

# Mays Business School's Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship named after legendary entrepreneur Arthur "Artie" McFerrin Jr. '65



The entrepreneurial spirit of longtime Texas A&M University benefactor Arthur "Artie" McFerrin Jr. will continue to inspire future generations of Aggies through the renaming of Mays Business School's Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship in his honor.

McFerrin, who passed away Aug. 8 after a long battle with leukemia, consistently supported Texas A&M's academic and athletic programs with major gifts. The 1965 graduate of Texas A&M University is the namesake of the McFerrin Department of Chemical Engineering, the McFerrin Athletic Center (the indoor football complex and track stadium) and the Cox-McFerrin Basketball Center.

"Widely known as one of the most generous, humble and understated leaders in business, Artie gave more in his life than he ever took," said Texas A&M Foundation President Tyson Voelkel. "He set a standard few others will ever achieve as a man of character and conviction focused on the future. It is fitting that the newly renamed McFerrin Center for Entrepreneurship will bear the name of someone so focused on giving others opportunities."

The CNVE's renaming was made possible through a \$10 million gift from McFerrin and his wife, Dorothy. These funds will advance the center's work as an international leader in entrepreneurial education. "We are truly grateful to the McFerrin family," said Eli Jones, dean of Mays Business School. "Artie's spirit lives on through the thousands of lives he has influenced and will continue to influence. His heart for Texas A&M and entrepreneurship beats in the hearts of those Aggies who choose to be courageous enough to create solutions to the world's biggest problems—those who are indeed fearless."

Funds will further help the center more effectively prepare aspiring entrepreneurs to succeed in a turbulent global economy. "Our goal is to create a state-of-the-art center that equips young people for starting and growing their ventures," said Richard Lester, the center's executive director. "With this support, we can expand our reach and impact while linking existing programs for a cohesive experience. More than grooming specific skills, we hope to train students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset: to believe they can achieve and not give up when the going gets tough."

Founded in 1999, the center offers 27 entrepreneurship programs each year, which serve more than 3,000 current students and more than 1,000 former students annually. The center engages the entire student body, assisting Aggie entrepreneurs from all academic majors, as well as those at Texas A&M System schools. The goal is to double the number of student entrepreneurs served within the next five years.

The center houses programs including the Aggie 100 Awards, Startup Aggieland, Aggie Entrepreneurship Saturday, 3-Day Startup, the MBA Venture Challenge, the Reynolds and Reynolds Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans. Recent programmatic additions include the creation of the MaroonX Accelerator, the opening of the UPC Retail Incubator and Blackstone LaunchPad, and the organization of the first Texas A&M University High School Entrepreneurship Camp.

These types of activities helped Mays Business School receive numerous honors, including Princeton Review's ranking as 20th for Undergraduate Entrepreneurship and 21st for Graduate Entrepreneurship. Affordable Schools also named the school the 47th Most Entrepreneurial School in America.

McFerrin, who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas A&M, spent his career in the chemical industry. He created KMCO LLC, a chemical processing and manufacturing company, over an 11-week period despite a major lack of funds. He also established the high-volume distillation company KMTEX in 1990, purchased South Coast Terminals in 1995 and became a partner in several other chemical processing plants in the U.S. and Asia.

The Humble resident appreciated the value of an entrepreneurial spirit. "Entrepreneurism allows you to take full control of your own life," he said in an interview before his passing. "It allowed me opportunities beyond my expectations."

The businessman and philanthropist leaves an important legacy that includes a passion for innovation, an appreciation for small businesses and a commitment to Texas A&M's excellence. "We want Texas A&M to have the greatest entrepreneurial program in the world," McFerrin added. "Texas is full of entrepreneurial-minded students, and we want them to look to Texas A&M for guidance in developing their talents and ideas."