News from the Department Head

I hope you enjoy the fall 2017 newsletter. The Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS) had a great fall term. The photograph above is a good example, depicting RPTS family members sharing an experience at the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Congress in New Orleans this past September. The image captures current and former students visiting staff members Debbie Barnes and Clara Aguilar at our information table in the exhibit hall. Later in the newsletter you will see that a group of our undergraduate students won the NRPA Student Challenge for the second year in a row.

(Continued on the next page)
We are working to provide more support for student participation in conferences, workshops and other professional opportunities. RPTS students attended the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association Conference in Oregon in November. In February, RPTS students will attend the Texas Recreation and Parks Society (TRAPS) Institute in Waco and the American Camp Association (ACA) Conference in Orlando, Florida. Other items in this edition relate to the retirement, after 34 years, of Dr. Jim Gramann, as well as spotlights of students studying and working in Youth Development and Event Management. There have been numerous faculty, staff and student accomplishments in recent months, and you can read about some of those below. Our department continues to excel in offering “high impact” experiences, and we had one of particular note related to Hurricane Harvey. Returning from a study abroad experience in the Caribbean, Dr. Petrick’s Cruise Management Course was diverted from Galveston to Miami for several days to avoid the storm before returning to Galveston. Students learned much about the industry and gained knowledge about how cruise companies manage weather related circumstances. Many students and RPTS faculty will strike out for study abroad experiences over the semester break. We are pleased to contribute to a diversity of educational experiences for our students and others from across the campus.

All you former students and other friends of the department please stay in touch and know that the door is always open. The first annual RPTS Tailgate was held in September. Several hundred current and former students attended the event, which was planned and implemented by our students. The date for the next RPTS Tailgate is set for October 6, 2018, prior to the Kentucky football game. I hope to see you there, if not before then.

May each of you have a wonderful holiday season.

Scott Shafer
Department Head
Congratulations to Dr. Tazim Jamal who, with coauthor Brian Smith, recently had their article, “Tourism Pedagogy and Visitor Responsibilities in Destinations of Local-Global Significance: Climate Change and Social-Political Action,” published in the journal *Sustainability*.

Congratulations to our friend and colleague, Dr. Robert G. Stanton (former Director of the National Park Service), who has been selected to receive the 2017 Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award for lifetime achievement in historic preservation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Board of Trustees.

Congratulations to Dr. Courtney Suess-Raeisinafchi for two forthcoming publications! Her first, "Hotel-like hospital rooms' impact on patient well-being and willingness to pay: An examination using the theory of supportive design," will be published in *The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. The second is published with coauthor Mody and is titled "The influence of hospital design and service on patient responses." It will be published in *The Service Industries Journal*.

Congratulations to Allen Taggart, a current RPTS graduate student who is finishing his masters with Dr. Ellis. Allen recently accepted a position as assistant professor and extension educator at the University of Idaho. Allen will be providing overall leadership and organization for the Ada County 4-H Youth Development program, with the primary focus on increasing partnerships, strengthening the volunteer base, increasing funding, publishing research, and delivering programs for a mix of rural, suburban, and urban audiences in the Boise metropolitan area.

Congratulations to our student team of Cory Dentler, Mary Austin Morgan and Jessica Burch who won first place in the NRPA Student Challenge over 25 other teams! They had to complete an Amazing Race type course through the French Quarter of New Orleans.
Congratulations to **Dr. Gary Ellis**, former student Jingxian (“Kelly”) Jiang, and their colleague, **Patti Freeman** on publication of their article, “Creating experiences for study abroad students” in the current issue of *Journal of Tourism Insights!* Their paper addresses the phenomenon of co-creation by focusing on provider-centric, activity-centric, and tourist-centric structured experiences.

Congratulations to **Melyssa-Anne Stricklin**, one of our departmental advisors, whose MS thesis was recently selected to receive the 2017 American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration Best Paper Award! Melyssa-Anne received her award at this year’s meeting of the Academy during the National Recreation and Park Association Congress in New Orleans.

Congratulations to **Dr. Jim Petrick** and his former students **Matt Stone** and **Chun-Chu (Bamboo) Chen**. Statistics compiled by the Journal of Travel Research place a paper by Drs. Stone and Petrick as the #1 most downloaded (1176 times) and Drs. Chen and Petrick as the #8 most downloaded (813 times) for the first five months of 2017.

Congratulations to **Dr. Angela Durko**. In the spring of 2018, her classes will be working with the United Nations to educate potential tourists and students. Her program will engage primary and secondary schools in Afghanistan and other countries. The primary purpose is to reduce negative perceptions of others (i.e., stereotypes). The program has great potential to open doors for Aggie student employment and visitation to countries that participate.

Congratulations to **Dr. Ron Kaiser** for a study abroad course he helps lead that recently received recognition in the A&M Abroad Global Engagement Plan. Dr. Kaiser worked with Dr. Gabriel Eckstein of the TAMU Law School to teach students from Mexico and the U.S. about water management, science and law at Hacienda Santa Clara, San Miguel. Thirty participants were involved in the 2017 course.
After more than 34 years as a faculty member, Dr. James H. Gramann retired this past summer. We have been fortunate to have him around this fall, teaching his Recreational Management of Wildlands course one last time to 54 lucky students. Jim spent almost his entire career in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, joining the faculty in June of 1983 after receiving his PhD from the University of Illinois.

While affiliated with our department, Dr. Gramann held the position of Visiting Chief Social Scientist for the National Park Service (NPS) for nine years between 2002 and 2011. He brought an accessible social science perspective to the conversation about national parks, a subject usually considered the province of natural scientists and historians.

He continues to examine shifting definitions of what a national park should be in a rapidly changing America, and how connections between parks and different segments of American society have succeeded or failed. He has received numerous recognitions from academic societies and federal agencies for his work.

Dr. Gramann has helped educate hundreds of students during his career, having taught five different graduate courses and six different undergraduate courses during his tenure. He also mentored scores of graduate students, many of whom are leading academics and practitioners in our field today. He and his students have contributed to the body of knowledge on ethnicity in outdoor recreation and prosocial behavior related to resource protection and user conflict. Jim has been a valued colleague whose friendly and thoughtful approach to students, faculty and staff has always been appreciated. Jim and his wife Jacque will both be missed in Bryan/College Station, and Jim especially so in the daily life of our department.

The Gramanns are building a home in Redmond, Oregon and will be moved in by the New Year. Among other activities, Jim will continue his work on a book about the meaning of National Parks in America. There are a couple of nice state parks near their new home, and the Cascade Mountains are only a hop-skip and a jump away. We wish Jim and Jacque all the best as they turn the page on a new chapter.
On November 19, 2017, students of RPTS 321 (Event Management and Operations II) hosted a fundraiser for the Brazos Valley Food Bank. The event, called Soupsgiving, took place at Wolf Pen Creek Park and was a smashing success. Families and students alike participated in the festivities, playing fall pumpkin-themed games, making crafts, and competing in the soup competition. An estimated 150 people attended, and over 1,200 cans were donated to the Brazos Valley Food Bank.

Thank you to all the students and their professor, Mr. Steven Migacz, for all the hard work and dedication that went towards making this event a success!
Graduate Student Spotlight
With Chad Nelson

While he did not create the sport, Chad did document the rules and develop the name, transforming a previously informal game with inconsistent rules into a sport that can be taught in a classroom setting. Action Ball is a unique sport in that it is easy to learn and can be played by anyone. Currently, Chad is researching the level of enjoyment and energy expenditure experienced by college students playing this new sport, and he hopes that it will soon become a sport that increases fitness involvement (and resulting health benefits) because of the fun and simple nature of the game.

Eventually, Chad hopes to see the sport implemented in youth programs across the country. To date, Action Ball has already been successfully integrated into the activity programs at several schools as well as at Deerfoot Youth Camp, where Chad serves as Director. In addition, Action Ball is now offered as a class in the Texas A&M Kinesiology Department and is a successful intramural sport, boasting 28 teams this past season.

Chad Nelson is a Ph.D. Student at Texas A&M University, pursuing a doctorate in Youth Development with the Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Department. However, Chad is much more than merely a student, he is an instigator for change, challenging college students and youth to grow in their integrity and respect for others as they strive to be the best that they can be.

Chad has a passion for working with youth and young adults, and he is currently researching the problem of physical inactivity amongst university students. There has been a growing trend toward obesity and poor health among college students, and Chad is combatting this problem by bringing a new sport called “Action Ball” to Texas A&M.
**Why did you choose the RPTS Department?**

Chad found the RPTS Department after taking RPTS 311 (Planning and Implementing Events and Programs) with Mrs. Shafer. Through this experience, he connected with many of the professors in the department, specifically Dr. Gary Ellis, who he ended up studying under to pursue a Ph.D. in Youth Development.

**What are some of your past experiences in this field?**

Chad completed his associate degree at Lon Morris College in Jacksonville, Texas. During his time in Jacksonville, Chad started a chess club and scrabble club for 4th grade students who were uninvolved in their schools to enhance their spelling, critical thinking, and interaction skills. The program took off, and the scrabble club soon grew to a city-wide program.

Chad completed a bachelor’s degree in Communication at Centenary College in Louisiana. While at Centenary, Chad started a broadcasting organization for Centenary college sports, and he also worked at a local church with their youth and orchestra. In addition, he ran cross country and track throughout college and coached the track team at Loyola Prep High School during his senior year. Shortly after completing his undergraduate studies, he spent three weeks in Russia where he worked with youth at a local Russian church.
Graduate Student Spotlight

Continued

Chad went on to pursue a Master’s Degree in Sports Management at Texas A&M University, working as a graduate assistant for the Physical Education Activity Program and teaching a variety of classes including Aerobic Running, Strength Training, Challenge Course, Ultimate Frisbee, Health and Fitness, and Basketball.

As part of his studies, Chad completed an internship in Italy where he noticed a generational gap between the youth and the elderly citizens at the local fitness center. He addressed this problem by creating an intergenerational program, “The Gioventu Streetball Three on Three Tournament.” The event successfully involved youth and adults, ages 12-20, in a three on three tournament-style basketball competition.

When Chad returned from his internship, he got involved with Deerfoot Youth Camp of Magnolia, Texas, which serves underprivileged boys, ages 10-13. Although he began as a coach, it was not long before he was promoted to Camp Director.

Currently, he is pursuing his Ph.D. with the Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Department while working full-time for the Physical Education Activity Program as an Instructional Assistant Professor. He teaches Pickleball, Challenge Course, Action Ball, Health and Fitness, Trail Running, Strength Training, and Rock Climbing during the semesters, and he works as the Deerfoot Youth Camp Director in the summers. Sometimes he even finds time to sleep and eat!
Where do you see yourself going in your future career?

Chad is currently focused on doing his absolute best with his current responsibilities as a Ph.D. student, professor, Deerfoot Camp Director, and husband. He asserted that, although he would love to stay at Texas A&M, the decision for his future will ultimately be between him, his wife, and God. He has learned from the past that hard work pays off, and is excited to see where the Lord takes him in the future.

Do you have any advice for future students?

Chad’s advice for future students was to “lean on the faculty and graduate students in RPTS as they are the best and the brightest in the nation.” He asserted that they are well-known for their work ethic and passion, and he did not think he would have succeeded thus far without the strong mentors that have surrounded him as he has pursued his education. “We don’t do anything on our own,” Chad said. “The whole department cares. Anytime you’re in something, you are in it together. When you come to RPTS, you are coming into a family. They want you to succeed, and that’s why they push you to be the best you can be.”
Kelsey recently completed an internship with the Children’s Museum of Houston in Houston, Texas. During her time with the museum, she diligently worked on planning the silent auction for their fall gala. This process included contacting participants and donors throughout Texas and nationwide as well as picking up local donations for the auction throughout the summer.

Although her internship ended this summer, Kelsey got the unique opportunity to see all her hard work put to use. She volunteered to help with the gala, which took place on October 14. The gala included dancing, a formal dinner, a live action, and a silent auction. Kelsey helped sell raffle tickets and worked as a spotter during the auction to help things run smoothly. At the end of the night, the gala had raised over $975,000 for the museum and their education and outreach initiatives.

It is a rare experience to work an event that hosts a former president of the United States. Kelsey Coats volunteered at an event that hosted five. Not to mention a plethora of famous musical acts such as Alabama and Lady Gaga. But this was only one of her exciting experiences as an RPTS student.

Kelsey Coats, Class of 2019, began her studies at Texas A&M as a Construction Science major. However, after taking RPTS 201 (Foundations of Recreation, Park and Tourism) from Dr. Shafer and Dr. Scott, Kelsey fell in love with the major and transferred into RPTS in the spring of her freshman year. She is currently pursuing certificates in Community Recreation and Park Administration, Tourism Management, and Youth Development as well as the Professional Event Management Certificate.
While the gala was a memorable experience, Kelsey also got the opportunity to volunteer as a Talent Coordinator for the “Deep from the Heart: One America Appeal Relief Concert,” which hosted five former United States Presidents as well as several famous musicians. The purpose of the concert was to raise money for those affected by Hurricane Harvey, and it took place in Reed Arena at Texas A&M University. Kelsey was in charge of setting up dressing rooms for the performers, escorting people through secret service, delivering meals, and running errands.

Throughout the day, she had the opportunity to observe the overall production of the concert and put her event management skills to good use. When asked if she learned any new lessons from her experiences, Kelsey remarked that the most important thing was being flexible. She explained that she did not actually know what she would be doing at the concert until she showed up that morning. Even the schedule that they provided her continued to change until the day of the event. Although the concert was well-planned, there were still issues that arose. The staff had to adjust when the lunch caterers never showed up, some of the stars were picky about dressing room details, and others missed their sound checks prior to the show. However, the event staff was able to take each complication in stride and find ways to ensure that the show was still a success.
Another lesson Kelsey mentioned was learning to be accommodating. Kelsey asserted that it was important to keep a customer-service mindset and to expect that the stars would have specific requests. Throughout the event, the staff worked hard to be accommodating and meet the needs of the performers.

When asked how her classes had helped prepare her for her experiences, Kelsey remarked that she had learned many lessons in her event management classes that came in handy, and her comprehensive program plan project from RPTS 311 had also helped prepare her for her internship with the Children’s Museum of Houston.

Finally, Kelsey wisely suggested that it is of utmost importance to wear good shoes (Mrs. Shafer seconded this recommendation!). When Kelsey volunteered at the relief concert, she arrived at 8:00 a.m. and did not leave until midnight. Comfortable shoes are a must at any event, but they are most crucial at the long ones.

Looking to the future, Kelsey hopes to pursue a career aimed at satisfying customers wherever she may be. She looks forward to using the lessons she has learned and experiences she has gained through RPTS to make a difference and serve others.
"What does RPTS mean to you?"

A word from the students...

"What RPTS means to me is a sense of community and family."
-Jessica Burch

"RPTS holds a special place in my heart because it’s where I found my true passion and was given the opportunity to meet amazing people and build relationships that I know will be lifelong!"
-Abi Albers

"RPTS means so many things to me. Our department is filled with so many selfless people dedicated to serving others and advancing our field. We are determined to improve the quality of living for those we impact through our interactions and our work. I can’t think of a better place to learn about our field."
-Bekah James

"To me, RPTS helps people to enjoy their leisure time and, in a grander sense, their life. If you define yourself by how much money you make, then very few people are successful. However if you define yourself by how you spend your free time and who you spend it with then a lot more people can define themselves as successful. RPTS helps make people who they are and helps people enjoy life."
-Kelsey Coats

"I am extremely blessed and proud to be an RPTS student. I will forever be thankful for the friendships I have with many of my classmates, and for the guidance I have received from our faculty."
-Heidi Cook

"RPTS is the escape from the conventional path of life. I was shown by people like the Shafer, Scotts and Rick [Harwell] that your purpose in life doesn't have to be derived from your career or source of income. Your purpose can solely lie in recreating and interacting with the natural world around you."
-Brett Jackson

"Simply put, to me, RPTS means OPPORTUNITY. It sounds simple but it is so comprehensive. RPTS was a second chance opportunity for me to get my college education right. It was an opportunity for me to grow as an RPTS professional. RPTS afforded me the opportunity to make lifelong friends, future colleagues, and collaborators in the field. RPTS also gave me the opportunity to learn from the best the field has to offer, not only from those with academic experience, but professors who have undeniably valuable professional field experience. Opportunity is only beneficial if you grab hold and run with it, but without Texas A&M’s RPTS department, the chance to do so at such a high level would not exist."
-Jonathan Failor
SUPPORT RPTS

We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. The webpage link below can link you to specific opportunities that need your support. Wherever you choose to direct your gift, it will have a lasting impact on our department.

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.

To make a donation that supports our department, activate the GIVE ONLINE button below. You may give to support students through an enrichment fund, or you may also support faculty and staff enrichment. These enrichment funds support either students or faculty and staff with travel to conferences, small research grants, educational enhancement, or professional development of different types.

Click here to GIVE ONLINE

For more information about giving including details about contributing to specific scholarships, please contact Dr. Scott Shafer, Department Head, Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, at sshafer@tamu.edu or call 979.845.7324.
Click the *Give Online button* on the previous page to support RPTS students, faculty, and staff. On the Foundation webpage, the drop down menu will provide two options, as seen below.

**Student Enrichment**—Giving to our student enrichment fund will support student participation in conferences, domestic and international field courses, thesis or dissertation research, scholarships, and other opportunities to enhance student education.

If you would like to give to an existing scholarship account, please contact Scott Shafer (sshafer@tamu.edu; 979-845-3837) in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences.

**Faculty and Staff Enrichment**—Giving supports faculty and staff through professional development, continuing education, conference participation, research grants, and other opportunities to excel in their work.
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 that 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.