the community from family health fairs to basic computer classes. The surrounding primarily Hispanic neighborhood suffers from poverty, unemployment, crime, substance abuse, illiteracy and a high teen pregnancy rate.

Through an array of programs and the University’s extensive resources, the Garcia Center nourishes the psychological, academic, artistic and socio-cultural identities of children and their families, while empowering them to become productive and responsible citizens. Since taking over the center in 2004, the College of Education has expanded the arts programming to include educational and counseling programming.

“But just about anyone can benefit from the variety of programming we offer,” says Roberto García, the Center’s director. “We want the University, the city and the community to be proud of the Center. The challenge is getting the word out.”

Each week during the school year, approximately 40 students drop by for the Arts-After-School Program’s tutoring, mentoring and hands-on arts activities. The program also includes America Reads, part of a larger University program that engages undergraduate students to tutor children age five to 12 who read below their grade level.

More than 600 families have benefited from the Life Enhancement & Academic Direction (L.E.A.D.) counseling program that aids adjudicated and at-risk youth. The L.E.A.D. program’s three components – family connectivity, healthy interactions and academic success – are all staffed by College of Education graduate students.

“Many of these parents don’t know where to turn for help,” García explains. “It helps that we have counseling students providing services. The biggest change I see by the end of the program is the parents are so grateful.”

SCIENCE RULES! EXPO REACHES OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

For the past five years, the University has reached out to West Oso I.S.D. fifth-grade students through the ScienceRules! Expo, a joint project by A&M-Corpus Christi students, faculty and local professionals that provides a varied snapshot of college science.

For each year on the first day of school, kids are already asking about going to A&M-Corpus Christi,” says Dr. Suzzette Chopin, professor of biomedical sciences and organizer of the annual event. “The students have heard so much about the expo through sisters, brothers, cousins and friends that they can hardly wait to experience it for themselves.”

The morning of the expo, students are bussed to the University Center, where they divide into groups and visit 14 booths that feature bubbling experiments, demonstrations, robotic cars and microscopes stations with biological samples to view. At the end of the day, the students vote for their favorite presentation.
According to Chopin, thank you letters pour in and are signed “I love the Islanders” and “Your future student.” One student, fascinated by the “germs” on her hands under black lights, writes, “I think it would be really awesome if my baby sister who’s in first grade would get the chance to visit your school in about four years.”

While the fifth-grade students learn about various areas of science, A&M-Corpus Christi students serve as role models to shape young minds and get area youth excited about science, Chopin says.

At the most recent expo in March, Julie Fisher, 21, set up optical illusion stations for the kids to explain the visual process and demonstrate how the brain transmits what we see.

“Most kids think science is for dorks,” says Julie, a biomedical science major. “We love showing them science can be for anyone and it’s a lot of fun.”

TEACHING ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE CLASSES RAISES AWARENESS

Before taking a class on teaching environmental science at the University, Elizabeth Rodriguez had no idea that Corpus Christi is the nation’s “birdiest city,” with more than 240 species. That’s one of many topics covered in the two-week course that the West Oso Junior High School science teacher will funnel back to tomorrow’s environmentalists, her students.

This summer, Elizabeth was one of 15 life-vest-clad teachers who rode in air and aluminum hull boats across the Aransas Channel to tour Lighthouse Lakes in Port Aransas. They were accompanied by guides from the Texas General Land Office’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program. On the trip, she learned how the agency responds to oil spills in the marine environment, knowledge she is excited about passing on to her students.

“Many of my students have never had the opportunities to observe the area’s natural resources,” says Elizabeth, 23. “I would like to schedule field trips and make the learning experience as real as possible for the kids.”

In Teaching Environmental Science (TES) I and II, teachers take field trips to area industries such as the Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Dupont, OxyChem, Valero Refinery, Sherwin Alumina and the J.C. Elliot Landfill to learn about environmental protection. The summer classes are taught by Drs. Denise Hill and Margaret Bolick in the College of Education and Flour Bluff Middle School teacher Cliff Strain.

Strain says that, after taking the course, teachers can teach a variety of subjects because they better understand the industrial process, how wetlands are used as transportation highways for certain products and how animals may be affected.

“Both classes take samples of the soil and seine the saltwater in the bays and estuaries,” Hill states. “We hear complaints about seaweed, but few people take time to look at the shrimp, flatworms, crabs and fish that live in the seaweed. Nature is beautiful.”

According to Bolick, since the first TES course was initiated in 1993, between 450 and 500 teachers have taken the lessons they’ve learned back to the classroom, impacting an estimated 10,000 students.

“Each summer, the teachers tell us that this is the most fun they have had in a university course,” Bolick says. “They take that attitude back to their students and are better prepared to promote an informed, balanced view of environmental issues.”

Helping numerous non-profit organizations, providing nurturing programs for children, cleaning up beaches and painting Habitat for Humanity homes are just a handful out of hundreds of activities that reflect A&M-Corpus Christi’s commitment to community involvement. At the same time, students like Seamus Nelson are “paying their rent” and setting the standard for those who will follow.
Since its inception in 1995, The University’s Women’s Center for Education and Service has joined with groups from other institutions of higher learning across the country to address many gender issues, but none more important than the problem of violence, both at home and throughout the world.

“When women involved in an abusive domestic situation come to us for help, we act as their advocate to help them get through the system,” says Rhonda Williamson, director of the Women’s Center. “We do our best to provide the help they need without them having to go to different agencies and relive the trauma by telling their story over and over.”

The Center works closely with the City of Corpus Christi, Planned Parenthood, the Women’s Shelter of South Texas, the YWCA and other organizations. After learning more about the victim’s situation, Williamson says, the Women’s Center staff explains what resources, both on-and-off campus, are available and, if necessary, connects them with a safe haven. In addition to the women who come to the center for help, others call anonymously seeking “advise for a friend.” Beyond the immediate need for protection and shelter, many women in destructive relationships need counseling for issues such as long-term sexual abuse that may have begun in childhood.

“Every 12 seconds a woman is beaten in this country. A woman is killed every six hours,” Williamson points out. “If we don’t educate people about these issues and empower women to work at eliminating the violence in their lives, this terrible fact won’t change.”

For the past several years, the University’s Women’s Center for Education and Service has participated in “V-Day,” a global movement to promote awareness of violence against women and girls including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual slavery. Proceeds from “V-Day” events across the United States have made it possible to open the first women’s shelters in Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan and South Asia.

Through “V-Day” campaigns, local volunteers and college students produce annual benefit performances of “The Vagina Monologues” to raise funds for anti-violence groups within their own communities. Last year, more than 2,000 “V-Day” benefit events were presented by volunteer activists in the United States and 76 countries around the world. Last year, the University’s production, which included a silent auction, drew more than 1,200 supporters during its two-night run.

Each April the Women’s Center observes Sexual Abuse Awareness Month by participating in the Clothesline Project, a national initiative to honor victims and survivors of intimate violence. During the month, women’s groups at the local, state and national levels display shirts made by victims as a testimony to the abuse they have suffered and how it has affected their lives. The Clothesline Project is repeated in October as part of the center’s Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“The shirts designed by these women are more than a symbol of the conflict and turmoil they have endured,” says Williamson. “By making a shirt, they are adding their voice to the growing chorus dedicated to exposing the horrific acts perpetrated against women around the world.”

University students perform “The Vagina Monologues” during the National “V-Day” observance, a global movement to promote awareness of violence against women and girls.
When the Nueces County Adult Probation Department asked Laszlo Fulop to put together an orientation video for new offenders, he saw it as an opportunity for students in his advanced video projects class to gain some real-world experience.

Fulop, assistant professor of communication and theatre, began collecting requests for community-oriented videos. This spring, the class produced public service announcements for nine local agencies and organizations.

“These are great projects that connect students to professionals in the outside world,” Fulop says. “Some of the videos may be shown on TV, and that will look good on their résumés.”

A 30-second video created for the Corpus Christi Police Department reiterates the message “Don’t become a victim of sexual assault. Think before you drink.” One of the strong video images is a flashing calendar to show that a rape is committed every other day in Corpus Christi.

“We were totally taken back by how incisive and detailed the video was and the message it portrayed,” says Commander David Torres, who hopes to work with more of Fulop’s students in the future. “It’s a very strong message and it was done in such a way that it really catches your attention.”

Laszlo Fulop, assistant professor of communication and theatre, teaches the advanced video projects class.
A driver slides behind the wheel of his high-powered sports car and starts the engine. His heart begins to race when he puts the pedal to the metal. There are few limits as he hits the long ribbon of highway that stretches ahead.

While the design and engineering that go into making an automobile have evolved over the years, the driving experience and the excitement it generates haven’t changed since Henry Ford launched his Model T in the early 1900s. Today, whether the car is a Pinto or a Porsche, drivers can be equally connected to the driving experience.

“The automobile offers one of the last refuges of true freedom in a much bureaucratized order of society,” says Dr. David Blanke, associate professor of history. “The idea of being able to hit the road is very emotionally resonant in America. We’re an extremely mobile society and cars have made us that way.”

The love affair Americans share with their automobiles is explored by Blanke in his latest book “Hell on Wheels: The Promise and Peril of America’s Car Culture, 1900-1940.” In the book, Blanke examines America’s changing cultural perceptions of the car and how it pulled society in two contradictory emotional directions: exhilaration in personal mobility versus anxiety over public safety. By investigating who owned cars, how they drove, and what kinds of accidents occurred, he shows how Americans sought to reconcile this paradox, a struggle which continues to this day.

“This is not a book about cars, it’s a book about driving and drivers,” Blanke clarifies. “If you try to understand American culture without understanding driving you’re leaving a significant hole in your understanding of 20th century American life.”

As a cultural historian who also penned “The 1910s: American Popular Culture through History” and “Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest,” Blanke communicates the idea that driving, like religion, television and sports, has a tremendous impact in our culture.

But while the automobile plays such a vital role in our American freedoms, Blanke explains, it’s also the greatest single source of accidental death, claiming 3.2 million victims over the last 100 years.

“How do you have this intense love affair with a device that is responsible for more deaths than all military actions in our history, combined?” That’s the central question Blanke explores in his 312-page book.

By the 1920s, America’s response to the automobile had shifted from excitement to outrage at the “flivverboobs” and “motor morn-s” recklessly abusing their newly acquired driving freedom. Fear of accident-prone motorists triggered driving restrictions, bettered driving training, safety reform and improved road and car design, Blanke says.

Blanke also draws on extensive research into public safety studies, insurance records and drivers’ personal stories. He explains why the car, a transportation option which emerged in competition with the horse, bicycle and railroads, wins.

“The love affair and the response to accidents is really what resonate with most people,” Blanke says. “We all understand the pleasures of driving as well as the frustrations and the threats. This book is about putting it into a historical context.”

“The automobile offers one of the last refuges of true freedom in a much bureaucratized order of society.”

David Blanke
In May 1942, just six months after the Axis powers’ declaration of war on the United States, the German submarine U-507 sits in the Gulf of Mexico waiting for an unsuspecting victim. Its patience is soon rewarded as the freighter Alcoa Puritan sails directly into the U-boat’s path.
After missing with two torpedoes, the submarine surfaces and opens fire on the unarmed vessel with its deck guns, crippling the ship’s steering system. The freighter’s captain gives the order to abandon ship just before the Alcoa Puritan with its 6,795 tons of cargo sinks to the bottom of the sea.

More than 60 years later, the ruins of the Alcoa Puritan and five other ships sunk in the Gulf of Mexico were discovered during a pre-drilling survey for a major oil company. Dr. Thomas Shirley, endowed chair for biodiversity for conservation science for the Harte Research Institute, was part of an international team of biologists and archeologists who studied the sites of six sunken ships to collect valuable information about the viability of using old oil rig platforms as deepwater reefs.

The team of multidisciplinary explorers from a number of universities and agencies was assembled by the Mineral Management Service (MMS), Office of Ocean Exploration (OE) and the National Oceanic Partnership Program (NOPP). Shirley’s task was to find and document vital new information about life in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Before oil companies can begin drilling, studies must be conducted to make sure that natural habitats are not destroyed either at the site or where the lines lead back to shore,” says Shirley. “While surveying, they discovered the ships at various depths which gave us an unprecedented opportunity to see if deep-water artificial reefs will produce additional fish and invertebrate communities.”

The team of scientists focused on the potential of deep water oil and gas structures to create suitable habitat for marine life. The team’s research resulted in a report titled “Deepwater Program: The Archaeological and Biological Analysis of World War II Shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico; A Pilot Study of the Artificial Reef Effect in Deepwater.” On May 17, the six principal investigators of the project were honored with NOPP’s “Excellence in Partnering” award.

Far from being a detriment to marine life, the submerged structures serve as habitat that attracts fish, which breed and multiply in the environment. Scientists discovered that artificial reefs attract fish communities up to a depth of about 2,500 feet and create habitats for invertebrates at even greater depths. According to Shirley, that’s good news for oil companies drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Oil rigs are being decommissioned at a rate of about 100 a year and, with the oil companies drilling in deeper Gulf waters, it is economically and ecologically advantageous to remove the topsides and leave the deep water portion intact,” says Shirley. “By doing this, the oil companies save money, a portion of which goes into the ‘Rigs for Reefs’ program. Even those oil and gas wells in deeper water, without platforms extending to the bottom, still have large structures on the bottom that are similar in size to shipwrecks.

Shirley’s study of deepwater habitats is also linked to the 50-year update of “Bulletin 89: The Gulf of Mexico- Its Origin, Waters, and Marine Life” compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1954. When completed, the update by the University’s Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies will make the Gulf of Mexico one of the most extensively studied bodies of water in the world.

“Because the undersea world is the least studied part of the Earth’s environment, the vast majority of species out there haven’t been described or defined,” Shirley points out. “Every cruise I go on, most of what I see hasn’t been identified. But just because something’s rare or undiscovered doesn’t mean it’s not important to the environment.”

Doctoral student Aaron Baldwin, now an assistant professor at Sheldon Jackson University in Sitka, Alaska, helped Shirley on the cruise. Graduate student Morgan Kilour used the cruise for her thesis research.

Shirley joined the HRI in July 2005. A former professor of invertebrate biology at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, he has conducted extensive research and participated in graduate education in the marine sciences. He has also served as principal investigator on numerous manned submersible research projects and published and lectured extensively.
AutoCheck Clinics Are Potent Weapons in War on Air Pollution

The Pollution Prevention Partnership (P3) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is putting its money where its mouth is in the fight against air contamination with free AutoCheck Clinics for Corpus Christi area drivers.

AutoCheck is a state-of-the-art auto engine analyzer that is able to break down the exhaust components of passing vehicles and identify those that are discharging harmful pollutants into the air. When a high-polluting automobile is identified, AutoCheck schedules the vehicle for repairs at a participating garage, typically with no cost to the owner. The system is also available to businesses and community organizations that would like to host an AutoCheck event.

AutoCheck is funded by a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Supplemental Environmental Project. Over the last two years, more than 10,000 Corpus Christi vehicles have been screened by AutoCheck, with an estimated 200 receiving repairs to cut down on polluting emissions.

While Corpus Christi is the only industrial-based city in the United States still in attainment of air quality standards established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), P3 Director Gretchen Arnold stresses that, without aggressive preventative action, the city could slip into non-attainment. A non-attainment area is an area that does not have good air quality and is not within EPA standards.

“Once an area is declared to be non-attainment, strict rules may be placed on the area, much like what other metropolitan cities in Texas are experiencing,” warns Arnold. “These rules may include costly vehicle inspections, losing money to build highways, businesses not being allowed to expand, and even restricted hours for construction activities.”

Arnold stresses that, since about 35 percent of air pollution is caused by cars and trucks, it is vitally important that they be well maintained. In addition to polluting as much as 25 times the amount of a clean-running vehicle, a poorly maintained automobile costs more to drive.
Around Campus

VOKURKA NAMED TO BALDRIDGE BOARD

Dr. Robert Vokurka, chair of the Department of Finance, Economics and Decision Sciences, has been appointed to the 2007 Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The award, created by public law in 1987, is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive.

PROFESSORS AWARDED EMERITUS STATUS

Former Texas A&M University faculty members Dr. Robert Maroney and Dr. Albert Trevino have been awarded the title of Professor Emeritus of Education by the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents. Maroney joined the University in 1961 and was the associate dean in the College of Education when he retired in 2007. Trevino was a member of the education faculty from 1974 to 2006.

The designation of Professor Emeritus was conferred in recognition of the recipients’ years of service and dedication to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

FERNANDEZ CHAIRS COMPUTER SCIENCES

Dr. John Fernandez, a professor in the College of Science and Technology, has been selected as the Rogelio “Roger” Benavides Chair in Computer Sciences and chair of the Department of Computer Sciences.

The Benavides Memorial Chair was established by the Benavides family in memory of husband and father Roger Benavides to emphasize the research and teaching of industrial safety. Their expectation is that the holder of the Benavides Chair will be a professor of computer science with a strong background in all aspects of computing.

TUNNELL WRITES FOR “ATLAS OF THE OCEAN”

Dr. Wes Tunnell, associate director of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI), has been invited to write an essay on the Gulf of Mexico for the revised “Atlas of the Ocean” compiled by the National Geographic Society. The article will focus on the uniqueness in science, conservation and social impact of the Gulf of Mexico, including the HRI’s recent findings.

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University Preparatory High School sophomore Julie Chapman, 15, works with teacher Tracy Erickson.
Preparatory High School Puts Students on Fast Track to College

High school students who once thought that a college education was beyond their reach are turning what was only a dream into reality through the new University Preparatory High School program, a collaboration between Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and the Flour Bluff Independent School District.

Just one year into the program, Principal James Crenshaw is finding that students are responding favorably to the challenge of adding college preparatory courses to their already heavy load of high school classes. Those challenges range from reading 600 pages independently every six weeks to keeping abreast of current events.

“The program’s main focus is on the core curriculum,” says Crenshaw. “And while we hope the students come to A&M-Corpus Christi after graduation, those classes will transfer to many other universities.”

Currently, 180 freshman and sophomores are on the fast track to a college education and, before graduation, can earn up to 60 tuition-free college credit hours. The prep school targets students who otherwise may not have an opportunity to attend college. Each year, 100 students will be added to the program until the maximum of 400 is reached.

Dr. Dee Hopkins, dean of the University’s College of Education, says the goal of the program is to create that seamless pipeline between high school and college. Strong emphasis is placed on reading, writing and math.

“We want to make sure students making the transition from high school to college are able to handle the work,” says Hopkins. “We are preparing them to be more educated citizens, which is good for our community.”

While freshmen course work is mostly college prep and reading intensive, Crenshaw says this year’s sophomores will concentrate on the core curriculum of math, science, social studies and English and begin earning dual credit in fine arts, Spanish and communication application.

Prep school teacher Tracy Erickson, who teaches freshman math and science, says she watched students grow into critical thinkers last year. Erickson admits there is lots of work and expectations are high, but since students and faculty are so motivated, goals can be achieved through committed effort on both sides.

“During the year, the level of class discussion became deeper and more meaningful as students were better able to verbalize their thoughts,” Erickson says. “I was impressed by their ability to take responsible roles and work cooperatively in groups.”

Sophomore Julie Chapman blazed through seven books during the summer for reading practice. The A-B honor roll student, whose younger brother David is a freshman in the program, is encouraging her younger siblings and friends to apply for the prep school.

“It was an amazing opportunity to save money and get a head start with college credits,” says Julie, 15. “The workload is more challenging than that of the average high school student, so I really have to be organized to get assignments in on time.”

Julie, who wants to be an obstetrician and gynecologist, is mapping out her future. After she receives her bachelor’s degree at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, she plans to attend medical school.

“A lot of kids think they’ll miss out on the high school experience, but it’s not true,” Julie says. “It’s the same experience. The only difference is you’re expected to be more mature.”

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James Crenshaw, University Preparatory High School Principal

**FAST FACTS**

- Begun during the 2006-2007 school year with 85 freshman students, who are now sophomores and are earning dual credit this school year.
- A new cohort group of 100 freshmen are enrolled this school year.
- Includes four Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi adjunct professors, a College of Education graduate assistant, plus Flour Bluff teachers.
- Students can take classes on campus during their junior year.
- The University Preparatory High School is a Texas High School Project (THSP) school. Public and private organizations in the THSP include the Texas Education Agency, the Governor’s Office, the Texas Legislature, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Communities Foundation of Texas and National Instruments.

**TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE PROGRAM**

- Students must complete an application, essay and interview.
- Students’ grades, attendance and discipline records, and TAKS performance scores are reviewed.

**THE SCHOOL’S ADMISSION PROCESS GIVES PRIORITY TO**

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- English language learners
- Students who come from an underrepresented demographics for college completion
YOUR NAME IS ON THE DIPLOMA.

NOW LEAVE YOUR MARK ON THE ISLAND.

A paver on the Walk of Recognition is the perfect way to commemorate your time at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Purchasing a paver is a great giving idea and an investment in the University’s future because the money raised provides scholarships for University students.

For information about Student Foundation activities or Walk of Recognition bricks, please call Molly Ruther, SFA President, at (361) 825-5558 or visit our website at: http://kanga.tamucc.edu/development/alumni/stu_foundation/index.html.

WALK OF RECOGNITION

Please fill in the blocks EXACTLY as you would like to see on your paver. Leave a space before and after “&”. Each space counts as a character. Omit punctuation marks. Orders received together will be laid together; brick location will be determined by architectural design. A&M-Corpus Christi Student Foundation reserves the right for copy approval or refusal. For questions about your copy call (361) 825-5558.

Special guidelines: If line and space permit, bricks may include: (a) “In Memory of” or “In Honor of”; (b) class year; or (c) group, club, military, honors, social club or Greek affiliation.

$100
4 x 8 Brick
Two lines of 12 characters per line

$250
8 x 8 Brick
Top two lines have 12 characters per line; center will contain one official seal and may have up to three letters as character abbreviations on either side of seal; Bottom line contains degree and class year.

Please check one official Seal for center of your brick:

☐ University of Corpus Christi Seal
☐ Texas A&M University Seal
☐ Corpus Christi State University Seal
☐ Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Seal
☐ Alumni Association Seal
Creating a scholarship endowment is one way to ensure your contribution will remain in perpetuity to support higher education and to help the University remain competitive in attracting the brightest students.

In recognition of donors making significant contributions to endowed scholarships, the University established the Endowed Scholarship Council. Donors with cumulative gifts to endowed scholarship funds of $50,000 or more are inducted into the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Endowed Scholarship Council and recognized at the annual Endowed Scholarship Banquet.

For more information on ways you can support scholarships or establish an endowed scholarship fund, please contact Heather Guerrero at (361) 825-3320.
THREE EASY WAYS to give to the Islander Fund

Answer “Yes” when our Island Callers “pop the question.”

Read and return our mailer with your gift.

Go to the Web at giving.tamucc.edu and give online. Choose an option that’s convenient for you. When you make an online gift you’ll receive this Islander mousepad!

Islander Fund? How does it help? The Islander Fund supports student, faculty and program needs within the colleges that would otherwise be unmet. Your dollars are an investment in such areas as computer labs, faculty and student research, scholarships, national student competitions, and student conference travel.