Contents:

From the Department Head 2
Departmental Highlights:
  Kite Fest 2019 3
  Dancing for the Health of It 4
  Ring in Spring 5
  Alternative Transportation 6
  RPTS Tacky Prom 7

Interviews:
  Kyndal Magyar 8
  Maria Leon 10
  George Kutac 11
  Former Student Survey 12
  Support RPTS 13
  Mission - Vision - Core Values 14
  Our Social Media 14
It has been an active, productive and educational semester in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS). We continue to provide exceptional “high impact” experiences for our students. A focus of this edition is on events planned and implemented by RPTS students. Our students were the primary organizers and facilitators in seven major events this spring; five are highlighted in the pages that follow. These experiences have become an integral part of the Professional Event Manager Certificate that many RPTS students pursue. At our recent May graduation reception a large percentage of students who spoke about their future had accepted positions in the event management profession.

The cover photograph depicts a group of RPTS students enrolled in Mr. Harwell’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) class in Hawaii this past January. Mr. Harwell has introduced a number of students to MWR programs that serve our military. Several are now pursuing MWR careers. At this time of year our South Pacific Study Abroad Program in Australia (Gerard and Kelly Kyle) and our field course on Youth Camps taught by Chad Nelson are about to begin.

You will also read about former student Kyndall Magyar RPTS Class of 2017 who has been working in the cruise industry for the past three years. As an undergraduate student, Kyndall took Jim Petrick’s Study Aboard course for a behind the scenes look at the cruise industry. Shortly thereafter, she applied for an internship program with Carnival and the rest is history. Be sure to read about the responsibilities she has, the exciting places she has experienced and people she has worked with.

Maria Leon and George Kutac provide their perspectives on being a student in RPTS and describe how they came to this field. Maria is a PhD student from Los Angeles, CA studying relationships between trauma, incarceration and developmental processes in young people. George is an undergraduate student from Houston with an interest in nature conservation who aspires to become a game warden. These two are just a sample of the many amazing students in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. Students and faculty in this department achieve much through research and practice that serves people, places and the greater good.

Former and current students watch social media for information on the fall 2019 RPTS Tailgate! It will be held this year just prior to the Auburn football game on Saturday, September 21st. We hope to see many of you there! In the meantime enjoy the summer of 2019. May it bring you opportunities to experience, and respect, new places and new people.
This was the 5th Annual Kite Fest. Texas A&M’s RPTS 321 students planned, promoted, organized, and implemented an amazing free community event.

The students worked hard to find sponsors and vendors, and through these collaborations they provided a memorable experience for community members to enjoy kite flying and additional activities including: face painting, frozen t-shirt contest, kite-making, prizes and much more!

We would like to congratulate and thank all of them for their hard work and the wonderful memories they offered!!!
Dancing for the Health of It is a fundraising event which benefits Health For All, a non-profit organization/clinic that serves residents who are in need of health services.

This event was based on the popular TV-show Dancing with the Stars. Participants were professional dancers and local celebrities.

The audience, along with judges, voted for the winners and the votes were counted based on donations.

Finally, as a medium to raise awareness for breast cancer there was also an auction of brassieres.
The Leach Teaching Gardens and Event Management Students hosted Ring In Spring, an event to promote our "Teaching Gardens." The Gardens are a beautiful place for events and leisure time for the entire Aggie community.

The event was not affiliated with the Association of Former Students but was held on Aggie Ring Day to celebrate students and their families. Our students served lemonade and cookies, passed out wildflower seed packets to visitors, and also took photos for them.
This semester, **RPTS students** partnered with **Transportation Services** to promote their Alternative Transportation initiatives.

Alternative Transportation constitutes a link to our commitment as a department to sustainable practices....encouraging multi-modal, recreational options for student transportation. This event promoted Veoride.
The RPTS Department in conjunction with RPTS Event Planning Students -- for the first time -- put on a Tacky Prom Dance that included students, their friends and family, staff, faculty, and other guests. For one night only, every attendee enjoyed a blast from the past with 80’s retro decor, neon lights, Polaroids, games, food, DJ's, a Prom King and Queen, dancing, gift bags, and a happen'en time.
Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your relationship with the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS) at Texas A&M University.

Hello, Kyndall Magyar, 24 years young, and living out a life most can only dream of. I work on-board Carnival Cruise Line’s ships 80% of the year. My job? Cruise Director! I am in charge of all front of house operations for entertainment across the ship. In addition, I am in charge of the Fun Squad who are the “meat and potatoes” of the operations. I began with Carnival 3 short years ago. I had a semester left and was looking for my summer internship and landed one of the nine spots given out to 2000 applicants to be a part of the inaugural internship program on-board. As interns we lived on-board for 3 months and got to be immersed into the very unique world of “Ship Life.” Since then, I have gotten to travel all over the globe with my job and have made friends from every corner of the world. I’ve met and performed with celebrities like Trace Adkins, Queen Latifah, and Shaquille O’Neill, our Chief FUN Officer. I have been a part of the inaugural team of Carnival’s largest and newest ship, the Carnival Horizon. But most important to me, I have met hundreds of thousands of people, and I had a chance to impact and be a part of their vacation. Being that I had a concentration in Tourism Management and Hospitality, specifically in the Cruise Tourism Industry while at TAMU, I don’t think there could have been a better suited job for me. While studying at the University, I focused on not only the tourism aspect but also Event Management, both front of house and back of house. I participated in the “Study Aboard” program where we took a cruise and studied more intensively on just what goes into the day to day operations on-board. Little did I know, there was sooooo much more to learn!

How did the RPTS degree help prepare you for your career?

My major helped prepare me for my career in many different ways. From learning about target markets and demographics, to being involved with the preparation, presentation, and execution of an event, these tools help guide me everyday. Having learned these fundamental qualities, I am able to apply them toward every aspect of my work. For example: we get over 3000 new guests on-board every 5-7 days. It is key to look at our demographics prior to the cruise and plan events, activities, and timings accordingly. Once we know our consumer, we move on to implementation of events and execution. 95% of the time, things do not go as planned. So learning to mitigate risks and have a Plan B, C, and sometimes D is something I do on a daily basis.
Was it your dream to work in the Cruise Industry? What prompted you to pursue this career?

Surprisingly, yes. I came into college thinking that I was going to be a journalist and on the day before my New Student Conference, I was talking to a friend that had just graduated with an RPTS degree. I asked what his plans were and he replied, “I’m off to work on vacation.” He explained he had gotten a job working on a cruise ship doing activities and parties all while travelling the world. When I realized I could vacation for work and get paid for it, I was sold! My family and I have cruised with Carnival, almost exclusively, since I was seven years old. When the opportunity came that I could work on-board the cruise line that was responsible for so many amazing memories from family reunions, birthdays, graduation celebrations, and more, I jumped at it and never looked back.

Do you feel that your job is related/connected to your personality?

100%!! I have never met a stranger in my life; you can ask my parents. I have always been very outgoing, almost to a fault, which is the main quality needed for my job. Growing up, I would say hi to strangers, try and be the center of attention, and more often than not make a fool of myself in the process. But if I got a laugh out of it, I was fulfilled. Being a Cruise Director, I do all of that on a daily basis, but just in front of thousands of people. And I LOVE IT!! I truly think there is no job more hand molded for my personality.

What is the most rewarding part your job?

When someone goes to cruise, they are trying to escape the realities of the world. I have heard every reason for cruising. Family reunion, birthdays, graduations, honeymoons, even divorce parties - everyone has a very personal reason to cruise. The best part of my job is giving these guests the experiences they’ve come to enjoy, whether they knew they wanted to or not. I focus on getting people out of their own way so they can let their hair down and have fun. Everyone is so wrapped up in their lives all the time, that I try and break that barrier down while on board and show them it is ok to be silly or dance around like a chicken or sing Don’t Stop Believing at the tops of their lungs. And when they come to me with the biggest smile on their face and say, “I have never done something like that before!” – that’s when I feel fulfilled. Giving value to something intangible for each individual cruiser’s experience is why I do what I do.

What advice would you give to future graduates of RPTS who wish to pursue a career in Cruise Industry?

The memories I’ve made and places I’ve seen would have never been possible without my job. It has been the best, hardest, and most rewarding three years of my life. Working on board is not a job for the faint of heart. The hours are long, the internet isn’t free, and you have to be able to go months on end without seeing your family. But the rewards of the job supersede all that for the right people. If you are outgoing, like a challenge, enjoy travelling, and are ready for something you’ve never done before, apply for Carnival at CarnivalEntertainment.com!!
Maria Leon

Help readers know a little about you. For example, where are you from, what are your experiences in life, what led you to pursue an education in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences? What topics in your studies are of most interest and what do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?

I am from Los Angeles and finishing my second year of the PhD program with Dr. Outley. I grew up on a summer camp that served youth and families involved in social services so the significance of recreation experiences was something I grew up seeing firsthand. I've always been drawn to issues of justice, I was the Robin Hood of my elementary school and a headache for my parents. I love looking at intersectionality to address issues of power and oppression, most of my work is in juvenile justice and requires a critical approach to reveal under-girding power systems. Contrary to what one might think based on my research interests, I really do love to have a good time. I love playing sports, dancing, the Los Angeles Dodgers, rollerblading, hot dogs, April Fools, summer, and pretty places. I also really like watching documentaries- the weirder, the better.

What have you learned through your experiences while in the RPTS Department?

One of the main things this Department has taught me is to make connections outside your circle. I think the nature of having a Department with a broad array of topics encourages us to get outside our silos. I have benefited from a multidisciplinary program by seeing how different approaches are used to address issues that come up.

Where do you see yourself in the future? How might your current studies influence your career and/or your life in general?

I would love to work with attorneys to identify alternatives to detention and with communities to provide alternatives to detention that are appropriate and effective. There has been more research coming out that recognizes the impact of trauma and incarceration on the developmental process of youth, as well as evidence that demonstrates youth have better outcomes when they are placed in community-based programs. Being in the Youth Development program has prepared me to think critically about how young people are impacted and how to creatively respond to meet the needs of youth, families, and communities.

What advice would you give new students or those thinking about becoming students in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences?

Honestly, use the library and meet with librarians. They are wildly underutilized treasures on campus and can improve your life exponentially.
Help readers know a little about you. For example, where are you from, what are your experiences in life, what led you to pursue an education in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences? What topics in your studies are of most interest and what do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?

Howdy! I was raised up about a mile from downtown Houston, let's go 'Stros! Being from an urban environment there was not much nature to spend time in but fortunately, my family put me in Scouts. Throughout Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts I developed an appreciation for nature and her restorative qualities. Being away from the city has always been relaxing to me and I chose to major in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences in order to explore methods of conservation as well as community recreation in order to ensure that future generations of both urban and rural dwellers have access to nature.

What have you learned through your experiences while in the RPTS Department?

While in the RPTS Department I have gained a next level of appreciation for the impact that nature can have on the lives of those exposed to it. Before coming to Texas A&M I thought nature was found in the woods or a field away from city life, but now I understand that nature is present in all places and we can use it as a force for good anywhere. Environmental design places natural elements into man-made settings including office buildings, schools, and hospitals. Environmental design features provide the same restorative qualities as nature including lowering stress, increasing productivity, and even aiding the healing process for people recovering from illnesses and procedures. I have learned that when designed properly an urban park can become an area that seems miles from the city and isolated to allow for relaxation and recreational activities. In short, I have learned how to bring the healing qualities of nature to everyone.

Where do you see yourself in the future? How might your current studies influence your career and/or your life in general?

My appreciation for the power of nature came with an appreciation for her fragility and scarcity of her resources. I hope to serve and protect the natural resources of Texas and its people by becoming a Texas Game Warden. The Texas Game Warden vision statement and the mission of Texas Parks and Wildlife align with the reason I came to Texas A&M and to serve on the Game Warden team would be an honor and a privilege.

What advice would you give new students or those thinking about becoming students in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences?

The best advice I believe I could give to prospective students is to understand that God has a plan for your life and there are going to be obstacles in your way, God placed these here to challenge, strengthen, and guide you to fulfill his purpose. When God placed these obstacles in your life he knew you could not handle them alone so he gave you strength. Find peace in knowing there is no obstacle you cannot overcome when you walk with Him. Also, get a roll of pennies to keep in your backpack for Sully.
Howdy Former Students

Our department is committed to providing an excellent education. We hope that the educational experience you had in our program and at Texas A&M is proving to be a positive influence in your life. Collecting information from former students like you will help us communicate the RPTS profession and plan for the future. If you did not already complete this survey in 2018, please take a few minutes to complete it. Responses will not be identified with you. Results will be aggregated and used to advise prospective students, assist current students, and plan for positive changes to the program.

Please click the link below:

We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. The web-page link to the right 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.

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.
**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.