



the

REACH

project

2020 Annual Report

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Acknowledgments

With 2020 being such a turbulent year for many families across the world, we would like to open this report with our dearest condolences to anyone that has been negatively affected by Covid-19. Between the losses of family, health, and both financial and emotional stability, this pandemic has wreaked havoc for the lives of the general public. This year has exposed the gaps in our systematic protection of Americans in a state of emergency, and more specifically it has exposed the effects of systemic poverty. This just goes to show how desperately the world needs organizations like ours, where the mission to end the roots of poverty guides us to improve the world one family at a time. Our organization would not have been able to touch the lives that we did in 2020 if it was not for the following:

Our Volunteers:

Thousands of hours of time and effort have been donated to our organization by our incredible and selfless volunteers. This year, we have juggled projects in areas including but not limited to food insecurity, health disparities, financial stability, home ownership preparedness, and education. If it wasn't for our nearly 100 volunteers over the year, we would have never been able to accomplish all the incredible feats of service that were accomplished this year.

Our Donors:

It takes a really special person to donate money to a good cause, especially in the case that most our donors did, because they were donating to help people they did not know personally. All of the aid that we were able to give our families this year had a huge price tag. All together we spent roughly \$200,000 to improve our community and help those in need. This money went to families with an immediate need to feed themselves and their children as well as into programs that will help our families with their dreams of long-term financial stability and in some cases worked to get people off the streets and into a home. The donations we got this year are responsible for making sure our Aggie family was taken care of, and we can certify that every dollar made a difference.

Our Families:

Our families are what this mission is all about. We refer to them as our Invisible Aggies to shine a light on the fact that they do not get the recognition that they deserve. In many ways, they were abandoned this year and left to fend for themselves. As an organization, we could not stand by and let that happen. We gave our all this year to help our families in as many ways as we could because they are truly incredible and selfless people. We are proud to have their trust and support and we are so thankful for the opportunity to give back and serve.

To all of you who have joined us in our mission this year, on behalf of our Board of Directors, our Executive Team, and our Advisory Boards, we extend to you our most sincere gratitude. Thank you all so much for your time, donations, and support in general. We truly cannot put into words how thankful we are.

Areas of Concern

Affordable Housing was the founding mission for our organization, and it is a mission that we have been working on since our founding and one that we continue to hold near and dear to our hearts. Given that 56.86% of households who rent are overburdened in Brazos County and the number of families that have no option but to rent due to a severe lack of affordable housing options, there is clearly a huge problem developing. For many families it is already a major problem and we have personally seen families this year that have steady income and still struggle to afford rent. This is a travesty that needs correction, and we have research teams working on solutions to this problem so that we can implement something that makes a difference.

Education is an area that is underfunded in many low-income areas and this only exasperates the divide between communities. Between companies outsourcing low education jobs abroad and massive increases in automation across the board, the number of jobs available to those without proper education is shrinking quickly. If we want to see a world in which everyone has an equal shot at success and stability, we have to fix our education crisis. As an organization, we are committed to developing programs that focus heavily on upskilling and training for more complicated fields.

Health Disparities are widely apparent between income brackets. While those with proper funding are able to get high quality medical care with cutting edge equipment for early detection and treatment, those without funding and health insurance are unable to even see a doctor for basic medical care. Without proper health screenings, individuals are left to deal with issues that could lead to losing years or even decades off their life and on top of that could put them out of work digging them even deeper into poverty. With Covid-19 spreading across the world, health has been a major priority for everyone, but we are especially passionate about taking care of the health of our families. We have been working with health experts, organizations, and Texas A&M departments to research and create free health opportunities for our community.

Financial Stability is a goal for most, but not achieved by many. There are so many facets to this issue to account for, but we are up for the task. Everything from job security, income, proper spending habits, saving, etc. is important for getting families to a place where they feel stable. Through research, educational seminars, partnerships, and individual campaigns, we have been working to take families, in some cases, from homeless to stable. We are far from done, and this mission will carry on heavily in 2021.

Emergency Relief is new for us this year. No one going into 2020 expected the mass unemployment that happened all at once and we knew as soon as it happened that we need to act. Through our meal distribution and rent assistance programs we were able to help hundreds of families stay fed and housed through this year. We are so proud of how quickly we were able to step up and serve in this new format and hope to be able to help for whatever comes next.

Organizational Growth

In order to streamline and maximize each project with the level of attention that it needs, we have made some big organization additions this year. More specifically:

We have created an **Internship Program** this summer that continues to grow and improve at every transition. We started with two teams of 4 focused primarily on Marketing and Fundraising. From the start these teams were an incredible addition to the project. They focused on everything from Social Media to developing guides for brand consistency. Moving into the fall this program grew in number of interns by 162.5%. This was a crucial growth point for the organization this year. We moved to 5 teams all focused on spreading word of our mission totally 21 interns. Through their efforts we were able to interact and partner with far more organizations than before which dramatically helped spread the word of what we are trying to do. This has led to a huge increase in support in the community and we are incredibly thankful for that.

Another area of growth is **Ags REACH**, our Texas A&M Student Organization. Creating a student organization has given us the ability to interact and recruit volunteers from the huge pool of Texas A&M students. Though this addition we have not only added 30 members to our team, but we were also able to inspire leaders and give them the opportunity to create new projects to give aid where they saw a need. In our first semester, Ags REACH was able to create and operate an awareness campaign that showcases the risk custodians on campus face when cleaning between classes due to Covid-19. We were also able to partner with different Texas A&M departments to create and distribute important health information to our families as well as create a program that allowed roughly 20 families to get a one-on-one consultation with a doctor for absolutely no cost. Lastly during this Fall semester, we were able to host our REACH Project Angel Tree program where we partnered with 128 different organizations to get gifts to roughly 150 kids whose families were struggling due to Covid-19.

To address health disparities, we created our **Health and Wellness Committee** whose job is to plan and guide the creation of the REACH Project Health and Wellness Center that we plan to launch in the Fall 2021. The individuals on this board are

prominent members in fields such as Public Health, Nursing, Pharmacy, etc. and they all have a passion for bringing down the health disparity between members of our communities. Getting this committee together was a huge accomplishment for us as an organization and we cannot wait to see what the final product turns out to be.

We have also grown our **REACH 12 Board** to account for more areas of organization guidance. Given the many facets of systemic poverty, it is crucially important that we maintain a dedicated and well-balanced board of advisors to make sure we are not only answering issues that arise, but also make sure that those solutions are the best for those we serve both short and long term. Many of the things we accomplished this year are due to the guidance we were given, so it is safe to say they are a crucial aspect of our organization.

Projects From 2020

Our **Covid-19 Emergency Response** program was launched on March 22 when we kicked off our **Meal Distribution** campaign to raise money for immediate support for furloughed Invisible Aggies and local restaurants. Thanks to the effort of our volunteers and fundraising help from Leon O'Neal Jr and Devin Morris we were able to raise \$104,000 which allowed us to feed 351 families twice a week for ~6 months. On top of that, through our partnerships with The Village, Double Dave's, Good Bull BBQ, Papa Perez, Gumby's, Fuzzy's, Hungry Howie's, Laynes, Admiral Catering, and Chartwells Catering we were able to stimulate the local restaurant economy in Brazos Valley which has been struggling massively this year. In September of this year, it was becoming clear that Covid-19 struggles were not going away anytime soon, so we pivoted to a more sustainable distribution model. We partnered with Brazos Valley Food Bank and Aggie Men's Club to deliver fresh food at no cost to our donors. This has allowed us to continue our weekly distributions to date. By the end of September, we started noticing that families coming through our distribution were unable to get proper access to masks at work and were being given a single disposable mask each to use for weeks at a time. These concerns led us to launch our **Masks for Ags** social media challenge and thanks to our donors and those who were kind enough to take part in the challenge, we were able to collect almost \$3000. With this we provided ~150 high quality, reusable masks to essential workers who were risking their lives to keep Texas A&M's campus open this Fall semester. A huge part of this project's success was due to the influence of Keller Cox, the head yell leader, and Eric Mendoza, the student body president. Thanks to their platforms and willingness to spread the word, we were able to keep our Invisible Aggies safe. Fast forward to the holiday season, we focused on the kids effected this year. We were well aware that if families were struggling with survival in general, then most likely, they were going to struggle to make the holidays special for their children. We were determined to make sure this was not a problem and kicked off planning for our **Drive Through Trick or Treating** event with help from our friends in Aggie Men's Club and the Chi Omega Sorority. This event comprised of spooky decorations and costumes

along with careful Covid-19 measures for safety where we passed out candy and treats to kids in the community. After the success of this event, our Ags REACH student organization worked to partner with 128 different organizations to host our **Drive Through Angel Tree Christmas Drive**. There was huge demand for this event due to the economic downturn that 2020 continued to bring and our family sign-up sheet filled up the day it was sent out. We are so thankful for the support we got from Texas A&M student organizations, local businesses, and individuals that signed up to adopt a kid and get them what they wanted for Christmas. Thanks to their time, funds, and effort, we were able to distribute presents of all kinds to roughly 150 kids ensuring their Christmas was still a magical experience in a year they most likely needed it most.

While we are extremely proud of how our emergency response program went this year, we knew that we could do more. Our goal of eliminating systemic poverty in Brazos Valley is a multi-part effort and there is no greater tool of change than changing the hearts and minds of our local community when it comes to what poverty looks like and what people going through it experience by **Raising Awareness**. This year, we continued our **Humans of REACH** campaign where we interview our Invisible Aggies and post their stories on our social media accounts for the community to read and learn from. We have found that while our Invisible Aggies are crucial to the maintenance and daily operations on campus, they are massively under appreciated by the Texas A&M student body. We hope that through reading these stories, students will empathize more with those around them and maybe even strike up a conversation and try to learn more. We anticipate the through this interweaving of the community, we will soon be able to leverage that for greater support for our Invisible Aggies in the years to come. While we were doing this, Ags REACH was distributing **Essential Worker Covid-19 Safety Posters** on campus and on social media. While simple, these were crucial for explaining to the student body how something as simple as wearing a mask or washing their hands regularly could protect our Invisible Aggies from unnecessary Covid-19 exposure. Many people are not aware that many of the workers on campus live in multi-generational households and are also more likely to have complications from Covid-19 due to a disproportionate amount of them with pre-existing conditions. While awareness and prevention campaign outcomes are tough to quantify, we had a better than expect spread on social media and nothing but support stemming from our posters on campus. This leads us to believe that the message was well received and potentially saved lives.

Our founding mission of **Affordable Housing** is still in its research phase, but we started to make tangible impacts in this field this year. For starters, we expanded our research by partnering with research programs on campus focusing on specific architecture, urban management, and economic sustainability. These teams are working on developing a sustainable learning village where we can not only provide affordable housing, but also provide upskilling to allow residence to rise above their current income labor and work jobs that are more advantageous for them. More tangibly, we started to work with families on **Rent Assistance**. Most notably, we had an Invisible Aggie, Mr.

Eastepp, come by our meal distribution and explain to us that he had been homeless all year and he had been sleeping on campus trying to dodge security who would make him leave. This was clearly devastating for us to hear, so we sprung to action and the community came to our aid. It took us less than 2 weeks to raise ~\$8,000 and get him moved into a fully furnished apartment for at least 6 months completely paid for thanks to our donors and Berkshire Hathaway. This was a story that really touched our hearts this year, and we are incredibly humbled to be able to provide this kind of relief in his life. This was not the only case of homelessness we ran into this year, and we worked tirelessly to work with whatever organizations we could in Brazos Valley to get those families off the streets in a timely manner. These revelations have led us to look more closely into developing temporary emergency housing, which we hope to be able to launch in the coming year.

Media Coverage

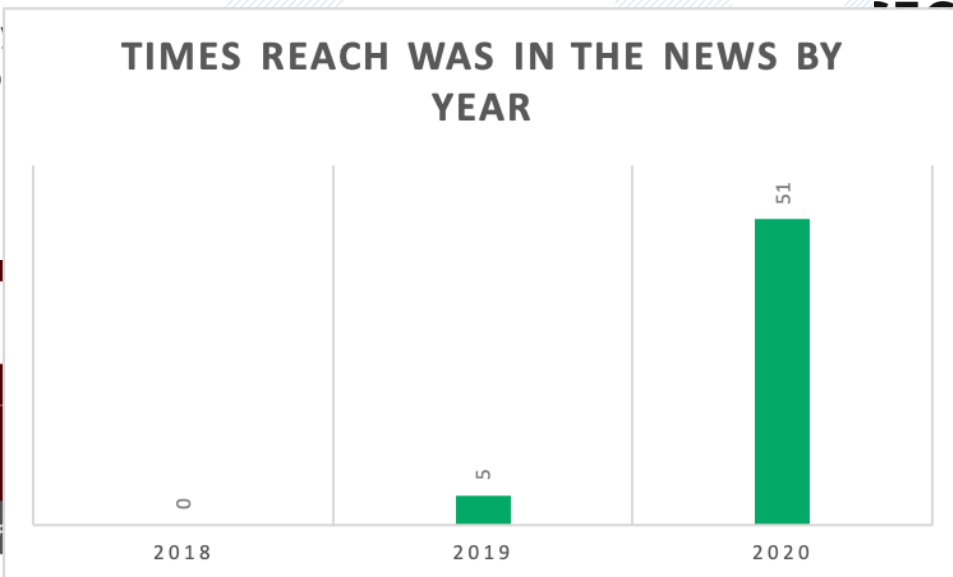
To say that our media exposure this year has exploded would be an understatement. Just this year, we have been reported on 51 times. When you compare this to the 5 times we were reported on in 2019, it is a 1020% increase! To see the full list, go to agsreach.org/In-The-News



LOCAL

REACH Project partners with A&M Foundation to support Aggies

As the holidays provide support...



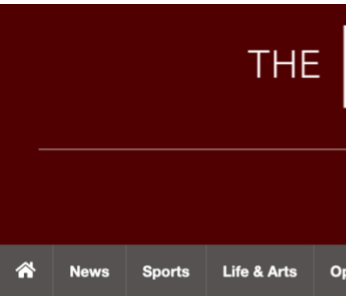
Just a SEC: Helping invisible Aggies through th...

Helping invisible Aggies through the REACH Project

Family

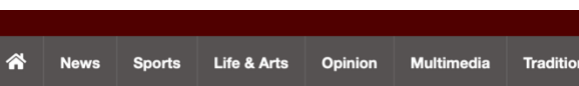
truck Aggieland and canceled the re...
to the Reach Project support Texas A&M

Howdy Aggie Family, I want to thank the Invisible Aggies on the REACH Project. Thank You! The purpose of the project is appreciation and spread of the Invisible Aggies



REACH Project starts GoFundMe page for members and A&M support staff

By Jack Corrales @JackCorrales11 Sep 29, 2020 Updated Oct 6, 2020



REACH Project hands out 200 Christmas meals to "Invisible Aggies"

Kendall Hogan · 12/22/2020

REACH Project holds Masks for 'Invisible Aggies'

By Jessica Le @jxssicalx Aug 17, 2020 Updated Sep 29, 2020



News Weather Sports



COLLEGE STATION, Texas (KBTV) - Monday to receive free meal

HELP BUTTON THE FOUR

LOCAL

REACH Project hands out FREE meals to...

SUPPORT AGGIELAND

Texas A&M Foundation Partners With REACH To Feed Local Families

