



Faculty

- Dr. Cole Shewmake, Chair
- Dr. Natalie Bird
- Dr. David Boffey
- Dr. Mike Carper
- Dr. Laura Covert–Miller
- Dr. Scott Gorman
- Michelle Grimes
- Dr. Shelby Hutchens
- Dr. Janice Jewett
- Dr. John Oppliger
- Dr. Tristan Ragland
- Dr. Elizabeth Smith
- Dr. Julia Spresser

Administrative Assistant

- Susan Downing

Graduate Assistants

- Emmalee Jessip
- Loryn Moser
- Belle Peters
- Jonrey Pino

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Pittsburg State University

Health, Human Performance, and Recreation

Volume 1
Issue 32
Fall 2025

Made By:
Lissette Allen &
Delanie Moske

Outstanding Alumni DePrice Taylor

With more than a decade of experience driving youth development, strategic initiatives, and community partnerships, DePrice Taylor (BS '10, Social Work, and MS'12, Sports Management) now serves as the Executive Director of Community Relations for the Kansas City Current.

She spearheads the club's community engagement strategy, builds and sustains meaningful relationships with corporate and nonprofit stakeholders, and oversees impactful programming and player civic engagement efforts.

At Pitt State, Taylor was a first-generation student and member of the Women's Basketball team who excelled on and off the court, including earning First Team All-MIAA Honors.

She has been recognized as a Kansas City Business Journal NextGen Leader (2023), Starland News Community Builder to Watch (2023), Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce MVP (2024), ATHENA Young Professional Leadership Award (2025), and alumna of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce Centurions Leadership Program.

She serves on the Win for KC Advisory Board, Black Excellence KC Board, Pitt State Alumni Association Board, and as a commissioner for Kansas City Parks & Recreation, appointed by Mayor Quinton Lucas.



Driven by a deep commitment to mentorship, she actively empowers young people, inspiring the next generation to thrive and lead with purpose, believing that despite your circumstances, anything is possible with faith, belief in yourself, and hard work.

Article by Andra Stefanoni

Chair's Message



Welcome to the Fall 2025 edition of the Health, Human Performance, and Recreation newsletter!

The HHPR Department celebrated with some outstanding individuals this semester. First, former HHPR student-athlete DePrice Taylor received the “Dr. Kenneth K. Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award” from the university. Ms. Taylor has been very influential in the Kansas City community and currently serves as the Executive Director of Community Relations for the Kansas Current. Next, HHPR had twenty-two student-athletes inducted into the National College Athlete Honor Society Chi Alpha Sigma. This newsletter’s “Alumni Spotlight” highlights Denton Hayes, who is teaching and coaching at Shawnee Mission North High School, and on October 20th, we celebrated Mrs. Susan Downing for her 30 years of service to PSU and 21 years in HHPR.

As you flip, or scroll, through the pages, you will see that the HHPR Department has some outstanding students that have been as active and busy as ever! We kicked off the semester with the 2nd Annual Car’Rilla Car Show, raising money for student scholarships. Dr. Bird’s Event Planning and Management Class successfully raised over \$2,500 for the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks. Dr. Gorman led the charge, for what I’m told is well over the 100th time over the past thirty-seven years, in a “Highway Clean-up”. Lastly, several classes were active at the YMCA, with Special Olympics Kansas, New Hope, Dance Performances, and in the local school districts teaching physical education lessons and developing strength and conditioning programs.

In addition to community service and involvement, HHPR students are always active in professional organizations as well. In early November, a group of students traveled to Hays, Kansas to attend KAHPERD. Students gave presentations on archery, fly-fishing, and juggling, among other topics. Ms. Loryn Moser, a graduate assistant with a background in Therapeutic Recreation, presented with Dr. Miller at the International Council on Active Aging Conference in Anaheim. There are several more conferences this spring that students will be attending. If you would like to find out how to support student professional development by donation, give me a call or shoot me an email!

If you are ever in the area, please stop in and say hello. Faculty and staff would love to see faces from the past and get an update on your successes!

Go Rillas!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Denton Hays

Greetings Fellow Gorillas!

I am a proud 2017 graduate of the HHPR Program. During my time at Pittsburg State, I was a four-year letter winner for the men's basketball team and a member of the 2015 MIAA Tournament Championship Squad. Beyond Athletics, I was also actively involved in the HHPR and Teacher Education programs.

Today, I live in the Kansas City area with my wife, (and former Gorilla Basketball standout), Kylie Gafford-Hays, and our two boys, Walker (3) and Duncan (1). Since graduating nearly a decade ago, I've spent the past nine years teaching Physical Education and Health and coaching multiple sports. I'm currently at Shawnee Mission North High School, where I've taught for six years. I've had the privilege of serving as the Head Boys Basketball Coach for the last three years. During this time, I also earned two advanced degrees in Educational Leadership & Sports Administration. I'm grateful every day for the opportunity to impact young lives, lead a dedicated group of student-athletes, and help build a positive culture within our school community.



Recently, my wife and I had the chance to return to Pittsburg State to celebrate friends being inducted into the Hall of Fame. We were blown away by all the new improvements on campus—and at the same time, it felt so good to be surrounded by all the familiar sights and memories that made Pitt State home for all those years. It was especially meaningful to share that experience with our oldest son and show him where Mom and Dad first met. Pitt State has given our family so much to be thankful for, and we take great pride in saying **WE ARE GORILLAS!**

To the HHPR Department, the men's and women's basketball programs, the Athletic Administration, and all the faculty, staff, coaches, teammates, and classmates—Thank You! The countless hours of practice, training, volunteering, and studying at Pittsburg State were among the best investments we've ever made!

Welcome Graduate Assistants!



Emmalee Jessip
Exercise Science



Loryn Moser
Recreation



Belle Peters
Physical Education



Jonrey Pino
Physical Education

Student Secretaries!



**Student employees for the HHPR Department are
Delanie Moske, (left) senior, majoring in Graphic Communications and
Lissette Allen, (right) sophomore, majoring in Exercise Science.**

Their hard work is appreciated!

HHPR Happenings

Second Annual Car'Rilla Show!



"The Car'Rilla Fest is entirely student-led. Our HHPR Club Officers worked for months to plan, including recruiting sponsors, managing registration, and coordinating the event. Nearly \$1,000 was raised for student scholarships! If you'd like to support Car'Rilla Fest through donations or sponsorships, please reach out to me at nhutchens@pittstate.edu. A special thank you to Campus Recreation for allowing us to use the building, and thank you to our fantastic volunteers and HHPR Club Officers. We could not have done it without you!" - Dr. Shelby Hutchens



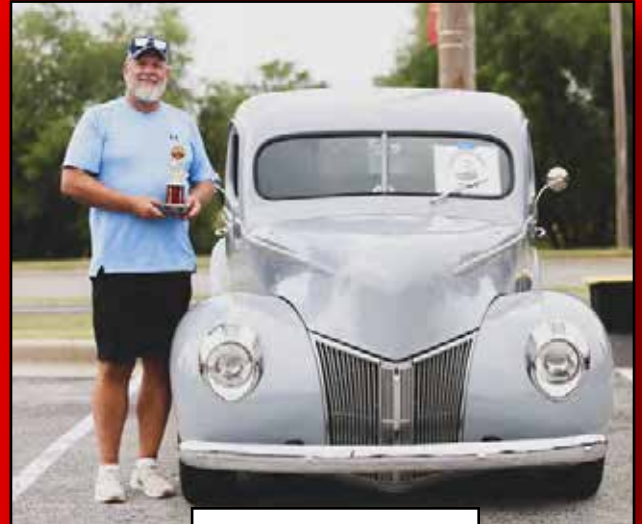
HHPR Happenings

Car'Rilla Fest Winners!



Roger Furman

1st Place Car Category



Frank Meister

1st Place Truck Category



Henry Krantz

1st Place Jeep Category

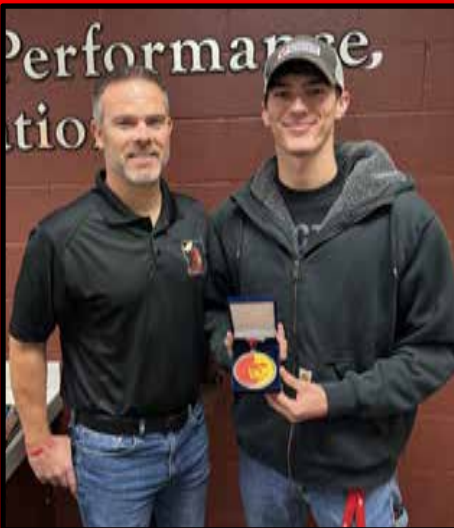


Todd Allison

1st Place Motorcycle Category

HHPR Happenings

Scholarship Donor Luncheon



Dr. Evelyn Triplett Scholarship Fund

Bella Fugate Bevillacq, Exercise Science

Helen Messenger Scholarship Fund

Maddy Hughes, PE

HHPR Scholarship

Austin Parrish, Exercise Science

Karl B. Larson & Rowena Sohosky Larson Scholarship

Kinleigh Hall, RSSHM/TR

Matthew Nutter Memorial Scholarship

Kaeli Lynnes, RSSHM/TR

Nadine E. Sheffield Scholarship

Amy Adamson, Exercise Science

Shelly Grimes Fitness Scholarship

Riley Hicks, PE (pictured left)

Wanda O. Weickert & Carol A. Cichowski Endowed Scholarship

Kyra Heald, Exercise Science

Breanne Peters, RSSHM

Kelsey Bruening, Exercise Science

Austin Sinn, Exercise Science

Janel Meyer, Exercise Science

Andie Hafner, RSSHM

O'Neill Legacy Scholarship

Weston Shafer, PE (pictured left)

COE

Kaydence Orlick, RSSHM

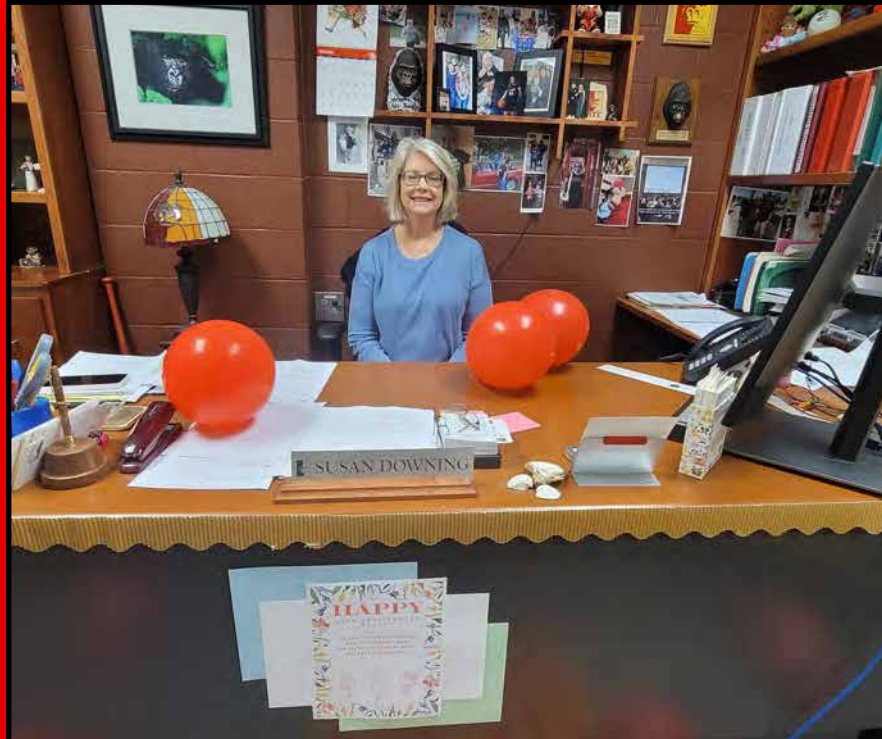
CONGRATULATIONS!

HHPR Happenings



GA, Loryn Moser, and
Koby Myers became
engaged this spring!

Congrats!



Susan Downing achieved a milestone this past October...30 years @ PSU! Nine of those years were in Teacher Education; the last 21 in HHPR.

Congratulations!

HHPR Happenings



Former GA, Ryan Hellwig, stopped by the office to catch up with some of his favorites.

F•R•I•E•N•D•S



Dr. Elizabeth Smith and Dance Minors, Lissette Allen and Tess Hudgens, are members of the Pitt State Crimson and Gold Dance Team and perform at every home football game!



HHPR Happenings



Students in Dr. Scott Gorman's Camping & Outdoor Education Class do Highway Clean-up as a community service project for the city of Pittsburg.



Tyler Atkins
Kelsey Bruening
Drew Daniels
Blake Garrett
Hannah Gibson
Eli Gilmore
Sailor Jensen
Jaydon Knight
Ava Laurent
Madi LaPointe
Macie Mays



Mario Menghini
Bradley Neill
Luke Niggemann
Nicholas O'Connor
Peyton Osborn
Trista Peterson
Austin Schmitt
Dylan Sprecker
Carson Trimble
Caden Uthe
Zachary Voss

Several HHPR student-athletes were inducted into Chi Alpha Sigma, a national college athlete honors society that recognizes outstanding academic achievement.

Congratulations!

Majors Fair



The Majors Fair was held this fall in the Axe Library. Departments from across campus were invited to participate and share respective discipline information with undeclared students.

Students could also learn about student organizations as well as minors and certificates complementing other majors. Students, grad assistants, and faculty had a great time meeting with the students!



RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE



HHPR faculty and students were on hand to welcome area high school seniors to Rumble in the Jungle. Over 500 students were in attendance and learned about the various majors and activities in the HHPR Department.

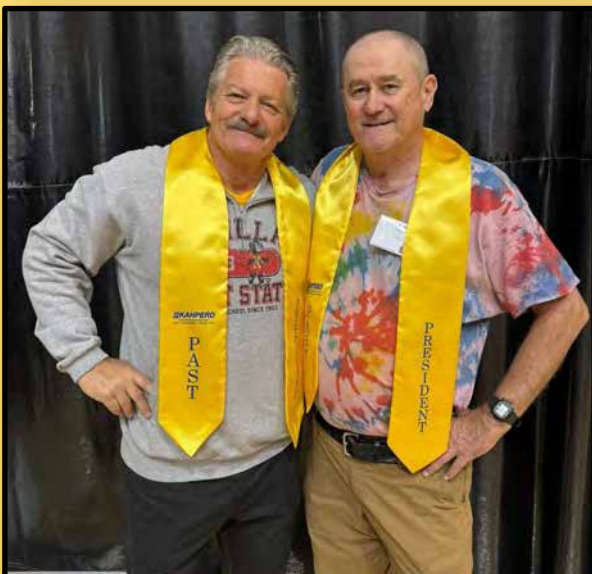


KAHPERD Convention



Above, Shelly Grimes and Dr. Julia Spresser, presented the "NFL Flag in Schools Program" at the KAHPERD Convention. The NFL Flag in Schools initiative advocates that all kids achieve 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity most days of the week. With currently 22 NAIA colleges offering women's flag football as a competitive sport and youth leagues being offered across the nation, Flag Football has become one of the fastest growing sports in America.

Below are pictured Scott Gorman & John Oppliger, both past presidents of KAHPERD. Also pictured is an activity our students were involved in.



KAHPERD Convention



KANSAS ASSOCIATION FOR
Health • Physical Education • Recreation • Dance

KAHPERD Convention



Dance professor, Dr. Elizabeth Smith, was recognized as the Dance Education Teacher of the Year at the KAHPERD Convention.

Congratulations!



DANCE NEWS



Dr. Janice Jewett's Dance Appreciation students worked with both 1st and 3rd grade students at Meadowlark Elementary teaching them various dances and rhythmical games including line dances, the Virginia Reel, Spooky Loo, and more! After dancing, all Westside participants received a Gus Coloring Book compliments of PSU's College of Education.



DANCE NEWS



Dance Appreciation students had a great time sharing their dancing skills with residents at Carrington Senior Living. The students performed many dances, including a couple of dances residents were invited to join in... the YMCA and Hand Jive. Dances included the Fox Trot, Heel Toe Polka, Virginia Reel, Footloose, Electric Slide, and East Coast Swing. Three students were selected to perform their choreography they did for a class assignment earlier in the semester. Erin Schroeder performed a tap dance; Kendal Armstrong performed a Pom dance and Ava Jackson performed a contemporary piece.

Fall Showcase



Students in the Jazz, Hip-Hop, and Contemporary classes split into groups then choreographed a routine to perform for the annual Fall Showcase.

The Modern Dance Class performed a piece choreographed by Darcie Shultz. Along with group work, there were many soloists who choreographed their own routines!



Photography by Sam Clausen

Exercise Science News



The collaboration between the Exercise Science Program, Pitt State baseball pitchers, and Pitt State Strength and Conditioning has begun! Pitchers performed a series of power and speed tests this semester to mark the beginning of off-season training.



Exercise Science News



Pitt State baseball pitchers got their body comp tested with the Applied Physiology Lab's new InBody 970 BIA Device, before testing their grip in seated and standing positions.



Exercise Science News



Exercise Science students launched their In-season Strength & Conditioning Program with PHS Soccer Team. Tests included aerobic fitness with the Yo-Yo test, Sprint speed, and anaerobic fitness with a shuttle run.



Rylee Martin administered a maximal oxygen consumption test (VO_{2max}) on her participant for her final exam. Rylee was recently accepted into the Physical Therapy Doctorate Program at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center.

Congratulations Rylee!



Exercise Science News



Dr. David Boffey and students have been partnering with the Pittsburg High School Soccer Team to implement a new strength and conditioning regimen.

Physical Education News



The Motor Learning and Development Class went to The Center in Pittsburg to observe pre-school students' basic fundamental movement skills.



Pictured above, Drew Cassida, Brayden Goodman, Nick Moeller, & Skylar Stevens enjoying Theories I Class at Four Oakes Golf Course.

Physical Education News



Students in Introduction to Physical Education went to Meadowlark Elementary to participate in a soccer lesson led by Mr. Whitely, Meadowlark's P.E. teacher.



Physical Education News

Shelly Grimes' Theories II PE students worked on the fundamentals of Flag Football with seventh-graders at Pittsburg Middle School!



Physical Education News

Drew Cassida & Jessa Hylton, students in Dr. Julia Spresser's Theories III Class, taught Gymnastics to 4th grade students at Meadowlark Elementary.



Physical Education News



First Aid and CPR
classes work on
Adult CPR with
manikins and
practice unconscious
choking in children.



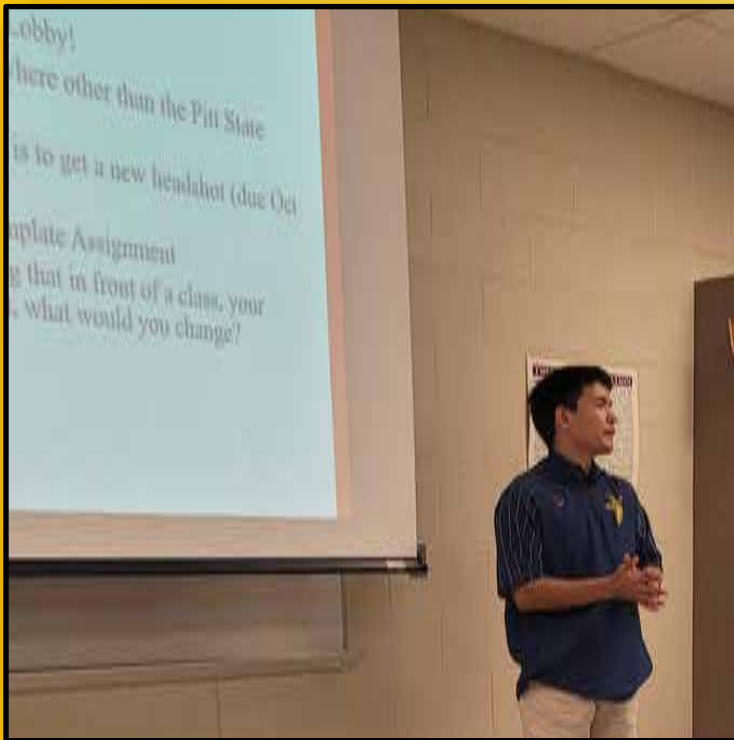
RECREATION NEWS



Pitt State Therapeutic Recreation students in the Diagnostic Groups Class practiced what they learned about physical disabilities through adapted sports like wheelchair basketball and seated volleyball, even playing a 3-on-3 game!



RECREATION NEWS



Joey Addicott, Spring '25 grad, was back to speak about his internship experience with the Savannah Bananas in our Professional Development Class. The department is proud of him and excited to hear of his experiences!

#OAGAAG



A huge thank you to the 2025 Recipient of the Bateman Outstanding Alumni Award, DePrice Taylor, for stopping by and speaking with Dr. Hutchens' Leadership & Management Class! Her experience and insights into leadership in sports were fantastic for our students to hear, and easy for them to connect with.



RECREATION NEWS



Students in Dr. Hutchens' Professional Development Class recently heard from Gorilla Football Coach, Brandon Perkins. Coach Perkins shared his coaching journey and is currently the Cornerbacks and Defensive Pass Game Coordinator for Pitt State! It was a fantastic presentation!



RECREATION NEWS

Bethany Foster, PSU Athletics, met with our Rec 320 Promotions Class. Students learned through experience how college sport sponsorship works.



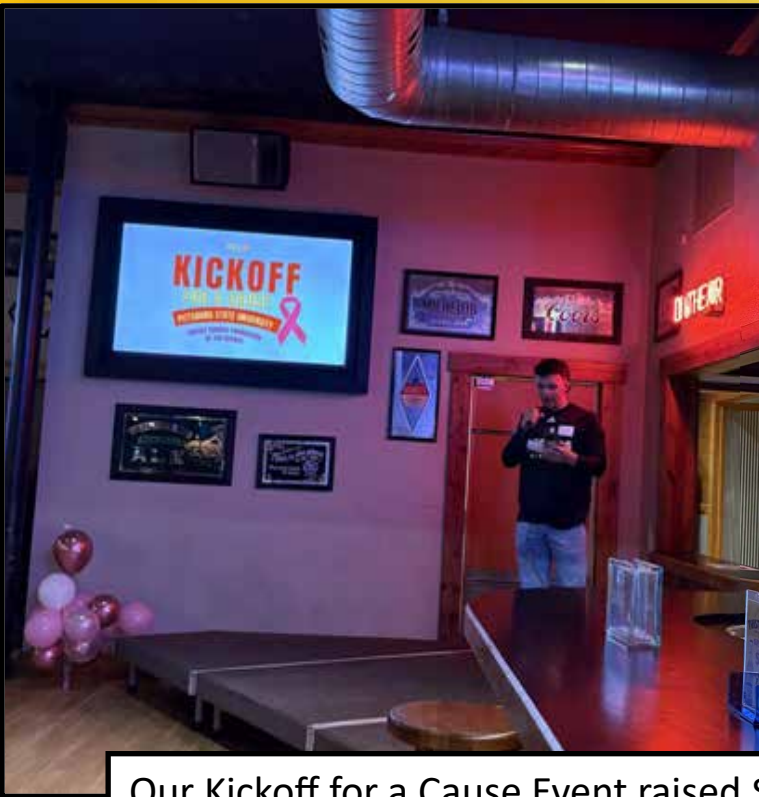
RECREATION NEWS



With the help of PSU Athletics, students in Dr. Hutchens' Promotion in RSSHM Class presented sponsorship packages to representatives pictured in these pages, Oliva from 7 Brew, Robb Good from Tropical Smoothie Café, Zach Kunkler from Hampton Inn, Paige Lown from ServPro, Shannon Brutchin from Security First Title, Timberlee McNair from Pittsburg Interiors, Ami VanBecelaere from First Edition Transfers, Katie Sweezy from Ryan-Dittmann Insurance, and Denise Grasso from Pairott Head Liqueur.

Thank you!

RECREATION NEWS



Our Kickoff for a Cause Event raised \$2,572 with funds going straight to Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks and will be used in Southeast Kansas (they work with patients in all 4-states). Not too shabby for our first year- very proud of our students!



RECREATION NEWS

Therapeutic REC



Pitt State Therapeutic Recreation students are back at the YMCA this semester, sparking joy and connection through their Golden Gorillas Class! By engaging older adults in innovative interventions and activities, they're empowering a brighter, more vibrant community.



RECREATION NEWS

Therapeutic REC



The Therapeutic Recreation Program collaborated with Special Olympics Kansas and Medicalodges to host the Senior Unified Event at the Pittsburg State Plaster Center. This year's theme was Halloween; costumes were encouraged! The activities for the event were designed and led by therapeutic recreation students. At this event, Special Olympics athletes ages 45 and older and older adults living in area retirement communities were paired together with a volunteer. All participants received medals at the end of event.



Photography by Olivia Ryan

RECREATION NEWS

Therapeutic REC



Dr. Covert-Miller and Graduate Assistant, Loryn Moser, attended and presented at the International Council on Active Aging Conference in Anaheim, California. They presented on the Golden Gorillas Intergenerational Program Pitt State students do in the community with older adults. Dr. Covert-Miller and Loryn also found some time to visit a local theme park!

RECREATION NEWS

Therapeutic REC



The Interventions in Therapeutic Recreation Class met weekly this semester with New Hope Day Service. Students were responsible for planning and facilitating their own activities for the group. These weekly meetings centered on teamwork, cognition, positivity, and building connections. As the semester progressed, the class became increasingly confident in leading the group and has consistently created successful interventions for the New Hope consumers.

TR-iffic Day of Play



Students in Therapeutic Recreation hosted TR-iffic Day of Play with a Circus Carnival theme. Nearly 500 people were at the event designed for persons with disabilities of all ages. Area schools and day service programs attended the event. Students created and led the stations along with student volunteers from the HPR Department and other programs across campus. Special Olympics Kansas collaborated with the TR-iffic event to host their Treats and Trails outside of the Plaster Center.



Photography by Sam Clausen

TR-iffic Day of Play



Photography by Sam Clausen

Dr. Gorman's Camping & Outdoor Education Class



Dr. Gorman's Camping & Outdoor Education Class



Dr. Gorman's Camping Class students surprised him with scrapbook of all their camping adventures this semester and at Roaring River!

In Loving Memory, Carl Edward Roth



Friends and family said good-bye to Carl Roth, who passed away on September 22nd at his home. He was part of three state high school football championship teams in the early 80's and played football at both KU and Missouri-Rolla. It was at Rolla where Carl met Coach Chuck Broyles; a future Gorilla was born!

Carl earned a degree in Physical Education at PSU in 1993 and his masters in 1995 while serving on the Gorilla football coaching staff. Coach Roth would be part of a national championship team and many post-season team appearances.

He will be missed by his wife, Megan, twin sons, Ty and Jax, family friends, and a host of PSU colleagues, players, and coaches.

Support Our Students



Help our students grow beyond the classroom!

Our HHPR students stay active year-round-learning, presenting, and connecting at professional conferences. We're seeking support to help cover travel expenses including hotels, transportation, and registration fees. Every contribution, no matter the amount, directly supports our students' ability to gain valuable experiences that prepare them for their future careers. Thank you for helping them take the next step!

For further instruction scan the QR code down below.



Support Our Students



A Special THANKS to our Donors

Andrew & Shanna Albright

Backroad Brew

Dr. David & Elizabeth Boffey

Missy Clark

Dr. Mary Coplen

Ron & Susan Downing

Stephen Foster

Dr. Scott & Beth Gorman

Michelle Grimes

Richard & Stephanie Grinage

Lisa Gunya

Dr. Robert Hefley

Carmen Jarrell

Medina's Mexican Restaurant

Frank & Judy Meister

Dr. John & Kathy Oppliger

Pamela & Guy Owings

Dr. Cole & Jennifer Shewmake

Michael & Jo Slaughter

Gary Thompson

We Appreciate You!

Congratulations to our Graduates!

Exercise Science

Taylor Brown
Gabriel Hook
Kyla Hummel
Adam Thompson
Robert Tobel
Sierra Wright

Graduate

Christian Bates
Jerek Butcher
William Griffin
Matthew Long
Antione Nunn Jr.
Megan Saba
Madilynn Sanderhelm
Jaykob Welcher

Dance Certificate

Makenzie Coomes
Clarissa Worley

Recreation

Cleo Chandler
Cooper Harris
Jahkobie Smith

Physical Education

Landon Carson
Trey McClelland
George Short

Sports Management Certificate

Ali Fabrizius

Hospitality Management Certificate

Paiten Griffith

Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant

George Short



Happy Holidays

from HHPR

Cole Shawmake

Emmalee Jarvis

John Appleton

David Bortez

Sally Anne

Jane Edwards

Billy Jones

Susan Dunning

James Jewett

Natalie Ford

Kyle Zerkel

Delanie Minko

Lissette Ann

Sara West Miller

Frank Horn