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Children's Center Named For Becky Gates

June 5, 2006

Knowing of the keen interest taken by Texas A&M University President Robert Gates' wife in the university's children's center, a Kingwood couple has donated \$1 million for enhancement of the facility, and The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents has responded by naming it in her honor - the Becky Gates Children's Center.

Arthur McFerrin Jr., a 1965 Texas A&M graduate, and his wife, Dorothy, developed a strong friendship with Mrs. Gates in recent years, particularly because of their shared interest in education generally and specifically in Aggies, including those who have young children, noted Robert L. Walker, the university's vice president for development.

"In general, the McFerrins' \$1 million endowment is taking place because of the generous giving spirit of Arthur and Dorothy McFerrin and of Becky Gates and the vision of what the children's center could become," said Walker, who recommended the naming of the center to the regents, who approved the request Friday (May 26). "The naming of the 'Becky Gates Children's Center' is a fitting tribute to honor and recognize a lady who has embraced the true Aggie Spirit by reaching out to help others. We applaud Arthur and Dorothy McFerrin and Becky Gates for their vision and willingness to help our families here at Texas A&M University."

Dorothy McFerrin and Becky Gates had met frequently at university events, but their relationship deepened as they took "Traveling Aggie" trips to New York together, each realizing that they shared a keen interest in and devotion to improving education and childcare. McFerrin was a public school teacher, and Gates has worked in both higher and adult education.

The McFerrins have made several other major gifts to Texas A&M University, including establishing an endowed fund to support the Artie McFerrin Department of Chemical Engineering and a lead gift to the 12th Man Foundation in support of the Phase II Championship Vision Capital Campaign to help finance a multi-purpose indoor athletic complex.

Gates received her bachelor of arts degree in history from Washington State University and later earned a master's degree in student personnel administration from Indiana University. She has worked in student activities administration at Colorado Woman's College, Central Missouri College, Federal City College, Washington, D.C. and American University. She joined Northern Virginia Community College (Alexandria Campus) in 1970 and spent 24 years there, retiring in 1994.

Since coming to Texas A&M when her husband accepted the university's presidency in 2002, Gates has shown a keen interest in supporting women's activities at the university. And she has been especially enthusiastic in supporting the children's center in its efforts to help Aggie families.

Each day, the children's center serves as many as 152 children, ages six weeks to five years, providing for all areas of each child's development and early education needs. The center provides a child-centered environment that children can explore at their own pace. Center staff work closely with Texas A&M families to achieve educational goals for their children and serves as a model for quality child care, maintaining the accreditation standards set out by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

"Naming the children's center the "Becky Gates Children's Center" is a fitting tribute to honor a lady whose desire and dedication is to help create as nurturing environment of the children of Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff," Walker said.