Good afternoon! I am beyond honored to have the opportunity today to dedicate the 2022-2023 Federation year and our annual directory.

During the two “unprecedented” years of the global pandemic, I like many of you, felt anxiety and fear about the changes going on in the world. In March of 2020, our oldest Aggie had two degrees in hand and a brand-new Aggie husband. Our youngest Aggie was on a spring break trip only to come back to Texas to face the hard truth that she would not be returning to campus to finish the year.

We were so grateful to have had our large family wedding (Wedding Photo) just before the world shut down.

Our junior said repeatedly as she finished her spring semester back home, “Well, at least it’s not my senior year.” And then, the pandemic rocked on, and it was her senior year. She finished her classes on a hybrid schedule, did her student teaching wearing a mask all day every day, and luckily had a modified in person graduation where we were one of about 5 families left in Reed Arena – that’s what happens when your last name starts with a “W”. But praise the Lord, we got to see her Summa Cum Laude walk! Her Aggie experience will always be a little different, but her friendships grew closer as they navigated staying healthy and gathering safely – well most of the time! (Sled photo) I know many families navigated hard changes and so much loss. I will never forget hearing from our District 11 Meeting that year about how every single member from their Club had lost a loved one. Every single member.

Every single day of that global confinement brought new and different challenges and very early on, I realized that I would have to really train my brain to look for the silver linings. I committed to focus on what I could control instead of what I could not, and I decided that I wanted that season to be a wellspring of mental and physical health in my life.

During this time, I watched my friend and mentor, Cathleen Inman ’88 lead The Federation of Aggie Moms to conduct an online, virtual Boutique so that our Clubs across the country could continue raising scholarship funds. She worked with then President Elect, Diane Eckols to conduct our Spring Federation Elections that year completely online, an unprecedented meeting. That experience has since led us to make all of our meetings hybrid so that our Moms that cannot travel in for meetings, can still get involved! And our virtual Boutiques allowed us to connect with over 15,000 moms to support Aggie Scholarships! What a beautiful silver lining!

As the pandemic continued, I began walking daily to help pass the year and during that time, I was honored with the opportunity to think about what this year would look like as your Federation President. I knew immediately that I wanted to help our Moms focus on the GOOD things out there! The silver linings! After two years of fear and uncertainty, I wanted to provide an outlet to share the GOOD stories that were still happening at Texas A&M University. The more I thought about all the great stories and leaders that I had encountered at TAMU, the faster I walked and the more excited I got!

I was so blessed to be an “Old Ag” with so many stories to tell about my days as a student, the good days and the hardest days that gave me the grit I rely on even as an adult. My husband and I have loved every minute of watching our daughters and now son in law fall in love with Texas A&M University each in their own unique ways.

And that’s when it hit me! These “silver linings” in Aggie vernacular were Good Bull!

“Good Bull” is an old Army phrase, embraced by students to this very day! It’s a phrase used to describe anything that embraces or promotes the Aggie Spirit, or the traditions of Texas A&M. It is also used to signify approval of virtually anything! I cannot think of Good Bull without thinking of Aggie Moms! We have embraced and supported the Aggie Spirit for almost 95 years now.

I firmly believe “what you think about, you bring about”. I think that ties to the scripture, “Let us not become weary in doing GOOD, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

So, Moms, I am here today to dedicate our year to GOOD BULL! Positive thoughts, kind actions, encouragement, choosing joy, and looking at the glass as more than half full! After the hard two years we have persevered through, we all need a strong dose of GOOD BULL!

Not only did our families deal with Covid 19 each day, but our Club leaders also led their Clubs through the most challenging of times. My own Club, Coppell Aggie Moms, met in a parking lot for months in every kind of weather just to try to support one another and our Aggies. During the District Meetings of 2021, I would encourage Club leaders to just be a link in the chain to keep their Club going. They did not have to have a banner year, they just had to keep the connections and the spirit going. And that’s exactly what they did!

Strong leadership is never easy, but the last two years challenged even our best! Despite the challenges, this year, we supported 110 Clubs, our participation at events increased, and our financial strength was at an all-time high and the most amazing thing started to happen.

The difficulties Clubs were encountering really started to highlight the SPARKLERS out there, and when I started looking, there were SPARKLERS everywhere! Thankfully, so many of those women are in this room today! You know, the women that despite the circumstances, were finding joy, and helping to inspire Service and Sisterhood. The women encouraging Moms to Shine Together, and we saw firsthand all of the Moms out there Standing Ready! SPARKLERS that not only took on challenging financial goals but met it by 200% two years in a row! Those were the ladies that I was surrounded by and their positivity and dedication, only made me want to be more diligent and that in turn fed my enthusiasm! You see, positivity inspires more positivity! Kindness inspires kindness. Joy brings about more joy. That’s the very nature of these qualities.

But it was not just families and Clubs that were dealing with hard ramifications from Covid, our university leaders also led through extraordinarily hard times. On June 10, 2021, The Federation Executive Board got to meet with Dr. Katherine Banks who had just become the 26th President of Texas A&M University ten days prior. (Banks Photo#1 )

President Banks is the very first Aggie Mom President of Texas A&M! When her son/daughter enrolled at TAMU, this first time Aggie Mom joined more than 500,000 other Aggie Moms and experienced the exact same joy and pride that we all feel about our Aggies!

I was able to visit with President Banks again in February of this year, and you will be proud to know that the very first thing hung on her office wall was a print by Benjamin Knox that The Federation had gifted her. She asked me to convey to our members how much it meant to her to have that Aggie Mom art in her office and how much it resonated with her as a Mom and as a leader. (Banks photo #2)

Leadership proves time and again, no matter how experienced or skilled a leader is, leadership is a hard job. Every leader takes risks and makes mistakes. Every leader has unique circumstances that they are called to lead through. Our country has become a place where different opinions instill rage, unbecoming behavior, and outright mayhem. A generation of young adults has watched us treat our leaders with disdain and yes, some of that behavior touched our campus through the years.

Aggie Moms, as we genuinely try to encourage positive thoughts, kind actions, encouragement, choosing joy, and looking at the glass more than half full this year, I hope that you will join me in praying for the leaders of Texas A&M University, our professors, our staff, and our administration. And it is with great and careful consideration that I dedicate this year of Good Bull to President Katherine Banks and The Office of the President of Texas A&M University.

During the tenure of the 25 prior Presidents, The President’s Office managed a multitude of change including making the Corps of Cadets optional, integrating the campus, and admitting women in 1963. My husband was pretty excited about that change! President Lawrence Sullivan Ross is quoted as saying that “directing the college, ‘made me turn gray very fast.’” When Ross officially took charge of our beloved school, TAMU had “no running water, faced a housing shortage, was taught by disgruntled faculty, and many students were running wild”. He also decreased the enrollment age from 16 to 15. I personally am not sure why he was surprised by the onset of gray hair based on that decision alone! I hope you will take some time to research some of the interesting past Presidents of this campus. Their names will be familiar because they align with many of the landmark buildings throughout our land grant institution.

Our 26th President, will no doubt have many challenges to face, but she is a part of our sisterhood of Aggie Moms and we are exceedingly proud of her status as the first TAMU President carrying the title “Aggie Mom” and we humbly believe that honor is as profitable as anything else on her hefty resume. President Banks has committed to share Good Bull things going on across the campus with us this year and I genuinely look forward to hearing those stories. I have promised her staff that we will stay focused on our mission to contribute to the welfare of students and the Good Bull that will surely continue to generate.

Our 2022-2023 logo this year (LOGO) was designed by JohnConnor Havercamp from The Association of Former Students, and it depicts our SPARKLY members as an integral part of Good Bull. The butterfly is to remind us that beautiful things absolutely can come out of hard changes. Thank you, JohnConnor for being such a special part of our year. I believe our very best days as an organization are ahead as we plan for and step into our second century. John F. Kennedy said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future.” My goal is that if my daughters are fortunate enough to one day become Aggie Moms, that they will step on this campus and find the future even better than when they left, just like I did.

May the work of our hands and the joining of our hearts in service this year bring about a spirit of Good Bull that continues to make Aggieland a spirit that can ne’er be told.