



Women's Legacy Award

HONORING AGGIE WOMEN



Merrill Bonarrigo '75 is a wife, mother, grandmother and co-founder of Messina Hof Wine Cellars, Inc.; Messina Hof Hospitality Management LLC, and founder of Designer Events Company. Merrill believes that “Nothing is impossible; everything is possible with the Lord” and she will tell you that her life is a living testimony to that fact.

Born and raised in Bryan, Merrill graduated from Texas A&M University in December 1974 with a degree in business management and marketing. In 1977, Merrill and her husband Paul began Messina Hof which was named after their respective ancestral homelands. Paul's family is from Messina, Sicily, and Merrill's family is from Hof, Germany. Today Messina Hof has wineries in Bryan-College Station, Fredericksburg, and soon to be Grapevine, Texas.

In 1991 she developed an internship program with the TAMU Parks and Recreation department that continues today to mentor students in the hospitality industry. As a guest lecturer Merrill teaches about the Texas wine industry and success in business. At Messina Hof she hosts a monthly 1st Thursday gathering for Aggie Women to connect and provide support, encouragement and mentoring for Aggie Women of all ages.

Merrill is an author, blogger, and travels as a speaker with the International Wine Tourism Conference. She believes strongly in giving back to the communities that have supported and encouraged her. She and her husband helped found the Cattle Baron's Ball for Bryan-College Station, helped to launch the Texas Reds Steak and Grape Festival in Bryan, and created an affinity partnership wine program for the Association of Former Students as well as the Bush Library.

Honors include Women's Chamber of Commerce Rising Star, Woman to Watch, Outstanding Business Person, Luis Qualia Award and Supreme Master Lady of the Knights of the Vine. She has served on Boards of Women Former Students' Network, BCS Chamber of Commerce, Texas A&M Agriculture Council, East Texas Tourism Association, BCS Tourism Advisory Council, Keep Brazos Beautiful, Texas Wine Tourism Committee, and Professional Event Manager Certificate Program committee.

Her greatest joy has been to work with her husband and to see her children and grandchildren continue the legacy.