



Mary Reilly-Magee '90, M.A. '00

Making A Splash

When Mary Reilly-Magee used to tell people that she was an English major, they would invariably ask, "What are you going to do when you graduate? Teach?"

Her answer at the time was a vehement no, but sometime after earning her undergraduate degree, she realized she really was a teacher at heart. She got her teaching certification and eventually went back to school to earn a graduate degree—also in English literature. And she's made a name for herself in San Antonio as a teacher. But not for teaching English. She teaches children how to swim.

In January 2006, Reilly-Magee opened the Love to Swim school on San Antonio's North Side as the culmination of more than two decades as a swim instructor.

Growing up in Illinois, Reilly-Magee started swimming competitively at the age of 5.

Her first job was working as a lifeguard at a neighborhood pool, and before long she was tapped to help teach swim classes. In Texas, she continued teaching swimming during college and afterwards. For 18 years, she worked for Northside Aquatics under longtime director George Block. Even when she did get a job as an English teacher, at Holmes High School, she also coached the school's swim and water polo teams. But she found teaching in the pool more gratifying than teaching in the classroom because she felt that she could see the fruits of her labor more readily.

"I just fell in love with working with kids," she says. "Preschoolers are our favorite challenge. We love seeing those kids grow from having separation anxiety when they start classes to loving it and even not wanting to leave when their class is over. I feel for the momma, but

it makes me really happy to see her have to drag her kid out of here."

Reilly-Magee began her own business by holding classes at neighborhood pools and fitness clubs, but it wasn't ideal. Club members did not want to share the pool with children's swim classes, and Reilly-Magee was frustrated that she had no control over the water temperature. (Even in indoor pools, competitive swimmers prefer cooler temperatures than what's optimal for teaching children, she says.)

So Reilly-Magee found a landlord who believed in her business plan, and three years ago opened Love to Swim, where the water temperature in both of the indoor pools is a comfortable 92 degrees, she notes. Her staff has grown to almost 50, and each year they teach about 4,400 students—from babies as young as 6 months to adults. In December 2008, Reilly-Magee opened a second Love to Swim location in Schertz.

Her two English degrees from UTSA now hang in her office, and when asked about them, she jokes, "Well, I can read a book." Since opening the business, she says, she feels like she's earned honorary degrees in business, psychology, human resources and chemistry, too. But in truth, she believes her liberal arts background serves her well.

"I think it makes me a better employer," she says. "What's wonderful about studying literature is you're studying humanity, and we certainly have a lot of humanity around here."

—Rebecca Luther

WEB EXTRA: Go to www.utsa.edu/sombrilla to see a video of Mary Reilly-Magee.

She works for the Bibb County Board of Education as an accountant. They live in Warner Robins, Ga.

06 Douglas A. Beyer Jr., B.A. in violin performance, received a graduate certificate in performance at UT Arlington and in 2007 received a master's degree in music education, also at UT Arlington. **Ashlesh Murthy**, Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology, is a postdoctoral researcher in the laboratory of UTSA immunologist Bernard Arulanandam. In April, the Association of Scientists of Indian Origin in America honored Ashlesh with the Biotex Junior Scientist Award in Immunology. This summer, he traveled to Aarhus, Denmark, to present his research findings at the sixth meeting of the European Society for Chlamydia Research. The research focuses on vaccine development for *Chlamydia trachomatis*, the most prevalent sexually transmissible disease agent with an estimated 91 million cases worldwide. The research team found success in administering a chlamydia vaccine in mice, and testing is underway at UTSA to determine its success in guinea pigs.

07 Micol Bratten, B.S. in chemical engineering, is the new project manager for Terracon Consultants with CME Department in San Antonio. **Lesli Hicks**, M.A. in history, and her husband adopted a second child from China before the 2008 Olympics. "We'd waited more than two years for a daughter to join our first, when we heard the matching process could be another year," Lesli writes. Since they adopted 10-month-old Joy in 2000, increased international adoption and higher adoption rates inside China changed the average wait from six months to three years. "Feeling life on hold again, we painfully considered giving up on the yet-assigned girl we were already calling Grace." Instead, the couple decided to apply for a harder-to-place older child, possibly with special needs or male—the latter a rarity in Chinese orphanages. "Within days, they sent us photos of a smiling 7-year-old boy," Lesli says, adding: "Two months later, we welcomed Grayson home."

Laura Dawn Howard, M.A. in education/school administration, married Brandon Charles Dieringer on Sept. 20, 2008. She is employed by the Midland Independent School District.

Robin M. Patterson, B.B.A. in human resources, works for the YMCA of Greater San Antonio as the staffing manager.

08 Donny Geyer, B.B.A. in marketing, is the longtime lead guitarist for Gabe Garcia, who was a finalist in the 2008