

# Carry the VISION

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## Gift Reflects Success of “Mirror-Image” Alumni

Gary Dudley and Charles Amato are pictures of success, and their pictures are almost mirror images of each other. The two Sam Houston State University alumni met in elementary school while growing up in La Porte, Texas.

They lost touch during their teen years but met again in the mid-60s when they pledged the same fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon. They each received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from SHSU before setting out to make their marks on their communities.

“Our entire time at Sam, from the day we arrived to the day we graduated, was something we will never forget,” said Gary Dudley, Class of ’69. “From having mixers, to sitting on the hill, going to Campus Corner and meeting people from all over the state and beyond, we couldn’t have asked for a better college experience.”

After graduation, Dudley began coaching in the Houston school district. In lieu of being drafted, he joined the Marine Corp. After six months of active duty, he coached for another year and then took a job selling insurance products to banks and credit unions in the Houston area.

After earning his degree in 1970, Amato began a banking career with Bay City Bank and Trust. In 1974, the two met again at a party in Houston, where Dudley recruited his fraternity brother to work with him and sell life insurance in San Antonio.

Two years later, the entrepreneurs decided to venture out and co-founded their own company, Southwest Business Corporation (SWBC), with the purpose of providing insurance to financial institutions, while at the same time providing high standards in customer service.

Today, San Antonio-based SWBC is a multi-faceted company with more than 1,400 employees and offices across the country. Dudley and Amato have each been inducted into the San Antonio Business Hall of Fame. In 2009, they were both awarded the Beta Gamma Sigma Medallion for Entrepreneurship. They have also been recipients of the SHSU Distinguished Alumni Award, are members of the President’s Circle, serve on the College of Business Administration Advisory Board, and are Life Members of the SHSU Alumni Association. In 2006, both were inducted into the College of Business Administration’s Hall of Honor. They are also both part owners of the San Antonio Spurs. And, Amato is the Chairman of the Texas State University System Board of Regents.

While Dudley and Amato have remained active with their alma



*Charlie Amato & Gary Dudley*

mater, they are now extending their generosity by establishing an endowed academic chair, reserved for the dean of the College of Business Administration. The \$1 million gift will enable the university to attract and retain a scholar and academic administrator to lead the college. The chair will be named after the donors, as will the college’s Dean’s Suite of offices.

Dudley and Amato could not think of a better way to show Sam Houston their support.

“Both professionally and personally we understand the importance of giving back, and we appreciate all that Dean Mitchell Muehsam and President Dana Gibson have done to contribute to the success of our youth,” Dudley said. “We have hired many SHSU graduates who become leaders not only at SWBC but in the community.”

“Getting a solid foundation is important, and that is just one of the many things SHSU offers,” he said.

Dudley and Amato credit Sam Houston State University for giving them a well-rounded education and teaching them the value of hard work, adding that they are proud they can help SHSU continue that success with future students.



# College Takes “Next Step” With Naming Campaign



*SHSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences is on path to becoming one of the country's premiere colleges*

Sam Houston State University alumni and friends have a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The “Next Steps” campaign is offering naming rights to many of the facilities and meeting areas within the CHSS Building, including the Student Advising and Mentoring Center, a 250-seat auditorium, an open computer lab, an art plaza and classrooms.

SHSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences is on path to becoming one of the country's premiere colleges by integrating research and scholarship into the education of those studying history, political science, foreign language and culture. While faculty dedication and student enthusiasm is ever-present on campus, several needs have been identified to help the CHSS reach national prominence.

Financial contributions are greatly encouraged to help the college fulfill its vision. By purchasing naming rights, gifts will be used to fund student scholarships in the form of tuition, study-abroad programs and graduate research assistantships. Funds would also support program enrichment in all eight departments of the CHSS, allowing SHSU to attract notable educators and other distinguished individuals through endowed chairs and professorships.

Amid revolutionary changes in the way universities teach students, contributions to the “Next Steps” campaign will allow the college to lead the way for teaching innovation by offering endowments for Masters Teacher Chairs and additional funding to the Center for Pedagogical Innovation.

The “Next Steps” campaign allows alumni and Friends of SHSU to honor loved ones, colleagues and professors by putting their names on facilities and programs within the CHSS. Gifts to the college are appreciated at any level and can be used in any area you choose.

For more information about the “Next Steps” campaign, contact University Advancement at 936.294.3625 or visit [www.shsu.edu/-ua\\_www/giving](http://www.shsu.edu/-ua_www/giving).

## Schoppe Endowment to Provide the Gift of Education

Thomas Schoppe was the son of immigrant parents who settled west of Galveston, setting up a homestead on 250 acres where they started a family farm. The family worked the land and planted corn and cotton, learning quickly the value of hard work and an appreciation of living in a country where people who worked hard could own land of their own.

In 1912, when Thomas Schoppe was 27 years old, he decided he could better serve his family by leaving the farm and earning a teaching degree. He and his wife, Etta, moved to Huntsville so he could attend Sam Houston Normal Institute to receive a certificate of education. Etta washed and ironed clothes for people in the community to help pay for her husband's tuition. After graduating, Schoppe taught in many school districts in Texas and later retired in Port Arthur where he was the county school superintendent.

Thomas and Etta Schoppe had seven children. Their daughter Emafred Schoppe Pengelly also attended SHSU, earning a degree in political science.

“Our parents taught us four very important lessons growing up: first, love and serve your God; second, love, honor, respect and take care of your family; third, give two years of your life in service to your country; and fourth, you need an education, and you better figure out how you are going to get it,” Pengelly said.

To ensure and enable others to get an education as well, Pengelly has established the Schoppe Family College of Education Scholarship Endowment in memory of her parents. The endowment offers one-year scholarships to full-time SHSU students studying in the College of Education.

“My father was a consummate teacher,” Pengelly said. “His greatest joy was to see the light come on when a student would grasp the lesson being taught.”



*Thomas & Etta Schoppe*

Pengelly said she is proud the endowment gift will help others get their education, so they, too, can experience the joy of passing on knowledge to others.



# Contributions Provide Much-Needed Facelift To Austin Hall

It has been 27 years since Austin Hall was last renovated, and now thanks to the generosity of three charitable foundations, the architectural symbol of Sam Houston State University is undergoing extensive repairs and a much-needed facelift.

Austin Hall first opened its doors in 1851 as Austin College, a Presbyterian school for which Gen. Sam Houston was on the first board of governors. The landmark was later owned by the Methodist Church before it sold the building to the citizens of Huntsville. In October 1879, it became Sam Houston Normal Institute, and for the first time, it prospered.

In 1888 Old Main was built to meet the needs of a growing student population. The two buildings became historical fixtures for Sam Houston State University until a fire in 1982 destroyed Old Main and left Austin Hall damaged.

Austin Hall was restored and rededicated in 1986. Today it is still used for university receptions, meetings and special events, making it the oldest continuously used higher education facility west of the Mississippi River.

SHSU's Facilities Planning and Construction Office is leading the new renovation and preservation project which includes everything from the restoration of the cupola to floor refinishing, as well as the installation of new electrical and plumbing systems. Estimated to cost \$2 million, the



*The architectural symbol of Sam Houston State University, Austin Hall, is undergoing extensive repairs and a much-needed facelift*

project has benefitted from the generous support of alumni, businesses and charitable foundations.

To date, three foundations have committed to assisting in the funding for the Austin Hall restoration project. Houston Endowment, Inc., The Brown Foundation, Inc., and The Elkins Foundation have made sizeable contributions to help restore an important part of Sam Houston and Texas history.

The project is now underway at Austin Hall and is scheduled to be completed in May 2012.

Individuals may contribute to the renovation by contacting the Office of University Advancement.

## Sam Houston State University *A Member of The Texas State University System.*

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## Alumna Bequest to Share the Value of an Education

Jeanette Venza Sowers grew up in Beaumont, Texas, one of ten children. She moved to Huntsville after graduating from high school to attend Sam Houston State Teacher's College. She earned a degree in elementary education in 1931 and began teaching school in Beaumont until she married her college sweetheart, J. Cullen Sowers, in 1934.

Cullen grew up on a county farm near Weldon, Texas. In 1928, his parents loaded up their seven children and all of their belongings to move to a farm near Huntsville, so the children could get a college education. Cullen also graduated from Sam Houston State Teacher's College in 1931, earning a degree in agriculture. He later earned a master's degree in agricultural education from what is now Texas A & M.

After the couple married, Jeanette taught school in Virginia while her husband was stationed at the Pentagon during World War II. She later taught in the Austin school district while he worked on his doctorate at the University of Texas. Cullen was an Associate Professor of Agriculture at Sam Houston State from 1938-1941. Then the couple moved to Commerce, Texas, where he became dean of East Texas State Teacher's College. They lived there until Cullen's death in 1972. Soon after, Jeanette moved back to Beaumont to be near her family.

Although Jeanette never had children of her own, she loved being near her siblings and their children, many of whom also attended Sam Houston State University. "Aunt Jeanette talked about Sam Houston

all the time, especially living in Jackson Hall when Cullen taught agriculture at Sam," said her nephew Jasper "J.E." Tramonte. "She and Cullen loved the university and were so excited when I decided to attend as well."

Jeanette passed away in December of 2009 at the age of 101, but her legacy lives on through her nieces and nephews and a contribution to her beloved university. "She always lived a frugal life. She saved her money and made specific plans on what to do with it when she passed," said Tramonte.

Jeanette set aside \$200,000 to be donated to Sam Houston State University. The gift was used to establish the J. Cullen Sowers and Jeanette Venza Sowers Education Scholarship Endowment to provide financial assistance to full-time undergraduate or full or part-time graduate students majoring in any discipline in the College of Education. Jeanette's vision was to help many others fulfill their dreams of becoming educators.

"She and Cullen didn't have children; Sam Houston is what they shared together, so she felt this was the right thing to do," added Tramonte.



*Jeanette Venza Sowers*