

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

# 12 UNDER 12

*Young Alumni Spotlight*

# Game Changers

MEET 12 YOUNG ALUMNI WHO ARE  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**E**ach year, The Association of Former Students' 12 Under 12 Young Alumni Spotlight recognizes a dozen Aggies who have graduated within the past 12 years for their business accomplishments, civic or military service, philanthropic efforts, and outstanding representation of Texas A&M University's core values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and selfless service.

The 12 Under 12 Young Alumni Spotlight was conceived by the Young Alumni Advisory Council, a selected body of younger former students who advise The Association's staff on ways to better connect with the hundreds of thousands of recent graduates of A&M.

Among the 2016 honorees are leaders in business and higher education, an architect, a petroleum engineer, a nonprofit executive, a Congressional staffer, veterans and members of the U.S. armed forces including two military physicians. But all 12 of them are much more than their career achievements, their advanced degrees and their

awards. They are also mentors, volunteers and selfless servants, dedicated to the betterment of Texas A&M, their communities and the world.

We congratulate these fine young men and women on their accomplishments, and we thank them for their service and for their outstanding representation of Texas A&M and the Aggie Spirit.

#### **MORE UP-AND-COMING AGGIES**

The 12 Under 12 Spotlight honors only a dozen former students, but many more young Aggies are making their marks. From the 2015 applications, here are six more impressive young Aggies who ranked just outside the top 12: *Katherine C. Lacey '03 • Christopher Morales '03 • Phillip Bethancourt '04 • Joshua Langston '04 • Brent Lacey '05 • Christopher Matthew Beavers '10*

To read about previous years' 12 Under 12 Young Alumni Spotlight honorees, visit [tx.ag/12u12](http://tx.ag/12u12).

#### **APPLICATIONS FOR 2017**

Applications for next year's awards will be accepted March 1 through May 1.  
Visit [tx.ag/12u12](http://tx.ag/12u12) to nominate an Aggie or to apply.



### REGAN TURNER '02

As an executive director for the western U.S. with The Mission Continues, Turner helps lead a nonprofit that connects veterans with opportunities to continue their leadership and public service within their communities. He is a decorated Marine officer who led troops in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq and taught Marine officers at The Basic School and Infantry Officer Course. Selected as a Pat Tillman Foundation Military Scholar, he earned dual master's degrees at the Harvard Kennedy School, where he was a George Leadership Fellow, and Harvard Business School. He has coached Aggies transitioning from the military into business school and helped interview A&M scholarship applicants. Turner, who was a Muster committee chair as a student and also deputy Corps commander, has since helped organize many local Musters and chaired the Washington, D.C., Aggie Muster from 2008 to 2010.

### AMY BLAIR '03

To employ struggling single mothers she met in Malaysia, Blair founded Batik Boutique, a social enterprise that provides life skills, sewing skills and sustainable income while producing goods for a large U.S. brand. Life has changed entirely for many of these women through their employment. Blair has been recognized on an international level for her fair-trade business practices and addressed the spouses of heads of state at the 26th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit. Her business was one of 10 selected by the prime minister for the launch of the Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint. Blair invests profits to help fund healthcare for at-risk women, education for underprivileged Malaysians and more. She stays connected with fellow Ags, hosting visitors in her home and helping Aggies who move to Malaysia make the transition.



### KELLY COKE '03

As program director for Texas A&M University-Texarkana at Northeast Texas Community College, Coke oversees the center's work including advising, recruitment efforts, and six bachelor's degrees and three graduate programs offered to more than 180 students. She also serves as instructor of adult education and leadership studies and general studies degree program coordinator. Previously, she was the East Texas regional deputy director for U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, acting as his liaison on federal policy and federal funding affecting the region, and earlier interned at the White House with the office of first lady Laura Bush. She served the Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce as chair of the Leadership Mount Pleasant Class for 2015. Coke is a Class Agent for the Class of 2003 and has been a member of the Titus County and Bowie County A&M Clubs.

### SPENCE PENNINGTON '03

During 12 years' active duty in the Air Force, Pennington deployed multiple times in the global war on terrorism and Operation Iraqi Freedom. As an aircraft maintenance officer, when 2004's Indian Ocean tsunami struck, he kept MC-130s flying for 126 missions in less than a month that delivered 398 tons of cargo and evacuated the injured. He has led more than 2,380 active duty and reserve airmen in combat and at home while maintaining fleets of aircraft worth \$6 billion. He graduated from and was an instructor at U.S. Air Force Weapons School. Now a major in the reserve, he is a partner in Pennington Farms Inc. Everywhere he's been, he's volunteered with service projects and stayed involved with A&M Clubs. He helped plan Musters overseas and is a Class Agent for the Class of 2003.





### **COLE ROBERTSON '03**

With four partners, Robertson launched a \$200 million private equity fund, BP Energy Partners, to invest in companies that use clean, domestic natural gas; he was the lead partner on initial transactions totaling \$100 million. He managed Mesa Power Group's redevelopment of more than 1,000 megawatts of wind power. As a deacon at Park Cities Presbyterian Church in Dallas, he participates in projects such as annual distribution of 30,000 family meal boxes and raises money for Interfaith Housing; he also raises funds for scholarships through the State Fair of Texas Livestock Auction Committee. He mentors fellow Aggies and shares his perspective on the Aggie Spirit when asked to speak on his role as a student organizer of the post-9/11 "Red, White and Blue Out." He and friends recently launched an Aggie Ring Endowed Scholarship fund.

### **MAJ. DOUG RUHL '03, M.D.**

A major in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, Ruhl is an otology/neurotology fellow at the University of Virginia. Upon graduating from his otolaryngology residency at Tripler Army Medical Center, he received the hospital's overall outstanding resident teacher award and was the most published resident in the history of the program. His publications on medical malpractice have established him as an expert in this area. With the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, he serves on the Trauma Committee, helping shape his profession's approaches to head and neck trauma care. He is a medical director for the Virginia Lions Hearing Foundation, which provides free and low-cost hearing aids and funds research. He has also helped coordinate and participate in medical mission work to the Republic of Palau as a part of the Pacific Island Healthcare Project.



### **JAKE DONALDSON '04**

As founder and principal of Three Square Design Group in Houston, Donaldson tackles a wide range of projects; his firm has done industrial campuses, assisted living facilities and craft breweries, including the recently completed Karbach Brewing Co. He works to create an environment that reflects the way he believes clients, consultants and staff should be treated, and the results include workplace honors such as being one of Houston's Best & Brightest Companies to Work For in 2014 and 2015, as well as strong growth that has placed the firm in the Aggie 100 the past three years. Giving back is another strong focus; pro bono work includes architectural services for Houston Big Brothers Big Sisters' new headquarters and expansions for the Houston Food Bank. His firm partners with A&M's College of Architecture for a rotating internship program.

### **PHIL GRAVES '04**

One of the youngest directors at the Patagonia apparel company, Graves is director of corporate development and in charge of the company's investments and merger and acquisition activities. He oversees Patagonia's groundbreaking "\$20 Million & Change" venture capital fund, which invests in environmentally and socially responsible startup companies; and, as chairman of the company's New Business Council, he takes a lead role in helping in-house ventures such as food startup Patagonia Provisions, which takes into account sustainability issues throughout the supply chain for each of its products. His public speeches on behalf of Patagonia always mention the fact that he's a proud Aggie. On a personal level, he has worked with homeless individuals, helping provide food and fellowship; he has served as a long-term Big Brother mentor and also has led service projects and a church group.





## AARON KINSEY '04

Recently accepted to the highly selective Harvard Business School, Kinsey is pursuing a master's degree in business administration. In the Air Force, he served as a C-130 copilot and aircraft commander; he commanded missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. He taught pilot training and as a result was selected to teach at Pilot Instructor Training. As he transitioned into the business world following nine years of service, he interned for the San Antonio Area Foundation, which funds South Texas nonprofits; he helped advise on the management of a \$286 million investment portfolio. He has been a leader and volunteer in his churches and at Iraq's busiest hospital at Joint Base Balad. Kinsey served as a San Antonio A&M Club scholarship committee member, mentored Aggies in the Air Force and was the 2009 Houston County Muster speaker.

## VALERIE WALKER '04

A reserves and planning manager with Anadarko Petroleum, Walker was chosen as the 2013 Young Engineer of the Year by the Society of Petroleum Engineers. She earned Anadarko's Innovators Award in 2011 for leading the development of a procedure saving millions of dollars in potential lost production. In her efforts to support the success of women, students and engineers, she served as communications chair for Anadarko's Petrotech Womens Resource Group, on SPE's Section Board of Directors and Young Professionals Board where she created scholarships and was an A&M university ambassador lecturer. In memory of a sorority sister, Walker assisted in establishing a scholarship fund to benefit Aggie Kappa Delta math-based majors. Walker raises A&M scholarships with the Woodlands Aggies Club and participates in Anadarko's Leadership Program; she is obtaining her executive MBA at Rice University.



## CAPT. TIM SOEKEN '05, M.D.

An Air Force captain and general surgery intern with the military in San Antonio, Soeken earned his medical degree in May from Baylor College of Medicine and is working toward becoming a fully qualified participant in the elite Pilot-Physician Program. He has published research in ophthalmology and is engaged in groundbreaking research on the effects of microgravity on astronauts' vision. Previously, while serving full-time as a T-1A instructor pilot, he earned a master of science degree in space studies from American Military University. He coordinated a Kyle Field flyover in 2009 and has mentored Aggies as well as students and youths with churches and other organizations; he and his wife started a family support group for fellow medical students. While at A&M, he was recognized as 2004's most outstanding Air Force ROTC cadet in the nation.

## EMMANUAL GUILLORY '06

As a professional staff member for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce, Guillory is responsible for a wide range of higher education policy issues. Previously, as a senior policy advisor to U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, he helped shape U.S. policy on a variety of issues. He reinvigorated the Congressional Bi-Partisan Privacy Caucus and wrote or worked on legislation, mainly dealing with telecommunications and privacy issues, that passed the House floor. He led a congressional delegation to China, speaking on behalf of the delegation and facilitating meetings with Chinese leaders. His service to Texas A&M includes establishing and leading a Washington, D.C., nonprofit that awards scholarships to A&M, organizing the D.C. Musters in 2012 and 2015, and serving on The Association of Former Students' Young Alumni Advisory Council.

