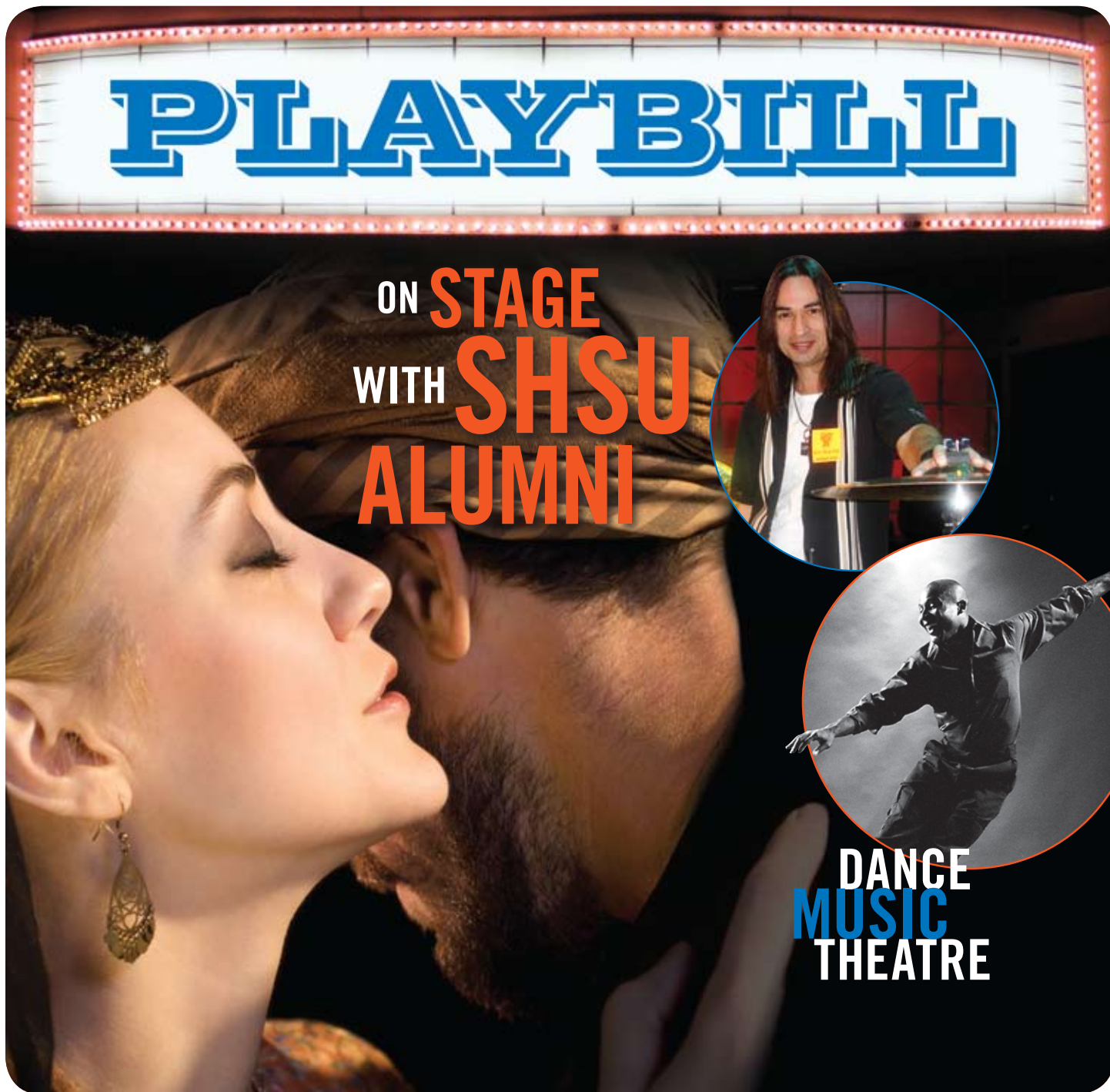


# Heritage

*Honoring Our Traditions. Envisioning Our Future.*



ON STAGE  
WITH SHSU  
ALUMNI

DANCE  
MUSIC  
THEATRE

# THE Vision



## Be Proud. Share the Vision.

We have so much to be proud of at our university. This issue of *Heritage* places a well deserved spotlight on the performing arts and the construction of the new Performing Arts Center at Sam Houston State. I invite you to read about our exceptional programs, talented alumni, and the outstanding facilities that will soon grace our campus.

Sam Houston State students are wonderful, and those in the performing arts are no exception. Our School of Music and Theatre and Dance students and programs have consistently been recognized as being among the best in our state and have often received national attention. I will readily admit my bias in saying that I believe no other university's performing arts program has any finer faculty, talented students, and academic offerings than ours.

An effective measurement of success is a university's product—its alumni. SHSU alumni are constantly in demand and continue to occupy prominent positions in the world of the performing arts. In this magazine you will enjoy learning about talented actors, dancers, choreographers, musicians and educators who are achieving their dreams as a result of their experiences and training at our university. Moreover, this is a mere sampling of the kind of alumni our performing arts programs produce.

By the summer of 2010, our university will possess one of the nation's top venues when the \$38.5 million Performing Arts Center opens its doors. Among a number of exceptional features, it will contain a state-of-the-art concert hall, recital hall, and dance theatre. With the completion of this major construction project, our facilities will have caught up with the high quality of our very talented faculty and students. The new center will adjoin the existing University Theatre to provide Sam Houston State University with a complex dedicated to excellence in the performing arts.

The new Performing Arts Center will become a highly visible platform on which to build an even greater performing arts program for the benefit of our learning environment and to enrich the cultural lives of those within the campus community and the surrounding region. In addition to providing a superior venue to see and hear hundreds of outstanding performances annually, it will be an incredible tool with which to attract and retain renowned faculty and exceptionally gifted students.

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*"By the summer of 2010, our university will possess one of the nation's top venues when the \$38.5 million Performing Arts Center opens its doors. Among a number of exceptional features, it will contain a state-of-the-art concert hall, recital hall, and dance theatre."*

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Even with our dynamic enrollment growth and the explosive development of our physical plant, I assure you the campus has never been more beautiful, with many exciting things to see. When you come for a visit, please plan to take advantage of the exceptional offerings presented by our performing arts students. You will be enthralled, enthused, and engaged with our students in a very special way. Yes, we have much to be proud of at Sam Houston State University, and we want you to be a part of it all. Won't you please share the vision with us?

James F. Gaertner,  
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The goal of *Heritage* is to keep you informed about Sam Houston State University. *Heritage* is published twice a year by the Office of University Advancement for alumni, donors and friends of SHSU. To contact the Office of University Advancement please call 936.294.3625 or visit us at [www.shsu.edu/giving](http://www.shsu.edu/giving).

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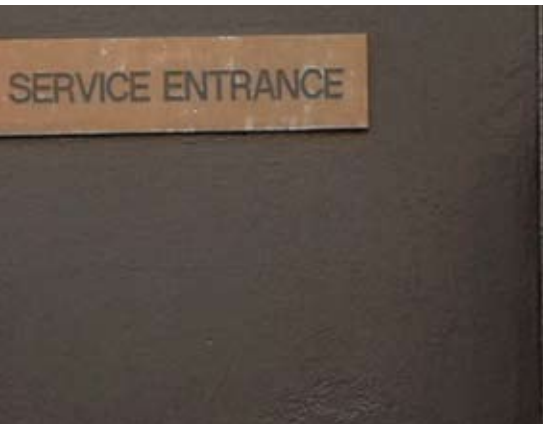
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SHSU graduates actress Sofia Gomez (photo courtesy of kevinberne.com), musician Paul Gonzalez, and dancer Elijah Gibson.







GREG GRAHAM, MUSICAL THEATRE

# Making Our University Proud

By Julia May

**S**am Houston State University's award-winning programs in theatre, dance and music have produced alumni who have found success under the spotlight. We caught up with a few of them to find out what they have been doing since graduation.

## GREG GRAHAM, MUSICAL THEATRE

Graham began his career in New York after graduating in 1999 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in musical theatre.

He was personally selected by legendary dancer and actress Gwen Verdon to perform in "Fosse," the Broadway musical tribute to the enduring legacy of musical theatre choreographer Bob Fosse, who was married to Verdon at the time of his death in 1987.

Graham has also served as dance captain, company member or choreographer for other Broadway shows, including "Hairspray," "Never Gonna Dance,"

"Chicago" and "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels."

Last summer, he choreographed his first off-Broadway show, "Tio Pepe."

Graham is currently appearing at the Imperial Theatre in New York City in the Broadway hit "Billy Elliot the Musical," with music by Elton John and lyrics by Lee Hall.

The musical opened in London's West End in 2005 and was nominated for nine Laurence Olivier Awards, winning four including "Best New Musical." The success of "Billy Elliot the Musical" led to productions in Australia and on Broadway, where talks in critics' circles have mentioned a possible Tony nod for 2009.



**SOFIA JEAN GOMEZ, THEATRE**



**ELIJAH GIBSON, DANCE**

## SOFIA JEAN GOMEZ, THEATRE

Gomez graduated from SHSU in 2003 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre and went directly into the Yale University Graduate Acting Program. She graduated from Yale with a Master of Fine Arts in acting in 2006.

Since then, she has played Athena in Mary Zimmerman’s “Argonautika” at Berkeley Rep, the McCarter Theatre Center and The Shakespeare Theatre. Other performances include the Old Hag, Russian Princess and Sad King in the “Mirror of the Invisible World” at Goodman’s Theatre in Chicago and in Long Wharf Theatre’s workshop of “Barbarian Woman.”

Some of Gomez’s other credits include Abigail in the Mark Wing-Davey production of “Safe in Hell,” Anna in Stages Repertory Theatre’s “Syncopation,” and Kitty Duval in “The Time of Your Life” at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. She has also performed in “The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow” at Yale Repertory Theatre and “Regrets Only” at Manhattan Theatre Club.

She worked with Manhattan Classic Company Theater’s Freshplay Festival and the New York Fringe Festival—the largest multi-arts festival in North America, featuring more than 200 companies from around the world and performing 1300 shows in 20-plus venues all over New York City.

Gomez is currently starring in Tony Award winner Mary Zimmerman’s “The Arabian Nights” as the female lead, Schererazade. This retelling of one of the greatest epics of world literature has played at the Berkeley Rep and will play at the Kansas City Repertory Theater and Chicago’s Lookingglass Theater in 2009.

[Photo courtesy of kevinberne.com](#)

*(The Arabian Nights; Ryan Artzberger, king; Berkeley Repertory Theatre)*

## ELIJAH GIBSON, DANCE

Gibson graduated in 1998 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in performance and choreography.

While attending graduate school at SHSU, he was invited to be a guest

performer and solo artist with the Houston City Dance Company on their European tour of France and Switzerland. He also performed as a guest artist at the Dance Chicago event with the Cerqua Rivera Art Experience.

In 2000, he joined Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, the original jazz dance company, and performed with them through 2007. He also performed as a guest artist with Dance Chicago and Tap Chicago companies and danced in productions of “The Nutcracker” with Dancenter North for the Performing Arts.

His movie debut was in 2001, when he performed as a dancer in Paramount Pictures’ “Save The Last Dance” starring Julia Stiles and Sean Patrick Thomas.

Gibson was a dancer for recording artist Kim English in her concert T-dance and for renowned house recording artist Byron Stingily in his concert at Chicago’s famed Circuit Night Club.

In addition to performing, Gibson has been on the teaching faculty of the American College Dance Festival Association, Jazz



LISA NICKS, DANCE



Dance World Congress, Dance Masters of Wisconsin, and the Chicago National Association of Dance Masters.

Not only has he taught in the United States, but he has performed and taught in Germany, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Latvia and Mexico.

Gibson is currently on the faculty at Shenandoah University in Virginia.

### LISA NICKS, DANCE

In the late '70s, Nicks was caught in the middle of the transition of dance at SHSU from the women's athletic department to the fine arts department. Her 1980 Bachelor of Arts degree in dance, reflecting two years in sports education and two years in fine arts, was handwritten by the late Mary Ella Montague, one of the champions of dance at SHSU, who spearheaded the change.

Upon graduation, Nicks worked in summer stock in Galveston and then went on to Houston, apprenticing in modern dance with James Clouser's Space/Dance/

Theater, and ultimately finding her niche with Farrell Dyde Dance Theatre. She also danced regularly in Houston Grand Opera, Theater Under the Stars, and Children's Theater Festival productions.

With the economic crunch of the mid-1980s, Nicks left Texas to find greener pastures in the Big Apple.

She met Doug Elkins and became a founding member of his critically-acclaimed company, touring in the United States, Europe, Asia, and South America. She taught in dance programs as diverse as Vienna's Tanswochen Festival and Bates Dance Festival to New York City's experimental dance project in the Coney Island School System and the 92nd Street Y's Dance in Education program in Spanish Harlem.

She worked as the company's rehearsal director, teaching repertory and scheduling daily operations, as well as their New York season, events, and tours. Utilizing the skills she had acquired with her SHSU business minor, she carried the title of chief financial

officer in charge of creating the budgets, payroll, tax reporting, coordinating and managing resources and expenditures, and assisting in strategic planning, fundraising, and board development.

When she helped her parents downsize from house to condo in the mid-1990s, Nicks rediscovered her old stamp collection and vowed to breathe new life into it.

Now living in Austin, she has launched a new artistic path with stamps, creating a large body of original works on boxes, canvasses, journals, planters, tiles, and other household objects, including a toilet seat.

When she is not shuffling stamps, Nicks is still happy dancing—teaching at Tapestry Dance Academy, in school outreach programs, college residencies, and her private exercise clientele. She performs solo or with the Kathy Dunn Hamrick Dance Company, which has commissioned four works in the last five years. Her choreography has been featured in Frontera Fest: Dance Carousel and Hot September





## MAKING OUR UNIVERSITY PROUD

### JAMES MCKENZIE, MUSIC

Flurries Festival at the Blue Theater; as well as in Houston at the Wortham Theater, Miller Outdoor Theater, and Barnevelder Dance Theater.

### JAMES MCKENZIE, MUSIC

McKenzie graduated from SHSU with a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1983. He attended graduate school at Rice University and earned a Master of Music degree in trumpet performance in 1985.

He joined the United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own,” based in Fort Myer, Va.—outside of Washington, D.C.—in 1986. As a member of this group, McKenzie plays at the funerals of fallen U.S. soldiers and at wreath-laying ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

He is also a member of the U.S. Army Herald Trumpets, which performs “Musical Honors” for the president of the United States and visiting heads of state.

He has performed at the inaugural events of Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack

Obama, and viewers of these historic events have possibly seen McKenzie and his trumpet during the traditional ceremonies.

The Trumpets perform “Honors”—“Four Ruffles and Flourishes” followed by “Hail to the Chief” for the president or “Hail Columbia” for the vice president—several times throughout the day during inauguration activities.

They play fanfares for dignitaries as they arrive and are announced. After the oath of office is given, they play “Four Ruffles and Flourishes” and the Marine Band plays “Hail to the Chief” for the new president.

From there, the trumpeters go to the reviewing stand and play “Honors” again when the president and vice president arrive to watch the inaugural parade.

That evening, they play at the announcement of, “Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States,” when the president and vice president arrive at the various balls.

In addition to official government events in the nation’s capital, McKenzie has performed

at the opening ceremony of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, the G-8 Economic Summits, and Super Bowl XXXIX, as well as with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

McKenzie has performed with the U.S. Army “blues” jazz ensemble, the U.S. Army brass quintet, and has been a jazz soloist with the U.S. Army Brass Band.

He was also a part of the performance at New York City’s Ground Zero in 2001 for rescue and recovery workers.

In addition to serving with the U.S. Army Band, McKenzie has been Second Trumpet with the Arlington (Va.) Symphony Orchestra/Arlington Philharmonic since 1990.

*Photo courtesy of Getty Images*

### DAOUD HEIDAMI, THEATRE

Heidami graduated from Sam Houston State in 2000 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in theatre.

Upon completing graduate school at the University of California, San Diego, he moved to New York City.



**DAOUD HEIDAMI, THEATRE**



**PAUL ALEXANDER GONZALEZ, MUSIC**

He has been in television’s “Guiding Light,” Comedy Central’s “Tough Crowd with Colin Quinn,” and NBC’s “Law and Order.”

He was recently on the big screen in the Adam Sandler movie “You Don’t Mess With the Zohan” and appeared in the 2005 geopolitical thriller “Syriana.”

He starred in the critically-acclaimed performance of “Masked” at the DR2 Theatre in New York, “Green Zone” at the Lincoln Center Directors Lab ’07, and “(I am) Nobody’s Lunch” at P.S. 122 and 59E59 Theatres, as well as the American Repertory Theatre, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and London’s Soho Theater.

His New York theatrical credits also include “Unlimited” with Slant Theatre Project and “Greater Messapia” at Queens Theatre in the Park.

Heidami was in the world premiere of “1001” by Jason Grote at the Denver Center Theatre, “The King Stag” at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, “The Tempest” at The Shakespeare Theatre, and the world

premiere of Charles Mee’s “Wintertime” and “Tartuffe,” both at the La Jolla Playhouse.

He is an associate artist with the Obie award-winning Civilians, a group dedicated to strengthening the connection between theater and contemporary society.

*Photo courtesy of Aaron Epstein*

### PAUL ALEXANDER GONZALEZ

Performer, composer and educator, percussion artist Gonzalez graduated from SHSU in 1992 with a Bachelor of Music degree in music education.

He continued his education and graduated with honors with a second Bachelor of Music degree in film scoring from Berklee College of Music, and since then, he has taught numerous high school and competitive groups while performing and recording with such artists as Chaka Kahn, Nelly Furtado, Richie Kotzen, Dave Samuels, DJ Kane, and Ziggy Marley.

Gonzalez’s sounds can be found on numerous albums, commercials, such TV

shows as CSI and CSI Miami, and films. His live performances include the Latin Grammys, DC USA, MTV, MUN2, Vina Del Mar, Hoy, Ritmo Internacional, and Conciertos Clandestinos.

He was pop singer Cherie’s drummer for the Cherie/Clay Aiken Summer Tour in 2004, which was capped off with a television performance at the U.S. Open on CBS.

As the percussionist for international pop superstar Paulina Rubio for three years, he performed on her world tour and appeared on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno and at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo, Norway.

In 2006, he joined with Lonnie Jordan, the legendary musician and founder of the American funk band “War,” to record an album.

Gonzalez recently had three new works published by Row-Loff Productions, the biggest name in percussion music, and he performed at the 2008 ALMA Awards with Wynonna Judd, Jon Secada, and Brian McKnight. ★



# New Center To Create Togetherness Among Programs, Literally And Figuratively

By Jennifer Gauntt



From left: Texas State University System Regent Michael Truncale, TSUS Student Regent Nicole Lozano, SHSU Associate Vice President Mitchell Muesham, SHSU College of Arts and Sciences Dean Jaimie Hebert

**T**hough not scheduled to be completed for another year, Sam Houston State University's new Performing Arts Center is already building excitement among the faculty members and students in the three departments it will affect the most.

A project more than 20 years in the making, the \$38.5 million center will not only provide a physical means of togetherness but also a feeling of connection by housing the School of Music and theatre and dance programs in one location for the first time ever.

"In addition to providing beautiful, well-designed spaces, the PAC will also bring dance, theatre, and music into a common area," said Jennifer Pontius, dance program coordinator. "We are very excited about the physical reality of being with the other performing arts on campus, rather than on the other side of campus."

With dance literally serving as the bridge, the 91,976-square foot facility will connect the existing University Theatre Center and Music Building into a complex, adding a host of upgraded performance and

rehearsal spaces, dressing rooms and faculty offices. The building will be located on the corner of 17th Street and Bobby K. Marks Boulevard, filling in the parking lots to the north of both the Music Building and theatre center.

"For me, the big thing is collaboration (that the building will facilitate)," said Dana Nicolay, College of Arts and Sciences associate dean and dance professor.

"The new Performing Arts Center is going to create more interaction among all three of the performing arts areas."

The PAC has been necessitated by the growth of the programs, from about 100 music majors and about 75 theatre and dance majors when the present facilities were opened to currently a few more than 300 music majors and about 350 in the department of theatre and dance, according to Nicolay.

While Academic Building III, formerly the Old Men's Gym, was originally scheduled to be razed in 1982, the dance program moved into the building on a "temporary basis" in 1986, according to Nicolay. The Music Building opened in 1986 as Fine Arts Phase I, a second phase of which was anticipated to also house the art and dance departments but was never completed, and the University Theatre Center was built in 1976.

The PAC will also alleviate the laundry list of issues associated with the age and space constraints currently faced by faculty, according to Nicolay.

The design itself will have a "distinctive, iconic look that would stand out as a performing arts, and to some extent a visual arts, center on campus," Nicolay said.

"The architects really tried to push multiple different surfaces and geometric shapes that are visible as you look at the building," he said. "It has many, many different shapes."

And while it brings the three programs together, literally and metaphorically, the "interesting and dynamic structure" of the two stories and the way the rooms are designed allows for the individuality of the programs to remain intact.

The building's showcase element is a "non-boxy" concert hall, an 800-seat space with 500 floor seats and a balcony that goes around the second floor that will seat 300—100 of which are behind the stage.

"You can put a full orchestra on the stage and a hundred choristers in the balcony," Nicolay said. "It really is a spectacular space; the design of it is just beautiful."

This addition, along with a new recital hall to replace the one "falling down around them," will give the School of Music the opportunity to host more events on campus. Larger ensembles are often forced to perform in local churches without a suitable-sized, on-campus venue, according to Mike Bankhead, School of Music director.

"Our students are not getting the opportunity to have their hard work pay off



in a good performance hall," he said. "It's been like having a chemistry program with no lab in which to work.

"We will be able to improve the quality of our performances and even add a performance series featuring off-campus, nationally-known artists," Bankhead said. "And, we will be able to bring festivals, conferences and other exciting events to campus and Huntsville."

The theatre program will receive three large rehearsal halls and a scene shop extension that will essentially double the size of their current shop while making it possible for students and faculty members to build sets, backdrops and properties on the scene shop floor rather than on the UTC Mainstage floor.

"That will functionally give us more open dates in the UTC Mainstage for them to perform, for potentially other programs within the university to perform and possibly bring in an outside touring series," Nicolay said.

Getting an entirely new home, the dance program will see the biggest improvements from its current location, receiving a fully-equipped dance theatre, four dance studios, a faculty preparation studio and a body

conditioning studio, as well as new faculty offices and a conference room, computer lab, a costume shop and dressing rooms for about 80 women and 10 men.

"The dance studios are cantilevered over the walkways, so they stand out separately from the downstairs rooms, and that all stands out separately from the music part of the building," Nicolay said. "It's a very interesting and dynamic structure and a really nice connection between the spaces."

Another new component will be an outdoor performance space in the courtyard that will be created by the three buildings, complete with terraced seating and equipped for lighting instruments for evening performances.

"We also hope that outdoor venue will stay active not only for the general public, but because of it being an outdoor venue, we hope to see events taking place during the day for the student body to come and just spend some time for a brown bag, during a lunch hour, watching a dance concert or seeing the steel drum band play or maybe some one-act plays taking place out there," Nicolay said. "Just something to keep the arts in front of the student body on a regular basis."

The idea of creating a community for SHSU's artists through collaboration will not only serve as a way to promote the arts but will allow for those involved to connect through the "identification of ourselves as the Performing Arts Center," according to Pontius.

"We also intend to populate the lobby and surrounding grounds with visual art as much as we can, and we hope that will help activate the relationship with the art department as well," Nicolay said. "That we'll have artists running into each other all over the place and talking about art and thinking about ways they can create new projects together is one of the most exciting aspects.

"There are so many ways our faculty can create richer, more meaningful art if we are working with one another on things rather than working alone."

That sentiment is resoundingly reiterated by all three program chairs.

"We will have an opportunity to work with the theater and dance department to do major projects ranging from standard repertoire to the great new works commissioned especially for our ensembles/students," Bankhead said. "This is the kind of collaboration that can make all of our programs grow, flourish and gain greater national recognition."

Other benefits of the center will be the opportunity for increased fundraising efforts through naming opportunities for its rooms, which will generate funds for scholarship endowments, endowed chair positions, enhancement funds and "many different things that can bring the performing arts to a whole new level," Nicolay said. Currently none of the programs have endowed chair positions, nor do they offer any full-ride scholarships.

"The quality of our programs is already very high," he said. "The endowments and facilities are going to help us attract prominent faculty, but that doesn't mean we don't have good people already.

"We have a lot of wonderful artists on faculty, we have a lot of talented students who work hard and go on to excellent



Arts and Sciences Dean Jaimie Herbert addresses an enthusiastic crowd at the Performing Arts Center groundbreaking ceremony.

*This is the kind of collaboration that can make all of our programs grow, flourish and gain greater national recognition.*

careers," Nicolay said. "But these resources that are becoming available to us by way of this Performing Arts Center will give us an opportunity to step up a level."

When the center is completed, the three programs plan to host a "pretty spectacular grand opening season," including a semester-long performing arts festival that will include many productions and performances.

"It certainly will do a lot to galvanize all of the performing arts areas," Nicolay said.

"I think this will put us on par or ahead of all of the other universities of our character in The Texas State University System.

"It will really be the lead performing arts facility from my point of view," he said. "I feel very happy and proud of the job that we've done to get all of the things in there, and I'm excited about what the architects have done, as well, in terms of the design they've provided." ★



For the second time in three years, Sam Houston State University dealt with the effects of two hurricanes at the beginning of the semester. However, as in the past, the university community pulled together and overcame the adversities.

## Texas State University System Regents Approve SHSU Master Plan

A plan that will guide Sam Houston State University's growth through the next 10 years was approved Nov. 21 by the university's governing body at its regular quarterly meeting.

The board approved Sam Houston State's current plan in 2000; however, because of the university's rapid growth during the past eight years, administrators decided to update the plan this year.

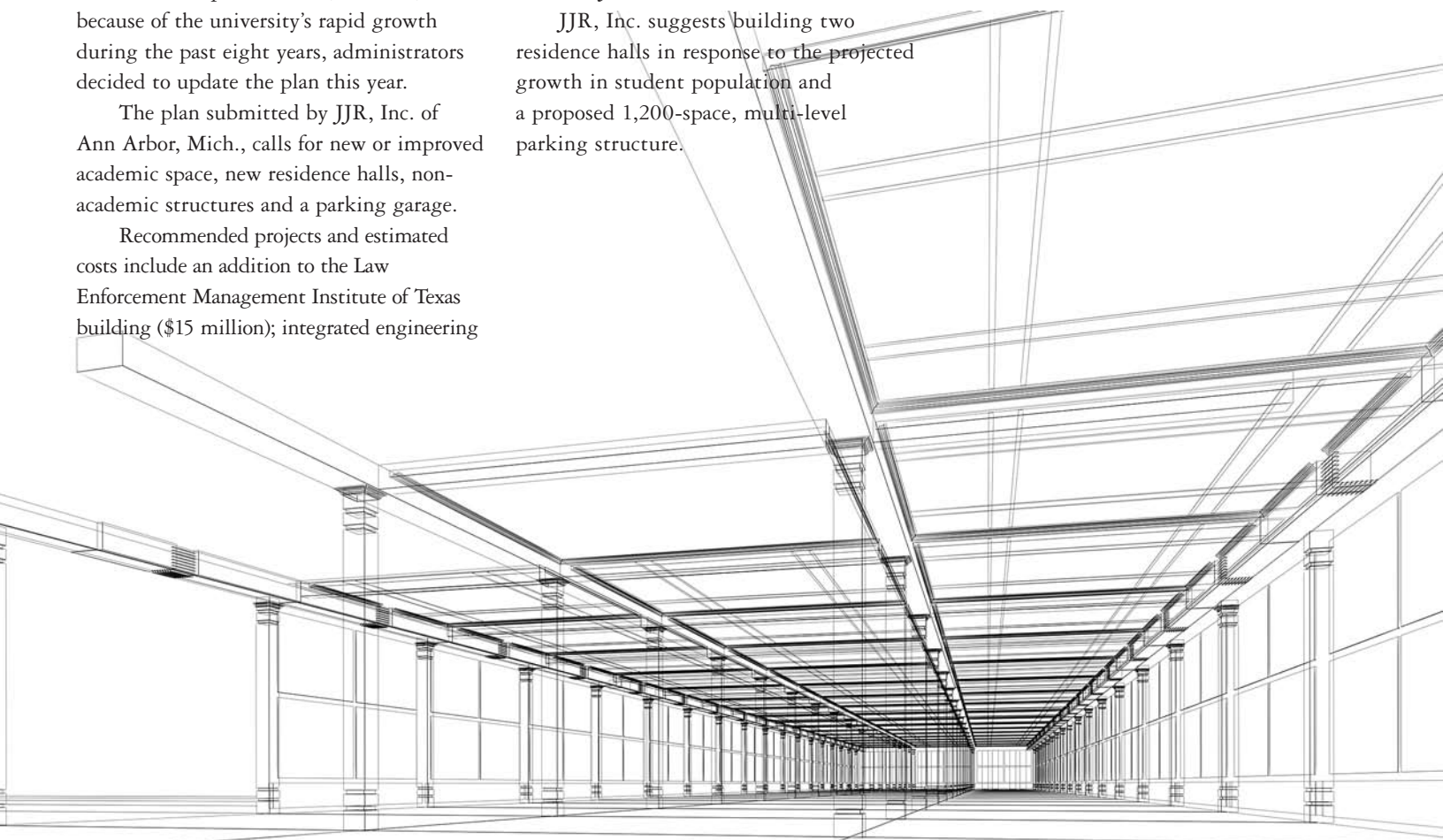
The plan submitted by JJR, Inc. of Ann Arbor, Mich., calls for new or improved academic space, new residence halls, non-academic structures and a parking garage.

Recommended projects and estimated costs include an addition to the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas building (\$15 million); integrated engineering

and technology building (\$37 million); agriculture complex at Gibbs Ranch (\$6 million); biology, nursing and allied health building (\$42 million); forensic science building (\$24 million); College of Business Administration building (\$45 million); and Criminal Justice Center addition (\$16 million).

JJR, Inc. suggests building two residence halls in response to the projected growth in student population and a proposed 1,200-space, multi-level parking structure.

Recommended non-academic facilities include a health center expansion (\$3 million); a new residence life maintenance building (\$2 million); and an alumni center (\$10 million) adjacent to Bowers Stadium. ★



## Ruffin Honored With Regents' Award



Texas State University System Board of Regents Chairman Bernie C. Francis, SHSU Distinguished Professor of English Paul Ruffin, TSUS Regent John Dudley

Paul Ruffin, distinguished professor of English at Sam Houston State University and a highly respected editor, publisher, writer and poet, has been named a "Regents' Professor" by the Texas State University System Board of Regents.

The board recognized Ruffin, along with Max Warshauer, professor of mathematics at Texas State University-San Marcos, and Jean Andrews, professor of deaf studies and deaf education at Lamar University, at their regular quarterly meeting in Huntsville in November.

The professors were honored with the system's highest faculty award for exemplary

performance and contributions in teaching, research and publication. The award is a lifetime designation.

Ruffin founded and has served as director of The Texas Review Press and is the founding editor and editor-in-chief of The Texas Review.

He has written and edited more than 24 books, both fiction and nonfiction, more than 800 poems, numerous essays and reviews, a weekly newspaper column and feature news stories, and initiated the creative writing program at SHSU. ★

## Ballinger Wins Prestigious Golf Award

Richard Ballinger, SHSU's director of the PGA Golf Management program, has been selected by the Southern Texas Section of the PGA of America as the recipient of the 2008 Horton Smith Award.

The Horton Smith Award recognizes the PGA professionals in each of the 41 sections across America who are role models for current and future PGA professionals and exemplify leadership qualities, strong moral character and service to the PGA professionals through education both at the section and national levels. ★



## Sam SHuttle Launched



Sam Houston State University and Brazos Transit District have partnered for a Monday through Friday shuttle that makes a trip between SHSU and The Woodlands.

While its primary users are Sam Houston State University students, staff

and faculty, the shuttle is public transportation and available to anyone.

Heather Crowson, vice president for Enrollment Management, and Richard Eglsaer, associate provost/vice president for Academic Affairs, handled the planning and negotiations for the new shuttle. ★

## Former Academic Officer Dies

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Emeritus Ray Reiner died on Oct. 13, 2008.

He served at the university from 1972 until his retirement in 1995. During his employment he oversaw the Sam Houston Memorial Museum, the military science program and the correspondence office.

He was also the author of a number of academic policy statements. ★



## Multi-Arena Leader Advises Using 'Common Sense' In Government



Former football star and Republican congressman J.C. Watts discussed America's "ideology of gracious decay" and how the country needs to find "new ways of dealing with old problems" by utilizing "common sense" during his President's Speaker Series lecture at SHSU on Oct. 8.

As quarterback for the Oklahoma Sooners, he was voted Most Valuable Player in the 1980 and 1981 Orange Bowls, a title he also earned during his rookie season in the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup, the CFL's Super Bowl.

He served Oklahoma's 4th District in the U.S. Congress from 1995 to 2003,

during which time he was elected by his peers to serve as chairman of the Republican Conference, the fourth-ranking leadership position in the majority party in the House and a position once held by Dick Cheney, Jack Kemp and Gerald Ford.

The President's Speaker Series was created in 2002 by SHSU President Jim Gaertner to introduce students, many of whom are first generation college students, to people who are living successful and principled lives. It is supported by a grant from long-time SHSU benefactor, the late Lu Ellen Gibbs. ★



## Rather Recognized For SHSU Gift

SHSU alumnus Dan Rather has been listed in The Giving Back Fund's second annual Giving Back 30 survey, a ranking of celebrities who have made the largest donations to charity in 2007 according to public records.

Rather, who gave \$2 million to SHSU for scholarships and discretionary spending within the university's communications program, was ranked No. 14 along with

Hugh Hefner and Tom Shadyac. Hefner gave \$2 million to the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, and Shadyac donated \$2 million to Valley Floor Preservation Partners.

Rather's contribution, given along with his wife Jean to the Share the Vision capital campaign, is the largest single monetary gift in the university's history. ★



## Irby Gets SHSU's Eighth NSF Grant



As the university's eighth National Science Foundation grant recipient, Beverly Irby is working to help solve some of the nation's most pressing educational issues: teaching science, especially to students who are at risk due to limited English proficiency or limited family income.

The \$1.5 million collaborative grant will fund research for "Project MSELL," a series of educational curriculum enhancements targeting fifth and sixth grade science students in Houston's Aldine school district that include English as a second language strategies, hands-on activities, technology integration, take-home activities

for family involvement and "Science Saturdays at Sam," which will bring the middle school students to campus to learn from SHSU professors and honors students.

Because there is a call for more math and science education in America due to recent reports that the country has fallen behind in both areas, Project MSELL, if successful, could have a great impact on both policy and curriculum, Irby said.

Irby's NSF grant is the first for SHSU's College of Education. The project, currently in the preparation stage for the pilot, will begin in the fall. ★

## SHSU Opens New Forensic Science Facility

SHSU's new Southeast Texas Applied Forensic Science Facility is now operating and providing enhanced training and research for crime scene investigation.

The facility provides a hands-on lab through which researchers can scientifically study human decomposition after death in the subtropical climate of southeast Texas.

The purpose of studying the process is to better enable law enforcement officials, medical examiners and crime scene investigators to extract evidence, which would lead them to more accurately determine critical information such as timing and circumstances of death.

Not only will the facility provide a venue for interdisciplinary research by scientists and criminologists at SHSU, but there will

also be more opportunities for area law enforcement officials, as well as national and international investigators, particularly those from countries where human body research is not allowed.

Joan Bytheway, a forensic anthropologist specializing in skeletal analysis who teaches in the university's forensic science program, spearheads the project, shared by the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Criminal Justice.

Sam Houston State University is the fourth university in the nation to have a forensic science facility for the study of human decomposition and the second one in Texas. The other is located at Texas State in San Marcos. ★



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## Rogers Named Head Of Success Strategy Program

Keri Rogers, assistant vice president for Academic Affairs, has been named the director of the new Student Success Initiative program at SHSU.

The program is designed to improve the success of all students by continuing to offer quality initiatives for first-year students.

The Student Success Initiatives, implemented during the 2008 fall semester, continues First Year Experience programs such as the SAM 136: "Introduction to Collegiate Studies" class, the Freshman Learning Community, New Student Convocation, and the Bearkats Read to Succeed program, while offering new initiatives that address issues concerning both SHSU and the student body.

The program collaborates with many university offices including the SAM Center, Enrollment Management and Student Services, as well as faculty and staff. ★



## Vice President For Finance And Operations Retires



Jack Parker, vice president for Finance and Operations and a distinguished alumnus of Sam Houston State University, retired on Oct. 1.

During his four decades with the university, he was a driving force in much of the progress that has taken place with physical growth and improvements on campus.

Parker worked for Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. CPAs before coming to Sam Houston State as the associate director of admissions in 1967. In subsequent years, he served the university as business manager, comptroller, and vice president for finance before being named vice president for Finance and Operations in 1987.

When reflecting on his accomplishments at the university Parker said one of the things

he was most proud of was the role he played in the purchase of the Sam South Complex. The complex houses offices for physical plant administration, crafts, vehicle maintenance, stores, central receiving/warehouse, property, computer services, the Texas Research Institute for Environmental Studies, University Police, the Small Business Development Center, and residence life maintenance.

He was also instrumental in the university's purchase of the Gibbs Ranch, the selling of Country Campus, and the acquisition of the property on which Bowers Stadium, the York Track Complex, and the Don Sanders Baseball Stadium and Bearkat Softball Complex are now located. ★

## Studies Show Students Unprepared For College

Less than one-third of all Texas high school students graduate prepared for college, and those numbers get even lower for minority students, according to two studies by a team of Sam Houston State University educational leadership and counseling department professors.

The statistics are the result of the work of six professors who analyzed the Texas Education Agency's data, released annually around November, into studies of gender and ethnicity for two separate reports.

The 2006–2007 data, the first released by the state, result from the Academic Excellence Indicator System that bases college preparedness on math and language arts by students' scores on either the exit-

level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the SAT or the ACT tests.

Julie Combs was the lead author on the gender report, and George Moore was the lead author of the ethnicity report.

Other faculty members who put together the studies are Rebecca Bustamante, Anthony Onwuegbuzie, Stacey Edmonson and John Slate.

Copies of the studies, "High School Students and Their Lack of Preparedness for College: A Statewide Study" and "Gender Differences in College Preparedness: A Statewide Study," are available by contacting Combs at 936.294.3181 or [jcombs@shsu.edu](mailto:jcombs@shsu.edu) or Moore at 936.294.4981 or [geomore@shsu.edu](mailto:geomore@shsu.edu). ★





## Sam Houston Receives Higher Carnegie Classification

Sam Houston State University has been named a “Doctoral Research University” by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, a classification that distinguishes the university by placing it in the top 7 percent of all institutions of higher education in the country.

The “Doctoral Research University” is the third highest doctoral classification category, following universities with “high research” and “very high research” activities. Including both private and public colleges in the United States, 96 institutions are classified as “very high research” doctoral universities, 103 are classified as “high

research” doctoral universities and 84 are classified as doctoral research universities.

“To put that into perspective, there are 4,391 institutions of higher education in the United States,” said David Payne, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. “We’re ranked with the top 7 percent of all institutions of higher education in the classification system.”

Sam Houston State joins the ranks of 11 other of Texas’ 36 public universities to be classified as a “Doctoral Research University” or higher, eight of which are in the two higher classifications and four of which are in the same classification.

SHSU is also the only university within The Texas State University System to have attained the “Doctoral Research” classification. Lamar University, Texas State University at San Marcos and Sul Ross State University, as well as Stephen F. Austin State—which is not a member of the TSUS—are classified as “Large Master’s” institutions.

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education classifies all institutions of higher education in the United States into a series of categories, ranging from doctoral-granting universities to associate’s colleges. ★

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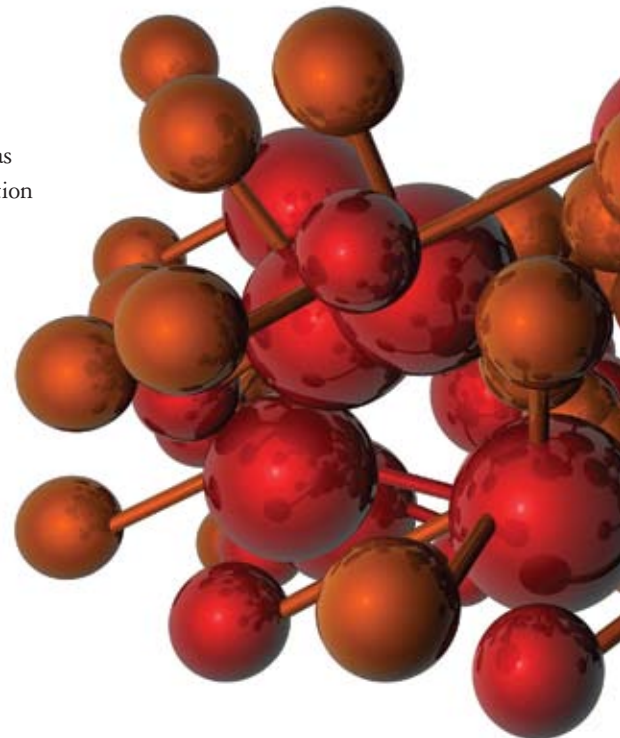
## Undergraduate Research In Biology at SHSU Recognized

Students in the department of biological sciences at Sam Houston State University are making a valuable investment in their future by participating in the undergraduate research program.

“Unlike other schools of the same stature, Sam Houston State University is providing abundant research opportunities for undergraduates. Several students majoring in biology have become involved in the research program for a competitive edge when applying for graduate school and

pursuing professional jobs,” said Raelynn Deaton, assistant professor of biology.

Many of them have been acknowledged by scientists from various academic institutions for their presentations and achievements at local and international conferences, including the Texas Branch of the American Society of Microbiology, Texas Academy of Science, Southwestern Association of Naturalists, and the Third European Conference for Poeciliid Biologists. ★



## University Spokesman Retires



After 37 years of serving as the voice of Sam Houston State University, Frank Krystyniak retired on Aug. 31.

While directing SHSU's public relations program Krystyniak was involved with writing, photography, design, web design and editing, publications coordination, advertising, production of brochures, posters, campus view books, and other materials. He worked in the administrations of SHSU presidents Elliott Bowers, Martin Anisman, Bob Marks and Jim Gaertner.

He served on the statewide Texas Higher Education Commission Communications Task Force for implementation of the Texas

Academic Skills Program (TASP) and was appointed as SHSU's customer relations representative for the statewide Compact With Texans initiative.

In addition to serving as the university's director of public relations, Krystyniak also taught at SHSU for 28 years, including courses in mass communications, reporting, editing, feature writing, magazine editing and production, sports reporting, and public relations. He also secured a chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America for the university, oversaw its reaccreditation, and served for many years as chapter adviser. ★

## Services Held For John Holcombe

Memorial services were held on Dec. 20 for John W. Holcombe, 68, professor of political science, who died Dec. 11 after collapsing on campus.

Holcombe had been a member of the SHSU faculty since 1966 and was the recipient of the university's 1991 Excellence in Teaching award.

Holcombe taught classes in American politics, legislative politics, and political participation. His research interests included state legislatures and the U.S. Congress.

Memorials can be made to the John Holcombe Scholarship Fund at SHSU through University Advancement. ★

## Balas Named Fulbright Scholar



Glenda Balas, mass communication department chair at Sam Houston State University, is spending the spring in Nova Scotia, Canada, as the recipient of a Fulbright Scholar Grant.

On leave from February to May 2009, she serves as the research chair for globalization at Dalhousie University.

While in Canada, Balas will conduct face-to-face interviews with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation personnel, interviews and focus group sessions with residents of Nova Scotia, content analyses of CBC programming, and archival research.

She plans to use her research findings to compare and contrast the U.S. and Canadian public media histories, which focus mainly on cultural values, audience reception, and junctures in policy development.

The Fulbright Scholar Program is sponsored by the United States Department of State. Additional funding comes from participating governments and host institutions in the United States and abroad. ★

## Sam Grad Named ‘Student Teacher Of The Year’

SHSU alumna Leslie Mills was recognized in October as one of two Student Teachers of the Year for the state by the Texas Directors of Field Experiences.

Mills, who completed her student teaching at Glen Loch Elementary in the Conroe school district, was selected based on a videoed lesson plan that was judged on her planning and preparation, knowledge of the subject taught, management of instruction, interaction and communication, professionalism, and inclusion of all students.

“It is quite an honor for Leslie to have been selected, and her achievement reflects well on her and on Sam Houston’s educator preparation program,” said Brian Miller, director for the SHSU Educator Preparation Services.

Mills, who student taught during the fall 2007 semester, currently teaches first grade at Glen Loch Elementary. She and her husband, Steven, live in Conroe. ★



## Faculty and Staff Giving Reaches 78 Percent

The faculty and staff have continued as partners in the future of Sam Houston State University. Their time, talent, and energy help enrich the academic and personal lives of all who attend SHSU. As members of the SHSU “family,” they are dedicated to helping fulfill the educational mission.

Each fall, a five-to-six week volunteer-driven annual giving campaign helps contribute needed dollars for scholarships, academic and program enrichment, equipment, and technology. The annual faculty and staff campaign began in fiscal year 2000–01 and the giving participation

rate was 18 percent. This past fall, the campaign set a new record with a participation rate of 78 percent. Faculty and staff have raised more than \$200,000 annually the past few years.

The volunteer committee includes about 55–60 employees representing each of the colleges and administrative divisions. Jim Bexley, Smith-Hutson Endowed Chair of Banking; Rosanne Keathley, associate professor of health education; and Sherry Henke, budget manager in Enrollment Management; serve as the volunteer leadership. ★

### FACULTY/STAFF ANNUAL GIVING PARTICIPATION RATE FALL 2008

Academic Affairs	100.0%
College of Education	100.0%
President’s Division	100.0%
Student Services	100.0%
University Advancement	100.0%
Enrollment Management	91.7%
College of Business Administration	90.2%
College of Criminal Justice	84.7%
Newton Gresham Library	80.9%
Finance & Operations	73.1%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	60.7%
College of Arts & Sciences	49.8%
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>78.3%</b>



## Sam Houston Documentary Web Site Launched

History buffs and educators have a new resource for the life and times of Gen. Sam Houston with the launching of the Sam Houston Project's new Web site [www.samhoustonmovie.com](http://www.samhoustonmovie.com).

The unique, interactive site was created as a companion piece for Denton Florian's documentary, "Sam Houston," the first video biography that chronicles the famous politician's life from his birth in Virginia through his time in Tennessee, in the U.S. Senate and beyond.

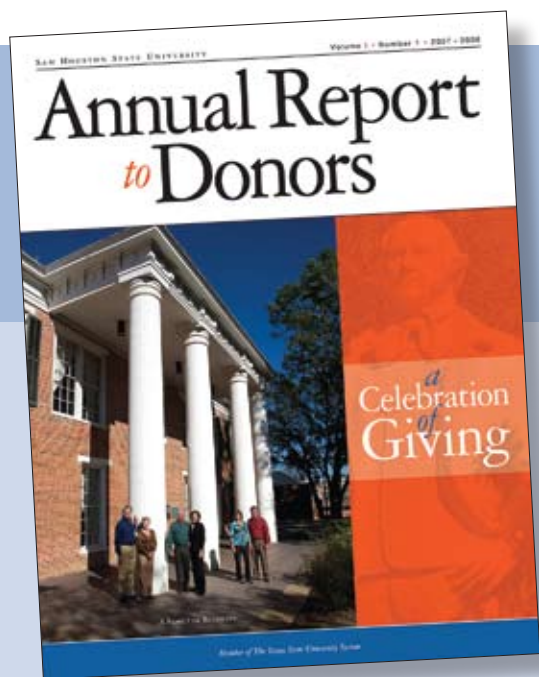
It provides information on people and places that were influential to and influenced by Houston, dispels and validates famous myths and legends, and offers a chronological timeline of his life, placed in historical context with other events happening across the U. S. at that time.

The Web site also contains hundreds of GPS coordinates for areas relevant to Houston's life, as well as museums and gravesites, on Google Maps, where users can see pictures and satellite images, get driving directions and find nearby restaurants or hotels.

In addition, the site hosts nearly three hours of video interviews of experts—including the Sam Houston



Memorial Museum's Patrick Nolan and Gene Pipes—that will not be included in the film, as well as free educator resources, including a video and script for a children's musical based on Houston's life and podcasts by historical experts. ★



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IN MEMORY OF  
Emma Normand  
George R. and Guadalupe Normand



**M**any times in sports, people tend to overdramatize moments on the field. Too often the terms “greatest game ever” or “a truly unbelievable moment” get thrown around from media and fans alike. When an underdog pulls off a victory they are talked about having to “overcome all odds” to get where they are.



HEATH PUGH, Senior

# AGAINST THE ODDS

By Jason Barfield



Most of the time, it is people just getting caught up in the moment.

With the Sam Houston State baseball team, there has been no shortage of incredible moments in the last two seasons. From a dramatic extra-inning win in the NCAA Oxford Regional playoff in 2007 against Southern Mississippi to the walk-off home run by Keith Stein in last year's Southland Conference semifinal win over Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, the Kats have shown a flair for the dramatic.

But when describing what it has taken for catcher Heath Pugh to be part of the last two seasons, no hyperbole is needed. When Pugh was in the eighth grade he was diagnosed with Type I, or as it is better known, juvenile diabetes. It is a medical condition that occurs when the pancreas stops making insulin. While it is controlled through diet and exercise, Pugh must also have daily insulin injections.

He has been active his whole life, but Pugh doesn't have to take time out of his day every time he has to get an injection. Instead he wears an insulin pump, even while he is playing, to help keep his injections on schedule.

"It's become a part of who I am," Pugh said. "When I was taking injections, I was taking four or five a day and was on a time schedule where I had to get up every day at a certain time and eat breakfast and lunch at a certain time.

"Being an athlete and a student, you aren't always going to be available at 7:30 in the morning or 12 o'clock noon. So with the pump, I can basically eat whenever I want, and I don't have to worry about a schedule. I can do whatever I want."

It is a condition Pugh has been living with, and playing with, for more than seven

years now. But anytime he has a difficult moment, he doesn't have to look far to find support. Sam Houston State pitching coach Chris Berry also has lived with the same ailment and, like Pugh, learned to continue to play baseball and be active.

The two actually met several years ago while Berry was an assistant coach at Baylor and Pugh was attending a camp there a few months after Pugh had been diagnosed with diabetes. That gave Pugh and his family a chance to ask questions, find out more information and get introduced to the device that would change his life.

"Heath's father came up to me during the camp and started asking questions about the pump," Berry said. "He introduced himself and told me about Heath, and we started talking about it and what it had done for me. They started doing their own research and next thing you know, he was on the pump.

"Six years later, we coincidentally ran back into each other, so that is kind of a neat deal," the coach added. "It all started with some questions and about Heath's struggles being diabetic and playing football and baseball and being active. They were looking for something better, and it just so happened that I was there at the time and was a model of what (the pump) could do for you."

For Pugh and Berry, they have been able to have a connection that most players and coaches don't get to have with each other.

"We have a different type of relationship," Pugh said. "I know that if he ever needed anything, he could call me, and if I ever needed anything, I could call him. I know he is always looking out for me."

Pugh, who is a senior this year, has been a big part of the Bearkats' success on the field. He has started 92 games as a catcher, helping



Pugh and pitching coach Chris Berry met at a camp.

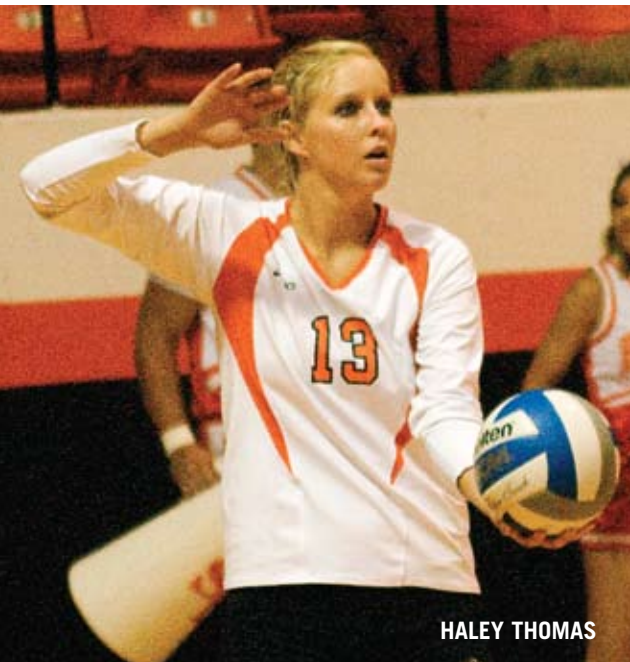
*"We have a lot of talent on our pitching staff, and as long as we keep the ball down, we are as good as anybody."*

lead the Kats to consecutive appearances in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history. His Sam Houston career statistics included 15 doubles, one triple, five home runs and 68 RBIs.

He is looking forward to another big year now that his senior season is underway.

"We have a lot of talent on our pitching staff, and as long as we keep the ball down, we are as good as anybody," Pugh said. "I try to help them out as best as I can." ★





HALEY THOMAS



RHETT BOMAR



FERGAL RAFFERTY

# FALL SPORTS WRAPUP

By Paul Ridings



IRINA SOTNIKOVA

**R**ecord-breaking performances by Bearkat quarterback Rhett Bomar and the Sam Houston women's tennis team, four intercollegiate tournament championships for men's golf, and a Southland Conference tournament semifinal appearance by the volleyball squad highlighted sports action for the 2008 fall semester.

## FOOTBALL

Rhett Bomar ranked No. 2 in total offense and No. 4 in passing in the NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision national statistics. The senior passed for 3,355 yards and 27 touchdowns and averaged 354.2 yards per game total offense.

In 19 games during the past two seasons, Bomar became the all-time Bearkat leader with career marks of 5,564 yards passing and 6,159 yards total offense. Bomar passed for more than 300 yards in nine games during his Sam Houston career. His 507 yards passing in this year's Southeastern Louisiana contest is the second highest single game total in school history.

Bomar came to Sam Houston as a transfer from Oklahoma in 2006. A kinesiology major, the Grand Prairie product earned his SHSU degree in December.

"I have had a good time here at Sam Houston," Bomar said. "I've made a lot of good friendships here that will continue for a long time."

When the annual National Football League draft comes up in April, Bomar is predicted by many to be one of the first quarterbacks selected. Bomar was selected to play in the annual Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala. in January. NFL scouts attended each of Sam Houston State's games during the 2008 season.

"Football is football. I'm thankful that Sam Houston gave me the opportunity to show what I can do," Bomar said.

Bomar was one of 12 Bearkats selected to the 2008 All-Southland Conference squad. Also named to the team were linebacker Chris Brown, wide receivers Catron Houston and Justin Wells, offensive linemen Hunter Schmidt and Nick Grimes, defensive backs Wonselah Brewer and Billy Skinner, linebacker Nolan Bucek, defensive lineman Erik Mikolajchak, fullback Matthew Powledge and punter Derrick Raymer.

## VOLLEYBALL

Led by all-Southland middle blockers Anna Ferguson and Haley Thomas, the Sam Houston volleyball team earned its third post-season conference tournament berth in the past four years. The Bearkats knocked off host team and No. 4 seed Stephen F. Austin in the first round of the tournament in a five-set thriller. Sam Houston lost to No. 1 seed Texas State-San Marcos in four sets in the semifinals.

Two spring sports teams had outstanding fall performances that bode well for the 2009 season.

## GOLF

The men's golf team won four of the five tournaments on the fall schedule. Led by junior Fergal Rafferty, the men brought home trophies from the North Texas Mean Green Classic in Denton; the Texas-Oklahoma Shootout in Kingston, Okla.; the UTSA Roadrunner Invitational in Kerrville; and the Sam Houston Fall Classic at Elkins Lake. Rafferty earned Southland Conference "Golfer of the Month" honors in October after winning individual medalist titles at the Oklahoma and UTSA events.

## TENNIS

Senior tennis player Irina Sotnikova went undefeated in singles and doubles during the Bearkats' fall schedule of four tournaments—a feat unequaled in tennis annals.

The native of Riga, Latvia, went 10-0 in singles and 12-0 in doubles with partner Peta Taylor, of Australia. Sotnikova now stands as Sam Houston's all-time leader in both singles victories (71) and doubles wins (82). ★



# ACCESS TO KATS JUST A FINGER TAP AWAY

Bearkat alumni and fans around the world can keep up-to-the-minute with Sam Houston State intercollegiate athletics with one click on the Internet at [www.gobearkats.com](http://www.gobearkats.com).

By Jason Barfield



After intense research for the best way to reach the fan and alumni base at Sam Houston State, a partnership was formed by the Athletic Department with JumpTV.com. GoBarkats.com now is the one stop for Barkat news, games and highlights.

Fans have the opportunity to purchase DVDs, official apparel or photos. Also, live video streams are available for most sports at SHSU so fans never have to miss a minute of Barkat athletics.

One of the most recent additions to the site has been the online store at barkatgear.com.

"This is something we have been working on for quite some time, and we are really excited to get this up and running," said SHSU director of athletics Bobby Williams. "One of the biggest questions we get from our fans is where can they buy apparel, so we are happy to finally have a place for them to shop online."

Barkatgear.com is easily accessed from Gobarkats.com. Currently a wide variety of items is available for purchase including polos, sweatshirts and golf bags and accessories. In the coming weeks, hats and jerseys, along with many other items, will be added to the store.

Barkatgear.com is just one in a line of additions to Gobarkats.com helping the fans get closer to Sam Houston State athletics. Photo Store was part of the original launch in October 2007, with the DVD Store jumping online this past fall.

"We are always looking for ways to connect with our fans, and this is another way to do that," Williams said. "We hope our fans take advantage of this opportunity."

The DVD store launched in August and has been a big hit, with more than 100 games already purchased. Whether fans want

*"One of the biggest questions we get from our fans is where can they buy apparel, so we are happy to finally have a place for them to shop online."*

Bobby Williams  
Director of Athletics

to go back and watch that 1996 football game against Stephen F. Austin or the 1991 game against Montana State, it is all there.

The games are all taken from coaches' game film, going back to 1989, and the run time on each game ranges from 50 minutes to an hour and 20 minutes in some cases.

As time goes on, more games will be added to the store, with the expected inventory to reach more than 300 individual games. The current archives for Barkat football go back to 1983, Ron Randleman's second year at the helm of the football program.

From 1983–1988, all of the games are on 8mm film. As the film gets older it gets increasingly harder to transfer to DVD so that process will take some time; however, as each game from that time period is successfully transferred to DVD, it will become available for purchase in the store as well.

While the store includes only football right now, plans are in place to add volleyball, soccer, men's and women's basketball, softball and baseball games that are played beginning this season, as well as past men's basketball games.



Also, any game that is streamed on Gobarkats.com will also be available for purchase following the game. Individual games are priced at \$16.95 and complete seasons range from \$109.95 to \$139.95. Also, bulk orders of 10 or more games over multiple seasons are available by contacting the Media Services Department at 936.294.3533 or by e-mailing Media Services coordinator Jason Barfield at jbarfield@shsu.edu.

If watching games as they happen is more your style, then Barkat Vision is for you. In its first full season, Barkat Vision offers fans the chance to watch the Barkats from anywhere with a live video stream of the game, complete with play-by-play.

During basketball season, 28 games were featured on the network with more than 20 on the schedule for baseball and softball season. Subscribers will also have the benefit of going back and watching games after-the-fact with every game archived to the Web site. ★

# TRIBUTE ENDOWMENT FUNDS HONOR LOVED ONES

## Margaret Ann King Conwell

By Jennifer Gauntt

*A vast majority of the scholarships and endowments set up at Sam Houston State University are given in memory or in honor of a loved one.*

*“These ‘tribute endowment funds’ are a very meaningful way to honor a loved one, faculty or staff member, classmate or to commemorate a special occasion,” said Frank Holmes, vice president for University Advancement.*

*For more information on establishing a scholarship or endowment, contact a member of the University Advancement development staff at 936.294.3625.*



**M**argaret Ann King Conwell touched the hearts of many who came through the drama department at Sam Houston State University during her lifetime.

When she died, a number of theatre alumni decided that one of the best ways to honor her memory would be to establish a scholarship in her name.

“There was just sort of a mutual attraction between the drama students and Margaret Ann,” said husband Hal Conwell, a doctor in aviation medicine in Huntsville and Continental Airlines chief flight surgeon. “She nurtured the university’s hungry and tired drama majors, and they, in turn, adored her.

“We had students in and out of our house a lot,” he said.

The first of the Margaret King Conwell Scholarships, for students majoring in musical theatre, was given in 2006. Since then, 11 have been awarded.

Margaret, an SHSU alumna who earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in general business, always had an affinity for theatre.

A dancer, skater and drum majorette in high school, she was instrumental in

# *Tribute*

## Margaret Ann King Conwell

*“She did so much for so many people. She was an amazing, amazing, amazing gal.”*

Hal Conwell, Husband



Dr. Hal Conwell

bringing Huntsville community theatre “back to life” and in transitioning the Old Town Theatre from a movie theater to a theatrical site.

“There had been a community theatre that through disuse just rusted out and stopped—then Maggie oiled it up,” Conwell said. “She started recruiting people for acting, and she got into it with some of her friends, a couple of other doctors’ wives.

“It was a natural progression, and the community got more and more and more interested in it,” he said.

Known as very affectionate and outgoing, she participated in SHSU’s production of “Show Stoppers” at the age of 50 and garnered the envy of the college students.

“It was funny, she participated in ‘Show Stoppers’ in very skimpy tights while

putting out the old vaudeville signs, and there was a joke among the college girls in the theatre up there: ‘When is Margaret going to get some cellulite,’” Conwell said.

She also traveled with the students on several occasions to see stage shows in New York.

“There was one time when they were watching a musical, and all of the sudden Margaret’s eye got blurry, and she thought, ‘my God, I’ve had a stroke,’” Conwell said. “But she went ahead and finished the musical, and when the stage lights came up, she found out what had happened. A lens had dropped out of her glasses.

“They went back and found the lens on the floor,” he said.

Margaret, who not only ran but designed Conwell’s doctor’s office on Lake

Road in Huntsville, had a charm about her that attracted people.

“Many of my aviators spent an inordinate amount of time hanging over the reception desk asking, in my opinion, rather inane, repetitious and lengthy questions regarding their medical exams,” he said. “She was loved and appreciated by the pilot group. This was obvious when more than 400 showed up in uniform to celebrate Maggie’s life at the memorial service.”

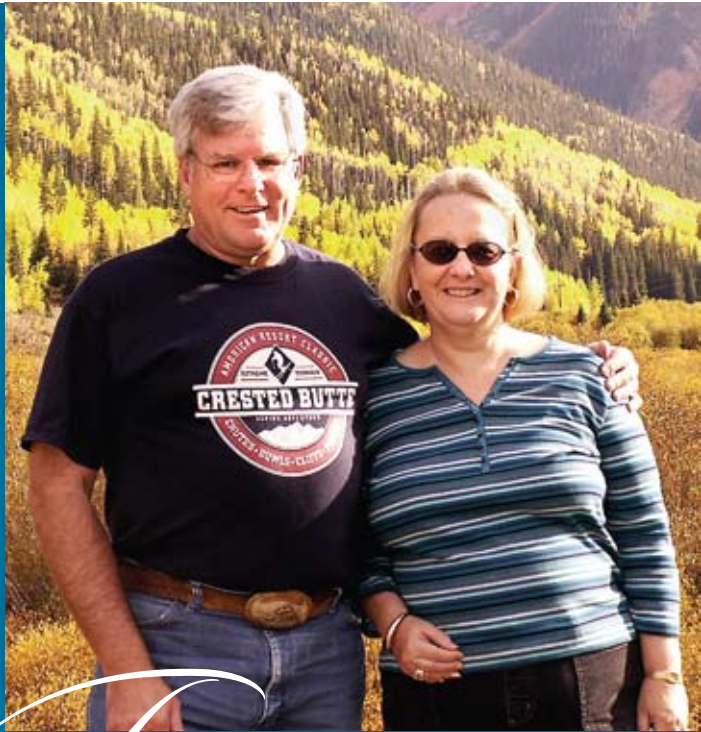
It was also the pilots from Conwell’s practice who helped support the endeavor to start her scholarship.

“Knowing how much she loved the theatre, we just picked it up and carried it on,” Conwell said. “She did so much for so many people. She was an amazing, amazing, amazing gal.” ★



# Erica Starr Czerwinski

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## *Tribute*

### Erica Starr Czerwinski

**T**o her parents, Mike and Nancy, and many of the people she encountered, she was a star long before she ever took stage.

Erica Starr Czerwinski used her middle name, given after Mike's grandmother, as her stage name when she came to Sam Houston State University as a theatre major.

When she died on March 14, 1999, the Czerwinskis decided the same day to establish a scholarship in her memory and requested donations be given to it in lieu of flowers.

"There is an old proverb that says if your name is repeated and never forgotten, you will live forever," Mike said. "We felt the endowment would mean that Erica would live forever and her name would be repeated forever."

It was an easy decision, as giving was something that was in Erica's nature.

"Erica had one greatness about her that sometimes frustrated her dad—she would help anybody that needed help," Mike said. "She used to give clothes to some of the less fortunate in high school so they would have something nice to wear on an award day. She was always giving. That was just her way.

"She gave people rides because she had a car and others didn't, and she'd get in trouble with us because she'd be late," he said. "We had five cats in the house, and I don't know how many outside. Erica would always bring home strays."

"Erica, being the person she was, would loan other people money until their student loans came in," Nancy said. "She would call us and say, 'Mom, can you send me a check for \$500 for so-and-so because his student loan hasn't come in, but as soon as he gets it, he'll pay you right back.' This kept going on and on.

"That's another reason we decided to give as much as we could."

Theatre was something that didn't interest Erica until high school, but she was very good at it. A choir member with "a beautiful voice," she used her skills in state competitions, as a Texas Renaissance Festival participant, and as the Cowardly

Lion in a Houston production of "The Wizard of Oz."

After visiting SHSU's theatre program and spending three hours with the department chair, students and faculty members, the Czerwinskis were sold on SHSU because Erica would get more hands-on training in the whole theatre process, in helping to build the sets and create the costumes, than she would at other universities she had considered.

"The program fit her so well because they had all the workshops after class, and

*"Erica had one greatness about her that sometimes frustrated her dad—she would help anybody that needed help."*

Mike Czerwinski,  
Erica's Father

she liked being hands-on," Nancy said. "She wasn't afraid to crawl under a set and screw it together when everyone else thought they were too big of a star to do any of that.

"Erica was just engrossed in it," Nancy said. "She loved it."

These lessons led Erica to take a more pragmatic approach to her education.

"She decided after a few weeks at Sam Houston that yes, she was talented at singing and dancing, but so were a dozen other people," Nancy said. "So she decided that instead of trying to be the star of everything, she would go into technical theatre, which was the lighting and sound. Because then, she said, if she ever worked in a small theatre, she could be the star and do all the technical things."

The Erica Starr Memorial Theatre Endowed Scholarship is now given to theatre students who focus on the technical aspects of theatre. After the endowment began generating funds on its own, the Czerwinskis used money they were giving to supplement the endowment to establish the Erica Czerwinski Scholarship for musical theatre students.

"We were fortunate that we could pay for our daughter's and our son's educations, and we thought after that, if that money wasn't going to be used for her education, with all of her friends and the problems we found in the financial world, we felt that the best thing we could do was use that money to help someone else," Mike said.

Additionally, the two have established a planned gift that will later give Erica's inheritance to the program for scholarships.

"We have a son and a daughter. Our son is still alive; our daughter is still with us but not living," Mike said. "We said we wanted her half to go to the program that she appreciated. She loved Sam Houston, and she loved that theatre.

"We feel this is a gift from Erica, and if a student receives a scholarship, we hope they think about this later in life, think about how Erica helped them, and if they are financially able, they will in turn reciprocate and help someone else," he said.

Still very strong supporters of the theatre program, the Czerwinskis said they are excited about the growth of the program, and in particular, the new Performing Arts Center that is currently under construction, because "until you are involved with it, you don't know how good it is," Mike said.

"We are so happy to see such a wonderful project, and it is so well deserved for all performing arts students," the couple wrote in an e-mail after hearing about the center's approval. "We know Erica Starr will be there on opening night." ★



## SHSU Honors 2008 Distinguished Alumni

Five Sam Houston State University graduates who have made notable contributions in business and education, as well as to SHSU itself, were honored as Distinguished Alumni on Oct. 17, as part of the university's 2008 homecoming festivities.

The honorees included Eleanor Paxton Smith Garrett, Jimmie Gibbs-Munroe, John R. Ragsdale, George C. Yax and Quatro E. Brooks.

### Eleanor Paxton Smith Garrett



A former teacher, Eleanor Garrett, along with her husband, Charles, established Garrett Electronics, Inc., a metal detection empire whose name is recognized globally.

Their products have been used by the airline industry, numerous Olympic games—including the upcoming 2010 games in Vancouver—treasure hunters, for security and hobby.

Garrett is a 1954 and 1955 graduate of SHSU with a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education and a Master of Education degree, respectively.

After graduating, she taught in Trinity County, Beaumont and Garland. Later, she developed and directed a kindergarten program at Orchard Hills Baptist Church, also in Garland.

The startup capital for the Garrett electronics company, founded in 1962, came from her Texas Teacher Retirement System funds to help create and market the device designed by her husband.

Today air travelers around the world either walk through a Garrett detector or are scanned with a Garrett hand-held wand, and Olympic athletes are protected during games by security devices built at the family-operated factory in Garland.

Garrett has been commissioned as a "Yellow Rose of Texas," an honorary recognition granted only by the Texas governor.

She is a 50-year member of the Order of the Eastern Star, a charter member of the Garland Women's Building organization, an SHSU Alumni Association Life Member and a life member of the Dallas Genealogical Society. She also participates in a number of lineage-related societies, such as the Magna Charta Dames and Barons.

In addition to managing their electronics company, she and Charles maintain a tree farm in East Texas and were honored with the 2002 Tree Farmer of the Year award.

## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI GALA

Following in the next four pages, are photos of the event taken by Paul Olle, The Gallery of Huntsville.





## Jimmie Gibbs-Munroe



Jimmie Gibbs-Munroe knows her way around a horse, a rope, a barrel and even a goat.

An SHSU graduate with a bachelor's degree in education, the multi-champion cowgirl conducts horsemanship and barrel racing clinics worldwide, including Australia, Brazil and Canada, as well as the United States.

A champion in junior and high school rodeo before coming to SHSU, Munroe was a member of the university's 1974 national championship rodeo team, participating in barrel racing, goat tying and breakaway roping and earning three individual national titles for barrel racing and "all-around" in two years.

After college, her career carried over into professional rodeos, where she earned additional accolades.

She competed in 11 different National Finals Rodeos with three different horses and in 1984, won the most money for the year out of all of the contestants. Munroe also holds five

world titles within the Women's Professional Rodeo Association, in barrel racing and as tie-down roper and all-around champion.

As president of the WPRA, from 1978 – 1993, she led the association in acquiring equal prize money to the men and worked to obtain national sponsors, the mandatory use of electric timers and better arena conditions.

In 1990, she was named the Coca-Cola "Woman of the Year in Professional Rodeo," was awarded the Tad Lucas Award by the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in 1996 and was inducted into two halls of fame: the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 1992 and the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1997.

She was inducted into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame (in 2003) and last year was awarded the Lane Frost Award.

She has served on the executive board of the National Cowgirl Museum since 1974.



## John R. Ragsdale



John R. Ragsdale is a name that will forever be emblazoned on the Sam Houston State University campus.

A recent donation by the 1959 graduate provided funding for the Office of Alumni Relations, the Enrollment Management division and for SHSU students through the creation of the Winnie Laurene Ragsdale Scholarship Endowment fund, named in honor of Ragsdale's mother.

For his generosity, the SHSU Visitor and Alumni Center became known as the John R. Ragsdale Visitor and Alumni Center.

A Caballero as an undergraduate—the precursor to the Sigma Chi fraternity, of which he was also initiated as a member—he went on to earn his Bachelor of Business Administration degree and a commission in the U.S. Army.

After working with the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company for several years, with whom he was named one of the “Top Ten Sales Representatives,” Ragsdale decided to branch out, opening a Burger King franchise in Houston. At the time of his retirement in 2000, he owned or co-owned a chain of 23 restaurants, with gross sales of \$20 million annually and more than 450 employees.

During this time, he also became affiliated with Klein Bank, serving on the board of directors and becoming one of five major stockholders. Klein Bank was later sold to Amegy Bank.

Ragsdale currently volunteers with the Montgomery County Emergency Assistance program and serves on the board of directors for April Sound Church, where he is an active member.





George C. Yax



More than 10 years ago, George Yax declared that he and his family “have truly lived the American Dream,” having taken the company he started in 1981 “public” in 1993 and receiving the Entrepreneur Of The Year award for Louisiana in 1997.

By 1997, Yax’s third underwater diving company, American Oilfield Divers, Inc., had expanded to 2,400 employees on six continents while controlling 30 percent of the Gulf of Mexico sub-sea construction business. They also laid underwater pipelines, manufactured sacrificial anodes and sub-sea pipeline repair tools and fabricated proprietary offshore oil platforms.

He owned 21 diving support vessels and had entered into the underwater robot business, with company annual revenue approaching \$200 million.

Yax retired that year, at the age of 57, though he remained chairman of the board, and he and his wife, Necia, and their family moved to Trail’s End Ranch.

In 1998, the company was sold to another NASDAQ company for \$280 million dollars.

All of this from an ex-SHSU geography professor.

Yax, who earned his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 1966 and Master of Business Administration degree in 1967, was a non-traditional student when he came to SHSU in 1962. He had previously served in the U.S. Army from 1959–1962, earning the rank of sergeant.

He was elected president of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity and taught 12 hours of geography on a fellowship at SHSU while earning his master’s degree.

After receiving his MBA, he began working in Houston for an underwater contractor, the field he remained in for the duration of his career.

Today, Yax and his family continue to work to improve their home at Trail’s End Ranch, putting in “at least six hours a day” (and “loving every minute”).

Animal lovers, they provide a home to 10 endangered species from around the world, including animals from China, India, Manchuria, Africa and Tibet.





## Quatro E. Brooks



A former “Big Man on Campus” who found his home on the Bearkat football field, Quatro Brooks is now “building dreams into reality.”

The 1995 SHSU graduate with a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology is the Alumni Association’s 2008 “Distinguished Young Alumnus.”

Brooks, who coached high school football and baseball for several years after graduating, found his calling in home building in 2000, when he was named D.R. Horton’s “Builder of the Year.”

In 2002, he and friend Mitchell Moore established a custom home-building business, BrooksMoore Custom Homes, and in 2005, after Moore left the industry, Brooks started Brooks Custom Homes, LLC, which has become a multi-million dollar business.

He now creates approximately eight homes per year, “each true custom, ranging in size and price,” and was recently featured on the cover of *The Builders Journal* with his wife, Kimberly.

“Although there have been periods of considerable change along the way, Quatro, the person, has not changed,” said a nomination letter. “His ingredients for success are at his core: honesty, determination, a commitment to serving others and a strong faith in God.

“Even at a time when the housing market has slowed considerably, Quatro’s ingenuity and ‘Do the right thing’ reputation within the market continue to enable his company to move forward.”

A Sigma Chi fraternity alumnus who was voted homecoming duke, Brooks’ generosity in the Houston area hasn’t gone unnoticed.

“He and his employees donated their time to organize and lead the construction for a deserving family,” said another letter. “The home of Bob and Sherri Weis, who foster 13 ‘special needs’ children, was in real need of repair and expansion.

“Brooks Custom Homes teamed up with a local church, and with the help of 800 volunteers, they added 1500 square feet and completely renovated the home.” ★



## Association Recognizes 1,000th Life Member

The Sam Houston State University Alumni Association recently reached a milestone when it received its 1,000th life member.

Terry Carlton, a 1960 SHSU graduate with a degree in physics who became the 1,000th life member in December, said the decision to join the Alumni Association at that level came from all of the memories SHSU holds for him.

"I met my wife there. We met the first day of her freshman year and the first day of my senior year; we dated that year and married the next summer," he said. "Based on my experience in ROTC at Sam Houston, I enjoyed my first career, 23 years on active duty in the military. I got to travel and see the world. I came back home and retired as a full colonel in 1983."

As a member of the Esquires and charter member of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity, the friendships he made can't be surpassed, Carlton said.

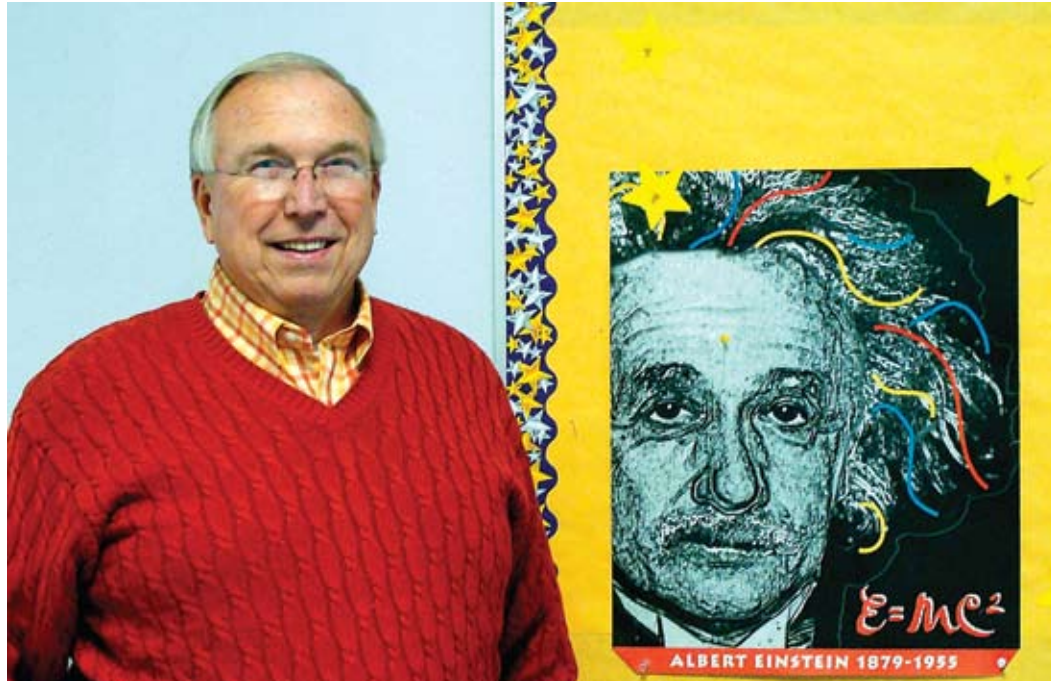
"The thing that really brought me back to Sam was the fact that those friends were still there, a lot of them in the Huntsville and Houston areas, and the fact that we're able to get together and see what they have done through the Alumni Association," he said. "So many of them are involved."

After his military career, Carlton became a physics professor at Stephen F. Austin, teaching more than 10,000 students in his 20 years there. He recently returned to the profession, teaching chemistry and physics in Onalaska.

"I'm 70 years old, and I have a lot of energy for a 70-year-old," he said. "I teach because I love science, and I love to see the lights come on for kids."

He and his wife, Judy, currently live on a ranch outside of Groveton. They have a son and a daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.

Since December, the total number of life members has risen to more than 1,050.



Terry Carlton, SHSU Alumni Association's 1,000th Life Member

This number is more than double the amount of life members the association had in 2005, when there were 485.

"Just in the last two years, we've seen a significant growth in life memberships," said Alumni Relations director Charlie Vienne. "More and more alumni are realizing the benefits of life memberships and never having to pay dues again."

The money from life memberships is placed into an endowment, which is used to offset operating costs for the Alumni Association, for such events as the Distinguished Alumni Gala and regional receptions, as well as supports the association's regional clubs, according to Vienne.

"The Alumni Association receiving its 1,000th life member is a significant milestone that is a testament to the program's development," said vice

president for University Advancement Frank Holmes. "The combined endowments for our alumni program have grown to nearly \$2 million, which is larger than many other alumni associations at larger universities."

Life memberships can be purchased for \$1,000 for individuals and \$400 for senior citizens or recent graduates. Joint memberships are also available.

In addition to a special "1,000th member" plaque, a brick will be placed in the Alumni Garden designating Carlton as the 1,000th life member and he was recognized during halftime at a Bearkat basketball game this season.

For more information on becoming a life member, call the SHSU Alumni Relations office at 800.283.7478 or visit <http://alumni.shsu.edu>. ★



## 2009 Alumni Board

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Mary Ellen Thornton

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Don Ward

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Charlie Vienne

*Ex Officio*

## Upcoming Events

Visit us at <http://alumni.shsu.edu>

### Friday, April 24

Service Awards Luncheon

### Thursday, April 30

Austin—Washington County  
Alumni & Friends  
Brenham

### Tuesday, May 12

Rangers vs. Seattle Mariners  
Rangers Ballpark  
Arlington

### Wednesday, June 10

Astros vs. Chicago Cubs  
Minute Maid Park  
Houston



Washington, D.C.  
and New York

**EVENTS**



Top: SHSU President Jim and Nancy Gaertner, attended an elegant event in the home of Marilyn and Bill Dabaghi in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 12. Bottom: The Harvard Club of New York City was the site of a holiday gathering held for SHSU New York area alumni on Dec. 12. The event was sponsored by (left to right) Janet and Joe Smyth, Hugh and Patricia O'Kane and Jean and Dan Rather.





## LOVE FOR FAMILY AND MUSIC INSPIRES GIFT

HARLEY, MARJORIE AND DAVID REX

**T**he fine arts have always played a prominent role in the lives of the Rex family.

Harley Rex taught at SHSU for 35 years, serving in a number of capacities including director of the marching band and the concert and jazz bands, saxophone instructor, and as the teacher of one of the university's most popular courses ever—The History of Rock and Roll. He was also assistant chairman of the music department and chairman of the summer music camps at SHSU.

Marjorie Rex, who received her Master of Arts degree from SHSU in 1967, was also a professional musician and educator, sharing the love of the arts with her husband.

All three of the Rex children—Don, David and Cynthia—are Sam Houston State graduates. The third Rex generation will be represented this fall when grandson Travis begins his academic career at SHSU.

Although David, a radiologist, chose the field of medicine for his vocation, he also loves music and has even worked professionally as a drummer and tympanic musician.

As a tribute to his father—"the person who inspired me"—and to the school that launched his career as a successful physician, David established the Harley E. Rex Endowed Scholarship Fund to benefit students in SHSU's music program.

The Rex family has a vision for the music program at Sam Houston State. They see the School of Music enlarging and improving as time goes on. They are excited about the new and capable faculty who are teaching some immensely talented students in the program. And they are very excited about the future of fine arts at Sam Houston State University with the construction of the new Performing Arts Center.

"We give in a variety of areas to Sam Houston State University, and we are confident that our gifts are a wise investment," said Harley. "We are happy to be a part of the legacy of this great university."

**To learn more about ways you can support Sam Houston State University, visit <http://www.shsu.edu/giving> or call 936.294.3625.**

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