

Carolyn Phelan's President's Message 2017-2018
April 8, 2017

The mission of the Federation of Texas A&M University Mothers' Clubs is "by individual and united effort to contribute in every way to the comfort and welfare of the students and to cooperate with Texas A&M University in maintaining a high standard of moral conduct and intellectual attainment." It is now my great honor to serve you as the 2017-2018 Federation President and to be charged with leading the Federation Board in working to accomplish that mission. We represent *all of you* in your *109 member clubs* who collectively have over *6500 members* spread across the state, the nation and the world.

I have dedicated this coming year as I serve as Federation president and the accompanying 2017-2018 Directory to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. My theme is "Aggie Moms: Nurturing and Inspiring." The accompanying logo design which was drawn by College of Agriculture and Life Sciences student, Jensen Martinez '18, features the hands of an Aggie Mom which nurture her child; the hands also represent everyone who plays a part in nurturing and inspiring and supporting our Aggies during their college journey. Above the hands is a tree trunk with several branches. The strong trunk and branches represent all of our Aggies, with the leaves representing how our Aggies will go out into the world to nurture and inspire future generations.

This year I will take numerous opportunities to shine a light on the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Like the College of Agriculture that was there in the beginning in 1876 when Texas A&M was first created, a mothers' love is present in her child's life from the beginning. I also want to remind us of that most basic love, of the nurturing things that we as moms can do for our Aggies. In 1922 Mrs. Ada Peoples worked with ten other mothers to form the Dallas A&M Mothers' Club. The Federation of Texas A&M University Mothers' Clubs was founded in 1928 to serve as an umbrella organization to unite and serve all of the individual Aggie Moms' clubs. We will celebrate 90 years as a Federation next year in 2018. Those first pioneering moms took care of their Aggies by bringing a "spread" to College Station. Back then they brought fried chicken, sandwiches, pies, cookies, and a mothers' love. That was so appreciated by their Aggies. This year I want to encourage you as moms to remember that your kids don't need fancy or expensive things. They need an expression of your love – of their mother's love. A box of cookies in their mailbox. A hand-written letter that says you love them. A hand-written letter with some money in it might say you love them more than just a letter. A phone call just to say you love them and are thinking of them. In this age where we email or text or tweet or Instagram or whatever, sometimes it is nice to go back to the basics and go "old-fashioned." You might just surprise your Aggie and make their day with an expression of love that is off the grid!

This year I want to also encourage you to each go out and recruit more moms to join your local club. There are so many benefits to being an Aggie Mom. You receive information on things happening at the University. You receive support from other moms who understand what you are going through. You have a wonderful social network – whose favorite color is maroon! You

have moms that you can laugh with and celebrate with when good things happen to your student, but you also have moms that you can cry with when things may not be going so well for your student at school. Just because you are led to believe that “everyone” is making a 4.0, it does not really mean that “everyone” is making a 4.0. Many of us spend our time praying that our Aggie passes his or her upcoming exams. Aggie moms connect you with lifelong friendships. Aggie moms put you in an organization that just since 2010 has contributed over \$2.5 million to the University in the form of scholarships and financial support to Texas A&M student organizations in College Station and Galveston. This is a group of moms that make awesome things happen – who wouldn’t want to be part of that?!

I also want to encourage you to all attend the 3 Federation meetings next year. We have wonderful speakers, sometimes entertainment (Yell Leaders, Miss Reveille, more), and we have workshops and training opportunities in August and January to help your clubs recruit more members, raise more money, and have more fun. And if you really want to have some fun, be sure to attend Aggie Mom Camp. This next year it will be in February!

My first Aggie Mom experience was when I started school here in the fall of 1985. My mother became an Aggie Mom. Yay for my mom!! She was the president of the Comal County club in 1987-1988, and I remember when she came to campus for Aggie Mom Boutique back when it was held in Rudder Exhibit Hall. I so clearly remember walking up and down the aisles and seeing maroon EVERYTHING! It was and still is awe-inspiring.

When my oldest daughter, Sandee, started school here in the fall of 2007, I became an Aggie Mom! Thank you, Sandee ’11, and thank you, Kimi ’19, for choosing A&M, also!! What an awesome group of women to be a part of. I still remember attending my first Federation meeting that year. I was immediately excited by the warmth of the moms, all working towards accomplishing something bigger than themselves; working towards taking care of *all* of our Aggies and this University. I was also so happy to immerse myself in the happenings of my local club. The Comal County club was chartered in 1953, and they started baking traditional German cookies at Christmas-time in 1954 to raise funds for scholarships for the Comal County Aggies. Every year they still make those cookies to fund scholarships and to provide financial support to various campus organizations. But it is through this tradition that the moms of Comal County get together to support each other each year. During the 3 days where over 24,000 cookies are baked, moms who are in their 80s come together with moms who are in their 60s and those in their 40s. They come to catch up with each other and to share their stories since they were together the year before. Many of your clubs have similar traditions that hold your club together and provide that same camaraderie. *“Once an Aggie Mom, always an Aggie Mom.”*

I want to mention some special people that have helped me along my journey to today. The Comal County Aggie Moms, my home club, are an incredible group of women, and they have supported and continue to support me and all of our Aggies. Dr. Robert Knight, Dr. Barron Rector, and Dr. Stephen Hatch, all professors in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, helped to instill in me a love for this University and a love for agriculture and

natural resources. Four of my dear friends from my days as a student, Joy Rodriguez '90, Leah Bast '91, Melissa Fisher '89, and Debbie Robinson '89, have shown me the importance of lifelong friends, and I am so honored that they took the time to share Family Weekend 2017 with me in Aggieland. My parents, Fred and Roselyn Fey, have always supported me in everything I have ever done – I can't thank them enough. My mom has been an Aggie Mom since 1985, and she still attends meetings and helps with the famous Comal County Aggie Mom Cookie Bake. My daughter, Sandee '11, and my daughter, Kimi '19, are the reasons I am an Aggie Mom, and I could not be more proud to be their mom. My son, Brad, is not an Aggie. He graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2013, and I am extremely proud of him, as well. Last, and most important, is my husband, Howard. Most important because he is always by my side – whether it is providing tech support when I am “lost” at the computer, or engineering support when I am creating something three-dimensional, or editing support when I am writing something, or financial support when I am doing all of this not-for-pay volunteering, or any of the other support roles he fills – he does it happily (mostly) and willingly (I think), but does it certainly “with” me, and I am grateful for that. He helps me “do my thing.”

And right now “my thing” is definitely Aggie Moms. For the next year I am here to serve you. The entire board is here to help each of your clubs be successful. We are here to provide you with the education that you need to be compliant 501c3 organizations that are able to recruit members and to raise funds to benefit our Aggies and our University. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time if you have a question or a concern. We are here to nurture and inspire you, our clubs. I want to also give a note of thanks to the thousands of Aggie Moms who have come before us, working to establish the amazing organization that we have today, and acknowledge those that will come after us who will continue our work in the future.

Again, I am honored to serve you during 2017-2018. And I am awed by all that each of you contribute to your local clubs and to your Aggies. Together we will make a difference. Together we will Nurture and Inspire our Aggies! Gig 'em!