The quality of RPTS students’ education is a result of many types of contributions. Members of our educational team include not only faculty and staff but also donors, advisory committee members, guest speakers, leaders in the field, intern supervisors, employers, community partners, and others.

Please join our team by supporting the RPTS Department. We have added a gift catalog in the back of this newsletter which includes education programs and initiatives you can support!

Your contributions will benefit present and future Aggies. Donors, welcome to our educational team! Our Department Head, Dr. Scott Shafer (sshafer@tamu.edu; 979-845-3837) will be happy to speak with you about gifts or any other matters of interest.

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So what else has been happening in RPTS since the last newsletter? Here are a few highlights:


- We welcome Dr. Dan Richmond who recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of Utah. Dr. Richmond teaches in our youth development area and is a Nation Outdoor Leadership School Instructor in the summer.

- In May our South Pacific Study Abroad Program took students from all over campus to study environment and culture in Australia, Fiji and New Zealand. Later in the summer the “Study Aboard” course set sail in the Caribbean for a behind the scenes look at the cruise industry. We also taught field courses in Alaska to study recreation on remote federal lands and in New York City for a look at parks, recreation and tourism in one of the country’s largest and most diverse urban environments.

- Students in our Event Management classes planned and implemented the first annual “Barksgiving” event in November. The event attracted hundreds of residents and their dogs on a beautiful fall afternoon. Our students, and their professor Steve Migacz, did an excellent job running the show.

- Students recently travelled with faculty to participate in the 31st annual Texas Travel Summit, the National Recreation and Park Association Congress and will travel to a conference of the Texas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus in January.

- The ProRanger Program, a partnership with the National Park Service (NPS), has accepted 11 new students from our campus, Prairie View A&M and San
Antonio College into the next cohort. ProRanger students spend two years preparing for law enforcement careers in the NPS through coursework, field schools and certification programs.

• Dr. Stronza and Ecoexist colleagues from Botswana visited to update us on their project and promote a film they have produced about their work to help people and elephants coexist (or “ecoexist” as the case may be).

• Faculty and their graduate students continue to work in a variety of research areas to examine topics ranging from youth interventions and life satisfaction, to civic engagement, fan loyalty, border tourism, service recovery, community gardens and recreational boating. These are only a sampling of the many interesting and meaningful projects in progress.

• A few of us recently visited Sheldon Lake State Park where our Texas Coastal Watershed Program continues to educate middle school kids about the environmental values of wetlands through hands on restoration projects. Let’s put it this way, they get muddy.

• Dr. Walker’s Urban Parks Extension Program recently received a multiyear contract to work with the Memorial Park Conservancy in Houston on managing natural resources in urban parks.

• An exciting new partnership is developing with Texas A&M Galveston as they plan to offer a concentration in Tourism and Coastal Community Development. We will share a new faculty member who will office in College Station and support students on both campuses.

• There are searches underway for two new faculty members in our youth development area. These new additions will significantly strengthen our teaching, research and outreach capacity in youth development.

• This spring we look forward to Aggieland Saturday on February 14, Parent’s Weekend, April 7-9 and our Scholarship Banquet, April 13 as opportunities to connect with students, parents and alumni. Please join us.

There are more items to share but these provide some feel for happenings in recent months. We look forward to great things in 2017. As another 70 students graduate Friday, December 16th, we are reminded of the thousands who graduated in the 50 years before them. Our students make positive differences in the lives of the people they serve every day.

To all the RPTSers out there working for resorts, federal agencies, youth camps, hotels, educational institutions, conservancies, non-profits, cruise lines, guide services, churches, municipalities, consultancies and professional associations, (among others), we wish you and yours the best for 2017 – year 51. We hope to see you in College Station or elsewhere as we gather to celebrate a common ground as professionals and Aggies.

Scott Shafer ‘80
Department Head
Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
A big congratulations to Dr. Scott Shafer, for accepting the position of Department Head for Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences.

Congratulations to Dr. Corliss Outley and Dr. Jill Martz for agreeing to serve as Associate Department Head and Associate Department Head for Extension.

Congratulations to Dr. Amanda Stronza who has again been recognized as she works for the greater good of people and wildlife in Botswana.

Congratulations to Dr. Angela Durko and Mr. Rick Harwell who both recently received Neuhaus-Shepardson Faculty Development Grants.

Congratulations to Mrs. Clara Aguilar on completion of her Certificate in Fundamentals of Office Administration through TAMU’s Employee and Organizational Development.

Congratulations to Dr. Linda Enoh, Dr. Tazim Jamal, and Mr. Rick Harwell for being inducted as a Fellow in the College of Agriculture and Life Science’s Critical Thinking Academy.
Congratulations to **Dr. Jill Martz**, whom received a grant award and will act as the lead investigator in the first phase of the Community Youth Development & Statewide Youth Services Network program evaluation.

Congratulations to **Mrs. Charriss York** who works in our Texas Coastal Watershed Program and received an award to work with the City of Friendswood on a project to improve water quality and beautification through WaterSmart Gardens.

Congratulations to **Drs. Dan Richmond, Corliss Outley and Jill Martz** for their Online Education Award of $35,000 provided by COALS to develop an on-line master’s degree in Youth Development.

Congratulations to **Dr. Peter Witt and Dr. Tek Dangi** for completed publication of a series of research briefs on youth (and parental) involvement in sport, which have been downloaded about 420 times!
Led by Mr. Steven Migacz, the RPTS 321 Event Management class hosted a “Barksgiving” event in Wolf Pen Creek Park. Their mission was to provide an entertaining dog-related event that focuses on educational aspects of adopting/fostering, owning, and caring for dogs while increasing awareness for Urgent Animals of Hearne and Robertson County. This event was a fun-filled day that invited friends, families and dogs of all kinds to engage in an array of activities. Some of these activities included photo booth opportunities, a dog-centered obstacle course, pie eating contests, educational booths, food & drinks and SO MUCH MORE!
Undergraduate Spotlight
Kylee Hargrove

Why did you choose RPTS as your major?
I am passionate about many things in life, but I am especially passionate about youth and travel benefits/impacts. I believe in investing in the lives of youth because they deserve to be invested in and brought up to change this world. RPTS has many professors and classes that teach you just that, the importance of changing the lives of youth. The other passion of mine is for travel and the importance it brings to people’s lives. Travel and tourism can change the trajectory, viewpoints and even enlighten someone’s life. I wanted to study that art and the impact it has on one to learn and experience all tourism has to offer.

What is your favorite Aggie Tradition? Why?
My favorite aggie tradition is the aggie ring and what it symbolizes. The ring is the most visible symbol of the aggie network and connects Ags all around the world. Every symbol on the ring represents the values that should be held by each member of the aggie family. These values include excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and selfless service. The requirements that must be met in order to receive your aggie ring are some of the toughest in the country, which is why it has become one of the most treasured items to have as an aggie.

What was your favorite class at A&M?
My favorite class at A&M was Dr. Martz’s RPTS 474 Management of Programs and Services for Youth. Not only were many of my friends in this class, but this is the class where I learned how to invest into children and play to their strengths, not their weaknesses. This class and what was taught was able to show us different perspectives on how each of our personalities are different and that we need to embrace each of those personalities because they can all play a part in this world’s greater good. If we only cater to one learning style, some get left behind, frustrated and it can even hinder their education. By being educated in this class I can now cater to different people and embrace what each unique and brilliant child brings to the table.

What do you like most about Bryan/College Station, TX?
Before moving away to start my journey as a college student my mother always assured me that my collegiate friends would be the ones that would last a lifetime. Little did I know how true this would become, I have made so many friends during my college career and truly believe they will be in my life forever. This is what I love most about Bryan/College Station is the people and the hearts that live in it. It is a wonderful place filled with friends that become family.
What is the best advice you’ve received about college life?

“The sun will still rise tomorrow.” My father is one of my heroes and throughout my career here at Texas A&M he and my mother have been my biggest cheerleaders. I have had many days where I have felt defeated and it never fails that when those days occur my father would end his pep talk with “well Kylee, the sun will still rise tomorrow.” So we have hope, and we can cling to that knowing that at the end of a day where we feel we can longer go on, that it will all work out. Tomorrow is a new day with a fresh start, make someone smile and make it a worthwhile day!

What has been your most treasured vacation?

My family and I started an annual family vacation to South Carolina every year. This past year myself and my parents went to Nashville before heading over to South Carolina. We experienced the culture of their downtown, Grand Ole Opry and we were even able to drive through the Smokey Mountains. Nashville is a place we have all dreamt about going to so being able to experience the music city capitol with my favorite people was something I will treasure forever.

What piece of advice would you give to future RPTS students?

Be Brave. As a student at Texas A&M University many opportunities surround you, take them. College is a special time in a student’s life where many “once in a lifetime” chances arise. I would encourage future RPTS students to get outside their comfort zone, take chances and fully embrace change. Being brave through the changes that occur with college allows for the journey to be filled with so much joy.
Dr. Aby-Sene Harper

Why did you choose the RPTS Department at Texas A&M University?

My masters advisor had recommended Texas A&M University among other universities. At that time, I was interested in tourism as a strategy for rural development and biodiversity conservation in African countries. The RPTS department had a significant number of prominent faculty members in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and community development. Today, I am very pleased with my decision to pursue my Ph.D. in the RPTS department at Texas A&M. During my time here, I became part of a great community of scholars in RPTS and in the Applied Biodiversity Science program. I am also thankful for the amazing friends who have made my time in College Station so great.

What projects were you involved with?

I worked on a few projects with my advisor, Dr. Matarrita. However, I was mostly involved in my own research. My dissertation focused on the outcomes and prospects of the integrated management plans of two national parks, one in Senegal and another in Mauritania. I also studied the livelihoods of the local people in the area. The purpose of this project was to better understand how their livelihoods can effectively be integrated in the resource management strategies of the protected areas for long-term biodiversity conservation and the well-being of local communities.

What are some of your past experiences in this field?

Prior to this project, my experiences in this field (rural development and natural resource management) were mostly personal. I spent most of my life in West Africa (Senegal, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana). During that time, my family and I traveled to rural communities and visited national parks along the way. These were profound and transformative experiences for myself. My involvement in this field as an applied researcher started while I was working with a cooperative of organic farmers in Chalatenango, El Salvador. Moreover, for my masters, I studied the impacts of tourism development on the Gullah community of Hilton Head Island in South Carolina.

What is your favorite destination? Why?

My favorite destination is my father’s farm in his native village of Sidibougou in Senegal. There is no other place where I am more at peace than there. What makes it even more special is the lovely sound of the birds that cradle me every morning.

What do you like most about Bryan/College Station, TX?

It's hard to tell you what I like the most in BCS, but I can tell you for sure who I like the most: The wonderful office ladies in our RPTS department! They make my time in B/CS, Texas so special!!
We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. This webpage can link you to specific student enrichment projects that need your support. Wherever you choose to direct your gift, it will have a lasting impact on our students’ lives.

Through your gifts, you can be a fellow “educator,” helping us to maintain and enhance the outstanding quality of the RPTS Department’s faculty, students and programs.

The quality of RPTS students’ education is a result of many types of contributions. Members of our educational team include not only faculty and staff but also donors, advisory committee members, guest speakers, industry leaders, intern supervisors, employers, community partners, and others.

Please contact Scott Shafer, Department Head, Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, at sshafer@tamu.edu or 979.845.7324 if you would like more information on a particular program. Gary will be happy to speak with you about gifts or any other matter that is of interest to you.

Dr. Gary Ellis, Department Head
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
2261 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-2261

The Texas A&M Foundation
401 George Bush Drive
College Station, TX 77840
Sponsor a “Legend!”

Legends in the Texas Travel Industry Speaker Series

$1,000 per “Legend”

The “Legends in the Texas Travel Industry Speaker Series” brings travel industry leaders to the Texas A&M campus. Over a two day period, the speaker makes presentations to classes and interacts with students through meals, receptions, and other events. Students gain unique insight into the joys and challenges of managing major travel and experience industry attractions.

Mr. Paul Serff, President-Emeritus of the Texas Travel Industry Association, RPTS Tourism Management Advisory Committee member, and part-time Lecturer created this exciting program for us. Your gift of $1,000 will establish you as a sponsor of a visit by a “Legend!”

Support a Student’s Success!

Generous donors have endowed the following scholarships, and we always welcome additional contributions to those in any amount!

Contributions to endowments, of course, grow the principal and result in increased awards to students. If you are interested in establishing an endowed scholarship a minimum donation of $25,000 is required.

- COADC Jana Wisenbaker Scholarship in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
- Leslie M. Reid Endowed Scholarship
- Lon and Inger Garrison Endowed Scholarship
- COADC Joyce Nies and Peter Witt Endowed Scholarship
- John L. Crompton Scholarship
- Elizabeth B. Crompton Scholarship
- COADC Heidemann Wuest Foundation Endowed Scholarship
- Sue Wittens ’72 Memorial Scholarship
- Elizabeth Lee Moore ’00 Endowed Scholarship
- Louis Hodges Scholarship in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
- Marguerite Van Dyke Graduate Scholarship
- Korean RPTS Alumni and Marguerite Van Dyke Endowed Scholarship
- Thomas G. Viilo Endowed Memorial Scholarship
- TAES Jake Hershey Fellowship in Natural Resources Conservation
- Bradberry Chair for Youth Development
- Robert B. Ditton Endowed Scholarship
- Peter Witt and Joyce Nies Youth Development Excellence Endowment
Help RPTS Sustain and Grow Excellence!

RPTS Endowed Fund for Excellence

Gifts in any amount welcome

The RPTS Excellence fund provides support for special unanticipated opportunities for our students that arise during the course of many academic years.

Your gift to our excellence fund will grow the endowment and provide us even better opportunity to pursue opportunities and continue to grow quality experiences for our students.

Mr. Royce Wisenbaker and his wife Jana Wisenbaker endowed this excellence fund for RPTS, and your contribution can help us continue to grow that endowment.

Sponsor an RPTS Quiz Bowl Student!

RPTS Quiz Bowl

$1,000 for sponsorship of a team member or a coach

RPTS students compete with top students from other universities in a national Quiz Bowl competition each year at the NRPA Conference.

Teams are comprised of four students and a coach.

Students are quizzed on park, recreation and tourism management, marketing, foundational knowledge, and the planning and staging of experiences.

You have the opportunity to sponsor one or more members of our team or even our coach (your choice).

Our team this year placed 2nd overall!
Become a Partner in Advancing Our High Impact Learning Programs!

**High-Impact Learning Courses**

**Monetary gifts in any amount are welcomed**

The Department offers a variety of “high impact learning” classes.

These classes engage students in direct experiences with managers and marketing professionals.

Students study in major attractions, state and national parks and forests, in cities and towns, and even aboard cruise ships!

Students must bear the cost of special fees for such courses, to cover transportation, lodging, and related expenses. Your support will provide access to students unable to pay those fees.

**Connect RPTS Students with Industry Through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service!**

**Connected Learning for Industry Professionals and Students (E!CLIPS)**

5,000 to sponsor an RPTS student intern for a semester

E!CLIPS is a Texas A&M/RPTS AgriLife Extension Program that supports real-world training and action research by connecting professionals in recreation, park and tourism businesses and agencies around the world with students and professional learning programs from RPTS Extension.

Opportunities are available in nature tourism, youth development, customer service, event planning, park and trail planning, and public input programs.
Mission

We enhance individual and social well-being and environmental and economic sustainability by generating and disseminating knowledge about the management and development of recreation, park, community, and tourism resources.

Vision

Our mission is achieved through undergraduate and graduate education, outreach, and research that integrate social science and natural resource management disciplines. We strive to understand and respond to the global and local implications of recreation, parks, tourism, and natural resource dimensions of diverse and changing societies. We endeavor to conduct an effective mix of theoretical and applied research, and liberal and professional education that prepares society-ready graduates and provides responsive service and outreach that meets the needs of our constituents.

Core Values

We believe that our education, scientific research, and outreach programs contribute to the expansion of knowledge and to the enhancement of the quality of life. We believe that our primary responsibility is to the people of Texas; we believe that our contributions to the State of Texas will be enhanced by scholarly activities at the national and international levels. We value the contributions that parks, recreation, community development, and tourism can make to the health of communities. We believe in preparing society-ready graduates, with a solid educational foundation that includes experiential and liberal education, and development of skills for career employment and lifelong learning. We believe that the process of education is a collaborative learning experience, and students, faculty, practitioners, and professionals from other fields are participants in this process. We recognize the growing demographic and geographic diversity of Texas and the United States; the value of diversity in thoughts and ideas among the faculty, staff, and students; and the opportunities presented by an international border. We recognize the value of human diversity and interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching, research, and extension, and affirm the individual strengths that people bring to the Department. We are committed to the contributions of recreation, parks, community development and tourism make to the sustainability and stewardship of cultural, historical, and natural resources. We are committed to the concepts of social and environmental justice. We value scholarship that is validated by peers and external audiences; and we believe that scholarship can be expressed through teaching, research, and extension.