

# Beaumont native named handler of Aggies' Reveille VIII

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Most guys would think walking a 2-year-old AKC-registered collie to school every day would be the perfect ploy to meet women.

But John Busch, 19, a Beaumont native and the handler of Texas A&M University's newly chosen mascot, Reveille VIII, simply considers it an honor to live with and care for the dog.

"Reveille gets a lot of attention from the girls at Texas A&M," Busch admitted, but "you quickly realize they're not interested in you. They're interested in the dog."

Plus, he already has a girlfriend.

On Monday, Reveille VIII was presented to the public as the school's latest incarnation of its mascot, and Busch was presented as her handler - the second handler to hail from Beaumont in the mascot's 77-year history. The first was Sam Netterville, Class of 1955.

Busch, an accounting major who takes Reville VIII to class with him, was chosen in April out of 12 freshman Corps of Cadets members in Class E2, the class of the student military organization that cares for the mascot. After months of preparation and studying, he was named handler just as Reveille VII entered retirement.

His parents - especially his mother, Cindy Busch, a 1981 graduate of A&M - are excited for their son.

"It changed our lives," she said. "That one phone call changed our lives."

After Reveille VII retired, Busch helped search for a replacement. After considering other types of dogs, he and others decided to stick with the collie breed - the last six have been collies, while the first was a mixed-breed found on the side of Texas 6 and the second was a Shetland sheepdog.

"Others just didn't have that noble appearance collies are known for," he said.

The search ended in Topeka, Kan., where Tapestry Tenacious Juell - Reveille VII's former

name - was found. Juell Collies and the Collie Health Foundation donated her to the school, and the university selected her last week as the new "first lady" of Texas A&M.

Between now and the Aggies' first football game on August 30, Busch will train the dog to handle the pressures of being a mascot.

"I'm getting ready to get her through the transition period for the first football game - 80,000 screaming fans and a cannon," he said. "There is no way any dog is ready for this."