Moving Forward

FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD | GARRY CHICK

In Lewis Carroll’s novella, Through the Looking-Glass, the Red Queen explains to Alice, “It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that.” We find ourselves this situation in much of life. The good news is that the faculty and staff of the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management have been running fast enough to maintain our lead in many areas and to move even further ahead of peer programs in others.

The opening this fall of the Golf Teaching and Research Center (GTRC), located in Keller Building, represents a major advance of our golf management program over similar programs elsewhere. The GTRC has state-of-the-art technologies for analyzing and evaluating golf skills. We look forward not only to the use of the GTRC as a learning and instructional tool for our students but also to its value as a research center in the future. (See the article on page 8 for more information on the GTRC.)

Professor emeritus Ralph Smith and instructors Tammy Buckley Smith and Patty Kleban are working with recreation managers from the U.S. Army’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (MWR) to make recreation programmatically accessible to military personnel injured or disabled during overseas conflicts through Penn State’s Inclusive Recreation for Wounded Warriors training program. The Wounded Warriors program is funded through 2011 by the Department of Defense to a consortium of Penn State programs including Continuing and Professional Education, the School of Hospitality Management, and the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management. This program is innovative, serves military throughout the United States and abroad, and is a way to give back to those who have been wounded or injured in the service of our country.

Department faculty members are also involved in several research and service projects overseas. Linda Caldwell has traveled to Africa several times in recent years to work with colleagues there in developing and implementing the HealthWise South Africa: Life Skills for Young Adults curriculum, a school-based program for middle school youth aimed at combining leisure, prevention, and human development. Christine Buzinde has been working with the Maasai (an ethnic group in Tanzania) for two years on tourism, indigenous knowledge, and well-being, while Harry Zinn and Duarte Morais visited Namibia in 2008 to examine the impact of wildlife refuges and conservation areas on indigenous communities. Deb Kerstetter and graduate student Ondrej Mitas, along with faculty and a graduate student from the School of Hospitality Management, visited Breda University in the Netherlands in November to discuss research collaboration; Mitas will join Breda’s faculty in the fall to advance that partnership. I have been working with a former student and his colleagues at the National Dong Hwa University in Taiwan on a six-city comparative project addressing leisure opportunities, leisure constraints, and health in these and other projects enhance the reputation of the department worldwide. We have already experienced a significant increase in the number of graduate students and postgraduate scholars from overseas who are interested in our visiting scholar program.

At a more local level, Al Graefe, Andy Mowen, and Harry Zinn recently completed research for the Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), a five-year plan for improving recreation opportunities and access statewide. (See the article on page 6 for more information on this project.)

These activities and initiatives, along with ongoing evaluation and revision of both our undergraduate and graduate programs, keep the department in a leadership position in terms of research, teaching, and service. I am both honored and humbled to serve such a wonderful and talented faculty and staff as the new department head. This is the finest group of individuals I have had the pleasure of being part of during my nearly thirty years in higher education. They are all running fast enough to move us consistently forward. I hope I can keep up.
The APG Welcomes You!
FROM THE APG PRESIDENT | KRS D’ALESSANDRO ’86

You might miss your days at “Old State.” They really were great times and you probably miss being connected with the University. Well, you are in luck—you are connected. As an RPTM graduate, you are automatically a member of the RPTM Affiliate Program Group (APG). You have the opportunity to give back, in the form of time, in exchange for the satisfaction of knowing that you are engaging students, faculty, and other RPTM alumni.

We work on several activities, including mentoring, alumni awards such as the Deb Kerstetter RPTM APG Outstanding Alumni Award, communications like our newsletter and APG Web site, and social/professional events such as our annual Speed Networking event and our annual Recreation Celebration. Last year, over 150 people attended the Recreation Celebration and enjoyed a relaxed atmosphere, live music by a local acoustic band (18 Strings), and the presentation of several awards to our RPTM outstanding students and alumni. I urge you to take advantage of this weekend celebration, which will be held the weekend of April 10, 2010. Load up the van with your favorite alumni and truck on up to State College. We look forward to seeing you.

We also have openings on our APG board or if you want to chair or be on a committee for one of our MACS events (mentoring, awards, communications, and social/professional). So whether you love the fall or the spring season, the Penn State RPTM APG is your chance to get engaged with the students, faculty, and all of our alumni.

2009 RPTM APG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Kris D’Alessandro ’86 RC PK
Kris.Dalessandro@us.army.mil

Past President
Angela Andiorio ’83 R P M
ala158@psualum.com

Secretary
Chris Phillips ’00 R P M
Cphillips@statecollegespikes.com

Treasurer
Dianne DeFusco ’88
diannedefusco@yahoo.com

At-Large Board Members
Miles Blundell ’04 R P M
miles.blundell@nwlr.com

Jim Hennessey ’87 RC PK
jhennessy@dorneypark.com

Greg Weitzel ’97 R P M
weitzel@allentowncity.org

Interested in serving on the APG Board?
Contact Kris D’Alessandro, president, at Kris.Dalessandro@us.army.mil or Tammy Smith, RPTM alumni relations coordinator, at 814-867-1756 or tbsmith@psu.edu.

Did You Know?
The Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management has a group on Facebook. Stay connected with your friends, current students, and fellow alumni. Once you have a Facebook account, simply search for “RPTM Alumni/Student Network.” If you have any questions, please contact Tammy Smith at 814-867-1756 or tbsmith@psu.edu.
Summer Camps: A Fun, Easy Way for Children to Fight Obesity

When school’s not in session, it can be difficult to find ways to keep kids off of the couch. Summer camps, however, prove to be a much healthier alternative to TV. Not only do summer camps provide fun, engaging activities for kids, but kids at summer camps meet or exceed the amount of daily physical activity recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“I think a lot of kids get used to having their day structured from school,” said Dr. Benjamin Hickerson, assistant professor of recreation, park and tourism management. “Summer camps provide a fun opportunity for children to stay active and keep on a regular schedule during the summer time.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that children participate in sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day, and studies have shown that this is the equivalent of between 12,000 and 15,000 steps.

Hickerson conducted research with Dr. Karla Henderson, professor of parks, recreation, and tourism management at North Carolina State University, on two types of summer camps: day camps, where children spend only the day doing activities (but spend the nights at home); and residential camps, where children sleep at the camps. He found that, on average, children in day camps took about 12,000 steps per day. Children in residential camps took 19,500 steps per day, on average, which is well above the recommended guidelines.

Hickerson analyzed summer camps for children between the ages of 9 and 12, in an effort to find out not whether or not children in summer camps were getting enough physical activity, and also which aspects of summer camps were effective in promoting physical activity and which aspects could use improvement.

“In terms of physical activity, there are traditional disparities between demographics,” said Hickerson. “Males typically get more physical activity than females; Caucasians get more physical activity than African Americans and Hispanics. We found that, even though these disparities still existed in summer camps, they were decreased—and ultimately all children, regardless of their demographic, were getting the recommended amount of physical activity to help them stay healthy.”

Hickerson also found that other variables are associated with children’s physical activity in camps. Peer groups play a significant role in physical activity; children with active friends were more likely to be active, too. More physical activity spaces in a camp (pools, lakes, trails, etc.) proved to increase physical activity, and the distance between activity areas also played a large role—children can be physically active simply by walking to their planned activities. Finally, Hickerson found that camps must achieve a balance in their programming, in order to optimize children’s levels of physical activity. If camps mandated too many physical activities in a given day, children could tire out and become less motivated.

Right now, Hickerson and Henderson are compiling their data into a series of journal articles, which can inform people who design or modify summer camps.

“I wanted to find activities or a better organizational structure that children can attach to and enjoy,” said Hickerson. “The more physical activity they participate in, the healthier they’ll be, both now and in the future.”

NOTABLE QUOTES

“Before entering into the major, I felt like I didn’t really belong [at Penn State]. Once I started taking classes [in the department], I started to feel like I actually belonged somewhere, and believe me, that feeling is priceless. I am extremely proud to be a Penn State grad but even more so to have graduated from this department.”

– Noelle Carlin ’08 RPTM
Welcome

Brian Soulé
Assistant Director of the PGM Program/Internship Coordinator
bjs48@psu.edu

Brian Soulé earned a master of science degree in sport and leisure service management from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), where he also served as a graduate assistant with the UNLV PGA Golf Management program. He received his bachelor of science degree in parks, recreation, and tourism management from Clemson University and he is a graduate of Clemson’s PGA Golf Management program. As a faculty member, Soulé serves as the internship coordinator, helping students select internship sites and serving as liaison between students and PGA professionals. He is involved with advising students on academic issues and facilitating students’ progression toward PGA membership. He also teaches Introduction to Commercial Recreation and Tourism, a section of Player Development, as well as a number of golf management courses, and he is co-adviser to the PGM Student Society.

Ruth Parson
Staff Assistant and Receptionist
rlp24@psu.edu

Ruth Parson joined RPTM as a staff assistant in September 2009. She comes to the department from the Center for Health Care and Policy Research, which is housed within the Department of Health Policy and Administration. Prior to that, she worked at Penn State Public Broadcasting and the College of the Liberal Arts at Penn State. Outside of the University, she was employed as an executive assistant for Cerro Metal Products and the Private Industry Council of Centre County. She serves as an integral part of RPTM’s professional internship program and serves as the receptionist for all students and visitors.

Student Rides to Third Place in World Surf Kayak Championships

In August, Lindsay Usher found herself face to face with six-foot waves off the coast of Portugal, with nothing to protect her but a paddle and a kayak. Luckily, Usher had been in this situation before, and she knew how to handle the surge of water. She soon found herself at a wave’s crest, visible to the crowd on shore. When she rode the wave in, there were cheers and Usher was soon given a trophy: third place in the women’s longboat division of the World Surf Kayak Championships.

Over 150 competitors turned up to face the waves at the biennial championship, which took place in Santa Cruz, Portugal. Twelve teams represented countries with coastlines worldwide: Japan, Portugal, two teams from the United States, several teams from the United Kingdom, the Basque Country, and Australia. Usher, a graduate student in Recreation, Park and Tourism Management at Penn State, was part of the US East Surf Kayak Team, and she was one of only three team members to place in the competition this year. Contestants had twenty minutes to ride ten waves and were judged based on the size of the wave, the length of the ride, and their surfing style.

This was Usher’s third entry into the World Surf Kayak Championships, having previously competed in Costa Rica in 2005 and Ireland in 2003. However, this was the first time she placed. “I’m pretty excited about getting third place. I had done fairly well in the past, but it had been frustrating to not have made finals,” said Usher.

Usher first began surf kayaking as a child at the Outer Banks, North Carolina. A family friend brought a kayak down, and she ended up playing with it in the water. Eventually her family bought their own kayak, and from that point Lindsay kept practicing, gradually introducing herself to more difficult boats and waves and entering harder competitions.

She plans on competing again in the 2011 world championship, which will be held in the Outer Banks, North Carolina.
Alumni Awards and Recognition

The department presents alumni awards at its annual Recreation Celebration. To nominate an outstanding alumnus/alumna for an award, please contact Patty Kleban at 814-863-2489 or plk4@psu.edu.

Larry Williamson ’69 RC PK
Alumni Recognition Award

Larry Williamson has made noteworthy contributions in the field of conservation and natural resources since graduating from Penn State. His efforts at the state level have impacted communities across the state and they will continue to for decades.

Williamson began his career with the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs in 1969, where he administered the local government portion of federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants program. Throughout his career he managed various community park, recreation, and conservation programs in the Bureau of Recreation (Project 500, Rural Parks Program, Young Adult Conservation Corp Program, SBA Tree Planting Program, Demonstration Community Center Program), and was director of the bureau from 1985 to 1995.

After working for thirty-eight years in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Williamson retired in June 2008 from his role of special advisor to the DCNR secretary of Pennsylvania.

Williamson has been an integral part of the implementation of conservation programs such as Gateway Gardens, PA Recreational Trails, Keystone Recreation Park and Conservation Fund (Key 93), and the Growing Greener program. He has received numerous awards for his professional accomplishments including the 2001 Conservation Professional of the Year Award from the PA Audubon Society, the PA Wildlife Federation, and the Nature Conservancy; the Schuylkill River Leadership Award from the Schuylkill River Greenway Association in 2002; and the Heritage Partnership Award from the Heritage Conservancy in 2003.

As an alumnus, Williamson has continued to support Penn State and RPTM. He has offered counsel as a practitioner, accepted students as interns and employees, and collaborated with faculty on programming and research projects in outdoor recreation. Williamson has also been a participant in the end of the year banquets and other social programs that encourage alumni-student relations.

Chris Phillips ’00 R P M
Emerging Professional Undergraduate Degree Award

Chris Phillips, assistant general manager of the State College Spikes, is dedicated to improving the communities and organizations with which he works. Shortly after graduation, Phillips accepted a position with the Hyatt Corporation. He was invited into the Corporate Management Trainee program and placed at the Grand Hyatt in New York City. Within a year he was promoted to front desk manager of the Hyatt Regency in Greenwich, Phillips then took advantage of an opportunity to return to his hometown when he became ticket account manager at the Altoona Curve baseball organization, an affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates. There, he managed ticket sales and developed fundraising and programming goals.

In 2005, Phillips accepted a position with another minor league team affiliated with the Pirates, the State College Spikes. He helped establish this new franchise and worked with the Pirates to expand their minor league offerings. His duties included hiring and supervising sales and ticket/seating staff, revenue analysis, ticket sales, and team sponsorship sales. Phillips was the top ticket salesman for five consecutive years and saw a 240 percent increase in sales revenue. He continued to support the Altoona Curve while building a fan base for the State College Spikes.

Paralleling his professional successes, Phillips began making significant contributions to the community. As director of ticket sales with the Spikes, Phillips initiated a partnership with the United Way that generated over $15,000 in contributions. He was nominated as vice chair of the Centre County United Way’s Young Leaders Group and served on the Centre County United Way Communications Committee. He also served on the Sponsorship Committee for Second Mile, as board chair for the American Heart Association Heart Walk in Centre County, and as sponsorship chair for the Alzheimer’s Association in Centre County. He is a VIP member of the Chamber of Business and Industry in Centre County.

Phillips contributes to RPTM by serving on the RPTM APG board. He attends most RPTM alumni events and is a frequent guest speaker in classes. He welcomes RPTM students for internships with the Spikes. Phillips works with undergraduates through the RPTM Student Society and donates numerous items for RPTM alumni socials.

Dr. Brijesh Thapa ’96g, ’00g LE ST
Emerging Professional Graduate Degree Award

Dr. Brijesh Thapa has advanced tourism and ecotourism through his research, teaching, and advising. He focuses on tourism issues that impact the management of natural resources, ecotourism, and cultural heritage tourism in geographic regions of great diversity or disparity.

Shortly after graduating from Penn State, Thapa accepted a faculty position at the University of Florida at Gainesville. He currently serves as graduate programs coordinator for the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management at Florida and is also the senior associate director of the Center for Tourism Research and Development. As an associate professor, Thapa is responsible for course development, graduate and undergraduate advising, research, and service. He is an affiliate faculty member of additional programs at Florida, including the School of Natural Resources and Environment, the Warrington College of Business Administration, the Tropical Conservation and Development Program, and the Center for African Studies.

Thapa’s work with state, regional, and international agencies has helped elevate the role of tourism across numerous settings. He provided leadership in understanding the special circumstances that promote indigenous tourism development in regions with social and political conflict. Botswana, Nepal, Kazakhstan, and Ethiopia are a few countries where Thapa’s research, teaching, and service have made an impact. In 2006, he was recognized as the International Educator of the Year by the University of Florida and he recently received funding to support a tourism partnership to strengthen research, service, and faculty development with international universities.

Committed to translational tourism research, mentoring students, and serving indigenous populations in developed and undeveloped tourism destinations, Thapa continues to be sought out by international organizations and academic institutions to discuss the impacts of tourism on marginalized populations. He offers counsel and collaboration with RPTM faculty and graduate students and he interacts with students and faculty at state and national conferences.
Alumnus Elected to U.S. House of Representatives

A life-long resident of Howard Township, Centre County, Congressman Glenn “GT” Thompson ’81 RC PK was elected to represent Pennsylvania’s Fifth District in the U.S. House of Representatives on November 4, 2008 and sworn as a Member of the 111th Congress on January 6, 2009.

Prior to being elected to Pennsylvania’s most rural district, Congressman Thompson spent 28 years as a healthcare professional. As an experienced healthcare executive who has touched the lives of more than 10,000 individuals facing life altering conditions, GT has learned firsthand the importance of access to quality healthcare in rural communities.

A 30-year veteran of the Juniata Valley Boy Scout Council, GT has enriched the lives of young men throughout Central Pennsylvania and continues to actively participate in Scouting as the Council’s President. He is a former member of the Bald Eagle Area School Board and is past vice-chair of the Private Industry Council of the Central Corridor.

A community leader with 3 decades of service, and a volunteer firefighter, GT is acutely aware of the challenges facing rural Pennsylvania and is eager to assist in the revitalization of our rural communities throughout the Fifth District.

As a member of the House Agriculture, Education and Labor, and Small Business Committees, GT will be in a unique position to bring his expertise and knowledge to bear on the issues facing rural businesses, communities, and families, in order to improve the lives of the citizens of the Fifth District. With jurisdiction over rural economic development, the Allegheny National Forest, and small business policy—the voice of Central and Western Pennsylvania is sure to be present in Washington DC.

Congressman Thompson is a proud graduate of Penn State University and Temple University, where he earned a Masters of Education. He and his wife Penny Ammerman Thompson have three adult sons, Parker, Logan, and Kale. They reside in Howard Township with their dog Truman.

“Ecotourism has proven its place in the world, that if done well and with principles in place, it is one of many solutions to biodiversity conservation and wise use of resources around the globe,” said Dr. Kelly S. Bricker ’98g LE ST in an interview with ECOCLUB – International Ecotourism Club, an ecotourism magazine.

ECOCLUB.com interviewed Bricker while she was interim executive director of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), of which she has also been chair of the board since 2005. The interview below discusses ecotourism, Bricker’s personal philosophy, and what TIES is doing to promote ecotourism at an international level.

**ECOCLUB.com:** How and when did you discover Ecotourism as a philosophy and practice?

**Kelly Bricker:** My husband and I travelled extensively for an adventure travel company back in the late 80’s and up through 1994. During this time, we would see areas once pristine and natural deteriorate—in a relatively short period of time. About the time that TIES started, I realized there are alternatives ways to develop and operate tourism products—and as a result, decided to dedicate my PHD focus on ecotourism and sustainable approaches to tourism development. I also attended one of the first board meetings TIES held in the early 1990’s and was thrilled that there was an organization addressing these issues.

**ECOCLUB.com:** There are many definitions for Ecotourism, but rather fewer for Ecotourists. Who is entitled to be called an Ecotourist? All nature tourists, or tourists (nature or urban) who follow certain guidelines / rules both in their travels and everyday life?

**Kelly Bricker:** I think what we promote at TIES and as individuals is simple, Ecotourists are those people who support nature-based tourism products and services that follow the principles to which the concept is aligned—including, contribute to conservation biodiversity, respect and support the well-being of local people, support local economies, involve nature and culture interpretation of the places visited, and involve ecologically sustainable practices. We hope that over time, people will learn how to move what they see in practice into their own lives, and will assimilate best practices into their every day life, and educate those around them.

**ECOCLUB.com:** Do you agree that sometimes Ecotourism gets bad press, unfair reviews from uninformed journalists, and over-pedantic scholars who tend to blame all the evils of Tourism on a concept and a movement that actually wants to improve Tourism? And if so, what measures should TIES and its Members take?

**Kelly Bricker:** I think we live in a society of free thinkers and critics, and as such will always be open to criticism in one form or another. I believe we have to pay some attention to this critique, as it challenges us to do a better job in communication, clarifying principles, and creating a place for open dialogue. We must continue to move forward and not get too hung up on what people criticize. We need to continue to strive for excellence in our products, correct mistakes of the past, and look forward to doing things better in the future. I think critics keep us on our toes and help us understand the range of perspectives out there. It is important for us to simply listen, learn, and as corny as it may sound, continue the good fight the best we can with the resources we have.

Dr. Kelly S. Bricker completed her Ph.D. research with The Pennsylvania State University in 1998, where she specialized in sustainable tourism development. Dr. Bricker has worked all over the world, employed as guide, tourism manager, wilderness instructor, scuba and sailing instructor, professor, and researcher. With her husband Nathan, she started an ecotourism company called Rivers Fiji in the rural highlands of Fiji, which is now protected as Fiji’s first RAMSAR Wetland of Importance. She has taught at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, West Virginia University, Sacramento State University and Cal Poly Universities in California. She is a part-time Senior Scientist in recreation with Devine Tarbell & Associates, an environmental management company focused on alternative energy resources. She continues to conduct research on the social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism development in Fiji and the US. Kelly serves as Associate Professor at the University of Utah in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. In 2006, she received the Emerging Professional–Graduate Degree Award from the College of Health and Human Development Alumni Society.

To read Bricker’s entire interview, visit www.ecoclub.com/news/097/interview.html.

Doors Swing Open on New Golf Teaching and Research Lab

Walk into 5 Keller Building and you might think you're on the production set of a sports video game. A person stands in the middle of the room, covered in shiny sensors and moving a golf club back and forth slowly. He pulls the club back, then blasts a golf ball into the net directly in front of him. Eight motion sensor cameras stationed around the room register his movements, and a complex stick person replicates the swing on high-definition monitors at either side of the room. This motion capture system is the same type of technology used to give the video game version of Tiger Woods realistic movement. But in Keller Building, the technology becomes a teaching tool.

Designed to advance golf research and instruction, the Golf Teaching and Research Center (GTRC) opened its doors on November 11, 2009, with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The center provides a cutting-edge, high-quality learning environment for Penn State students in the Professional Golf Management (PGM) option of the Recreation, Park and Tourism Management undergraduate degree program.

The GTRC would not have been possible without the financial support of many individuals and companies, whose confidence in the PGM program made them invaluable partners in this project. Peter Tombros, volunteer chair of “For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students,” and his wife, Ann, chose to contribute by creating a matching gift initiative, and their support was the driving force behind the successful fundraising effort. Likewise, individuals such as Richard Althouse, Frank Guadagnolo (former director of the PGM program) and Deborah Kerstetter, Jon and Judy Mills, William and Susan Naylor, and Raymond Rogers made significant contributions towards the GTRC. Qualisys North America and FlightScope contributed camera and radar equipment, respectively, for this project.

In addition to the motion capture system, the GTRC boasts a three-dimensional Doppler radar ball-flight machine that predicts the trajectory and distance of the ball, a putting green, and several pieces of equipment to modify clubs. The center also has a space in which physical assessment tests are conducted with help from faculty members in the Department of Kinesiology.

“We are excited about the Golf Teaching and Research Center because it is further educating our students to become better teachers of the game, which will allow them to be more marketable after graduation,” says Dr. Burch Wilkes, director of the PGM program and instructor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management.

By breaking down the finer points of how a golfer moves and swings, the center will give students a new perspective on golf and golf instruction.

“The equipment in the Golf Teaching and Research Center is more advanced than most other teaching institutions right now, which will give students a real advantage when they graduate,” says Eric Handley, director of the GTRC and instructor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management.

Because it is indoors, the center also provides year-round education—which is a huge asset when snow-covered fairways prevent golfers from practicing and learning.

“We typically like our students to learn outdoors, in the environment they’ll be working in, but it’s not always easy in the northeast,” says Handley.

“We hope to serve the golf community through the center,” says Handley. “The instruction techniques we’ll be creating and developing will not only benefit students, but the entire golfing industry as well.”

Participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the GTRC are (l-r): Dr. Burch Wilkes, director of the Professional Golf Management (PGM) Program; Dr. Garry Chick, professor and department head, Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management; Dr. Ann Crouter, Raymond E. and Erin Stuart Schultz Dean of the College of Health and Human Development; Ann Tombros; Peter Tombros, volunteer chair of “For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students”; Dr. Frank Guadagnolo, professor emeritus; and Eric Handley, director of the GTRC.
Improving Communities through Tourism

A tourism project empowers Tanzanian communities, increasing their economic sustainability in the future.

“Tourism is like fire: it can be used to warm your home and cook your food, but, without constraints, it can burn down your house.” This saying, common in the tourism industry, indicates the need for well-planned tourism efforts that empower local communities and promote sustainability.

In 2008, Dr. Duarte Morais, associate professor of recreation, park and tourism management, and Dr. Ladislaus Semali, associate professor of education, ventured to Tanzania to perform fieldwork and devise a system that would improve communities through tourism. They established two efforts: to build a pottery kiln and booth for a local women’s co-op, and to create a training program for local mountain guides.

Using funding from Tourism Cares, Morais, Semali, and colleagues in the Tourism Research Lab worked with Sebastian Kolowa University College (SEKUCo) in Lushoto, Tanzania, and the Tanzania’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, to formulate an action plan. In large part, the plan drew upon what community members and regional stakeholders said they needed most, and this is indicative of the Tourism Research Lab’s philosophy—that tourism development strategies must empower host communities to improve their livelihoods and well-being.

“We wanted the local community to ‘own’ this project,” says Lindsay Usher, a graduate assistant in the Tourism Research Lab. “Community involvement gives the local communities control over the industry, and ensures that everyone benefits from tourism, instead of just a few individuals.”

The pottery kiln and booth allows a women’s co-op from a local village, Mtae, to display and sell pottery to neighboring villagers and to tourists that pass by the region in multi-day guided hikes. A portion of the co-op’s revenue goes to community development projects such as improving schools.

The second component of the project was to develop a tour guide training and certification program.

“Tourism has grown significantly in the region, and some individuals are misrepresenting themselves to naïve tourists, tricking them into thinking they are honest, hard-working guides,” says Morais. “The ‘tours’ they guide are more like scams. They keep all the fees to themselves and often put tourists in danger.”

In the program that Morais and his colleagues have coordinated, approximately 40 percent of the fees received from tourists will be recycled back into the community, funding projects such as creating village-owned tree nurseries and improving housing for teachers.

The program teaches best practices in mountain guiding, trip planning, and customer care. Guides also learn about the local culture, history, plant life, and wildlife. After passing the final exam, guides will receive ID badges and printed red hats that will help differentiate them from rogue guides.

Thirty-five guides were trained in April and May 2009 at SEKUCo, the local university. Since summer 2009, SEKUCo has been in charge of certifying future tour guides.

“We wanted to foster the development of an outreach arm in SEKUCo,” says Morais, “so that they could improve on this system as they saw fit, in response to differing needs of the community. Tourism is a huge industry in this region, so it is exciting to see our colleagues harnessing this project to consolidate their academic and outreach mission.”

Other people involved in this Tanzania tourism project include Dr. Christine Buzinde, assistant professor of recreation, park and tourism management, and Dr. Deb Kerstetter, associate professor of recreation, park and tourism management and co-director of the Tourism Research Lab.
Walk With Me Event Raises $10,000 for Easter Seals

Five-year-old Vladimir has far more challenges than most children his age. He is deaf and blind, and for the first four years of his life he lived in an area lacking in the services needed to address his disabilities. After being adopted in May 2009 from his orphanage in Serbia, however, Vladimir began to undergo a rapid transformation, due in part to services provided by Easter Seals Central Pennsylvania.

Eight RPTM students in the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) option had the opportunity to meet Vladimir and his family in summer 2009. The students volunteered at a fundraising event called Walk With Me, a 2.5-mile family-friendly loop around the University Park campus to raise awareness of the services of Easter Seals and raise money for the local chapter. Vladimir was what is known as an Easter Seals Honorary Ambassador—someone who has directly benefitted from the services provided by the organization. The TR students raised $2,000; with their contribution and the contribution of other volunteers, the event raised a total of $10,000.

While speaking with Vladimir’s parents, Rose Skiba, a TR student, learned about Vladimir at the time of his adoption. He typically shied away from groups of people, sometimes curling up in a ball. His parents had tried to find out from orphanage staff what he liked to play, and the staff responded with disbelief. How could a child burdened with so many challenges ever play?

At the Walk With Me event, though, Vladimir was anything but shy. Instead, he was smiling and even clapping to the beat of the music he felt.

“It was unique communicating with a boy who is both blind and deaf,” said Skiba. Because she wants to work with children with disabilities when she graduates, Skiba said she enjoyed the experience because she could see the progress that Vladimir was making through therapeutic recreation programming.

Participating in the Walk With Me event, in addition to Skiba, were TR students Jason Forsythe, Eden Gilligan, Melissa Lennox, Stacey Mellen, Amanda Williams, Samantha Blazer, and Lisa Phillips; faculty member Patty Kleban; and friends Carolyn Wilcox and Casey Robinson.

Marcia Meehan Receives Deb Kerstetter RPTM APG Outstanding Alumni Award

Marcia Meehan ’81 RC PK is president and CEO of the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center in York, Pennsylvania. She was nominated for the Deb Kerstetter Outstanding Alumni Award by Matt Leininger ’81 RC PK, executive director for the American Red Cross in York, Pennsylvania. Leininger met Meehan in 1977 when they were both first-year students at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College. Leininger says, “In the thirty years that have passed [since meeting Meehan], I have seen her grow and achieve in ways that should make all Penn Staters proud.”

After receiving the Fred Coombs scholarship award her senior year, Meehan’s career took her back to Pennsylvania. In one position in inner city Baltimore, her nominators explain, she was dedicated to serving poor children in the city. She worked tirelessly to obtain grants and funding support to ensure that a YMCA child care center stayed open. In Greenville, South Carolina, she was in charge of the building expansion project that doubled the size of the current YMCA, adding an indoor pool, weight room, locker rooms, and tennis courts for local families.

The Deb Kerstetter RPTM APG Outstanding Alumni Award honors RPTM alumni who demonstrate ideals of the RPTM profession, maintain a strong commitment to leadership, produce high-quality work in his/her field, motivate students, and demonstrate a continued communication with alumni. For more information on how to nominate someone, visit www.hhdev.psu.edu/alumni/apg/rptm/awards.html.
Two Penn State faculty and one alumna have been selected to assist with the development of the first-ever U.S. National Physical Activity Plan. Dr. Andrew J. Mowen, associate professor of recreation, park and tourism management (RPTM); Dr. Birgitta Baker ’08 LE ST, assistant professor of kinesiology at Louisiana State University; and Allison Topper, senior instructor in public health sciences and pediatrics in Penn State College of Medicine, provided background research to inform the plan.

The purpose of the plan is to “help Americans become physically active every day,” according to a press release issued by the National Physical Activity Plan committee. To do this, the plan will identify the steps that must be taken by local, state, and federal governments along with communities, corporations, and schools, to ensure that children and adults can and will engage in physical activity consistent with the most recent guidelines.”

The physical activity plan draws upon a variety of important organizations for support and leadership, including the University of South Carolina (which is spearheading the project); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the American Academy of Pediatrics; the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance; AARP; the American Cancer Society; Active Living Research; the American College of Sports Medicine; the American Heart Association; and the National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity.

Mowen and Baker provided background research for one of eight sectors represented in the plan: Parks, Recreation, Fitness, and Sports. They presented a summary of their findings at the National Physical Activity Plan Conference, July 1-2. Their white paper has been submitted to a special supplement issue of the Journal of Physical Activity and Health. “I feel honored to be invited to pull together a variety of sector-specific ideas and recommendations for increasing physical activity within the United States,” says Mowen. “I’m glad to work with people from other allied fields on this project, because an interdisciplinary approach is critical to the plan’s success.”

Mowen and Baker’s recommendations, which were debated and discussed during the National Physical Activity Plan Conference, were organized into several categories including place, promotion, partnership, programming, people, and policy recommendations.

“You can partake in many different leisure activities that are intrinsically enjoyable and will help keep you physically active,” says Mowen. “Developing, maintaining, and modernizing park, recreation, sport, and fitness amenities should be viewed as a public health imperative. This includes improving support features such as connector trails, restrooms, and drinking fountains, and creating better access to these facilities. We also think that these facilities need to be promoted more, by way of national and local marketing campaigns that can truly reach and impact those who are less active. We think that there should be an increase in the types of programs available to high-risk populations (e.g., children, persons with disabilities, older adults, minority citizens, low-income families), and that those programs include social support and leadership to increase participation. Lastly, we feel that land use and zoning policies should promote the protection and reclamation of green space (parks, trails, etc.) for physical activity.”

Also playing a significant role in the plan is Allison Topper, who contributed as a plan writer for the Education sector. Other sectors include Public Health; Transportation, Urban Design, and Community Planning; Mass Media; Health Care; Business and Industry; and Volunteer and Nonprofit Organizations.

Learn more about the National Physical Activity Plan at www.physicalactivityplan.org.

NOTABLE QUOTES

“It’s amazing to be part of the great Penn State tradition of success—a testament to the leadership of the PGM staff and students. Don’t pass up any opportunities to better yourselves or improve our program!”

– Patrick Gunning ’08 RPTM
March 20 - 24, 2010
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society 63rd Annual State Conference
Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Champion, PA
Contact Ruth Parson at 814-865-1851 or rlp24@psu.edu for more information about the RPTM Alumni Social

Saturday, April 10, 2010
RPTM Super Saturday
The Nittany Lion, State College, PA
10:00 a.m. • RPTM Mentoring Brunch • Boardroom
1:30 p.m. • Alumni/Student Networking Event • Assembly Room
5:00 p.m. • 6th Annual Recreation Celebration • Boardroom

Saturday, May 8, 2010
17th Annual Professional Golf Management Family and Friends Tournament and Banquet
Penn State Golf Courses (tournament) and Ramada Inn (banquet), State College, PA
For more information or to register, please contact Darla Houseman at djh32@psu.edu or 814-865-7034.

October 25 - 29, 2010
National Recreation and Park Association Congress and Exposition
Minneapolis, MN
Contact Ruth Parson at 814-865-1851 or rlp24@psu.edu for more information about the RPTM Alumni Social

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. (RPTM10046) U.Ed. HHD 10-046