

RecLIFE MAGAZINE

Fall 2022



Rec Sports

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

HOWDY

Howdy Ags!

Fall 2022 has proven to be a semester full of change at Texas A&M. President Banks' Path Forward initiated its university-wide structural reorganization this September, multiple construction projects were completed with other renovations continuing across campus, and Texas A&M student enrollment continues to reach record highs.

Within the Department of Recreational Sports, change has manifested itself in the onboarding of new staff members, the completion of our newest facility, the Southside Rec Center, and the recent announcement of my own retirement. Although there have been incredible changes in the department over the past few years, we at Rec Sports are comforted to have had such an incredible team of staff, students, and alumni to support the Rec Sports mission of promoting activity, wellness, and development by providing high quality, inclusive experiences. What first began in 1926 as the "Intramural Department" has evolved into a nationally recognized program that continues to be one of the largest recreational programs in the country and each year welcomes millions of visitors to recreate at one of our six facilities.

As we move into the spring semester, we are excited to watch Rec Sports continue to grow. This spring, the Southside Rec Center will move beyond its introductory semester and welcome staff and students alike as a fully equipped and operational recreation facility. Our online presence will continue to exceed expectations just as it did when we surpassed 10,000 followers on Instagram this August. The department will experience a change in leadership with a new executive director, and imaginative programs will continue to meet the needs of the Texas A&M community.

It has been an honor to serve Texas A&M Rec Sports over the past 44 years. I am confident that the new director will lead the department into a new era while continuing our mission of inspiring the lifelong pursuit of health and wellness.

Thank you so much for your continued support of Rec Sports; we look forward to staying in touch.

Gig 'em,



Rick Hall
Director, Department of Recreational Sports

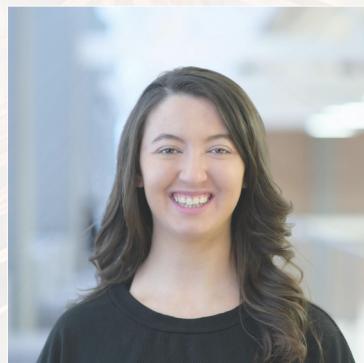


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RICK HALL

Director of Rec Sports, Rick Hall, is retiring after more than 40 years with the department. The Virginia Tech alum first fell in love with intramural sports during his senior year of college before starting his career at Texas A&M Rec Sports as Assistant Director of Intramural Sports in September 1979 under the supervision of Dennis Corrington. After five years with intramurals, Rick agreed to a job rotation with a colleague and took responsibility for facilities in 1984, a time when Texas A&M University was experiencing phenomenal growth.

"We had a facility that had about seven basketball courts, and when we would do intramural basketball, it was absolutely packed every night," Hall said. "We as a staff at one of the retreats knew we needed to do something; we needed more space."

As the '80s continued, select universities across the country established their own rec centers, and this inspired Rick and Dennis to create their very own rec center in the heart of Texas A&M University.

"There was this trend going on in the country, about five universities - UT was one, Arizona, Arizona State, UCLA - it was becoming popular to build a rec center... and you did it by going to the students and have a referendum," Rick Hall said. "We decided then that we needed to do a rec center, so we had to go to the students."

The \$36.4 million project was presented to the students of Texas A&M in the spring of 1987, which came to be the largest student body election of its time. The Student Rec Center was approved with an overwhelming majority and sent to the state capital to be codified into law, where it was signed by the governor in 1991.

"It's (The Student Rec Center) a whole new door opened up to me, never done any projects before and now to work with Facilities, Planning, and Construction," Rick Hall said. "I was a senior member of the facilities team; I was heavily involved in the design and all this process, so I was at every meeting."





From the then Associate Director of Facilities, Rick would continue to show excellence in higher and higher positions at the Department of Recreational Sports over the next 20 years as the demands of the increasing student body required more and more action and responsibility. In that time, more staff would be added to the Department of Recreational Sports, the Student Rec Center would be expanded to over 400,000 square feet, and his mentor and friend Dennis Corrington would retire in 2018 after 45 years of service.

As the presiding director, Rick oversaw departmental adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rec Sports app launch, the construction of the Polo Road Rec Center, the expansion of the Rec Sports minimum wage, and

the creation of the Southside Rec Center. While his directorship has only spanned the last few years, his commitment and service to Texas A&M University and the Department of Rec Sports traverses decades of facility innovation, departmental adaptation, university-wide change, and compassionate leadership.

"I hate to use the term longevity, but my longevity, commitment, and, through all the changes and the growth we've seen, navigating the climate makes me pretty proud," said Rick.



A BLAST THROUGH TIME

1979

Hired at the Rec

2018

Promoted to Director

2022

Southside Rec Center was built

1995

Student Rec Center was built

2021

Polo Road Rec Center was built

2023

Rick Hall retires

When asked about what he will miss the most about his career in Aggieland, Rick disclosed how homely Texas A&M Rec Sports came to be. What began as a fledgling organization operated by a close circle of colleagues has soared to accommodate multiple program areas, a thousand student workers, and dozens of full-time staff. From the late seventies, that pioneering generation of Rec Sports staff has developed alongside one another and guided those younger than them in the values of Texas A&M Rec Sports. This pioneering class has worked together, risen together, led together, and one by one, now retire together.

"I'll miss the people," said Rick. "This is almost a second family. Some of my best friends are here, some are retired or are about to. We were like glue." He continued to go on and say, "I'll miss the view, the access, and the awareness".



In his retirement, Rick hopes to learn Spanish, play guitar, and spend time with his wife, Mel, who he met at Texas A&M during his time as the Assistant Director of Intramural Sports.



WELCOME TO REC SPORTS!

Full Time Staff



Federico Caballero
Strength & Conditioning Coordinator

"I'm excited to serve the student population and community of Texas A&M through state-of-the-art strength & conditioning equipment and facilities. The history, tradition and reputation of Texas A&M cannot be beat."



Kaitlyn McCollum
Communications Coordinator

"I look forward to working together to find new ways of promoting health and wellness for all demographics of students through different media outputs. I have a big love for TAMU and Rec Sports cares about the wellbeing of A&M students unlike many others I wanted to be apart of!"



Todd Grier
Assistant Director - Outdoor Adventures

"I'm excited to join a very capable team, and the community in Aggieland is incomparable. Outdoor Adventures is known for its quality program. There are endless opportunities for creative partnerships among the campus community."



Alyssa Moncreif
Operations and Events Coordinator

"I'm excited to grow and have the opportunity to impact the students of Texas A&M in a positive way! I always admired the facilities, programs, etc. of A&M Rec Sports before arriving here. I loved my time as a GA here and am so glad to be staying!"



Mason Kautz
Communication Specialist II

"I look forward to broadening my skillset and putting my writing talents to use! A&M has that small-town living and affordability I'm looking for while also having easy access to Austin and Houston."



Amber Peppers
Human Resources Generalist

"I look forward to helping hire the best and the brightest, to continue the exemplary service we provide. I have always been impressed by the facility and the staff and students who work there have always shown excellence. I wanted to be a part of that."

Graduate Assistants



Michael Heath
Sport Clubs
MS Sport Management



Myrka Lila
Fitness & Wellness
MS Health Education



Sean Moran
Operations
MS Sport Management



Fernie Perez
Intramural Sports
MS Sport Management



Courtney Ploch
MarComm
MS Marketing



SOUTHSIDE REC CENTER

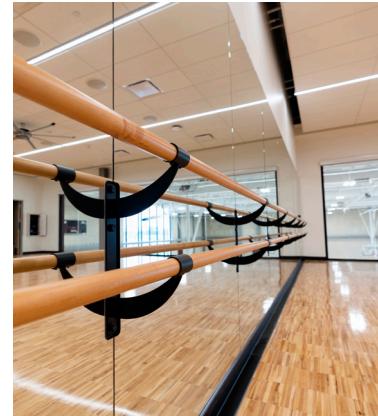
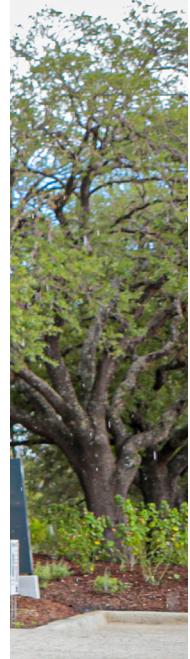
This August, the Department of Recreational Sports welcomed the newest member of the Rec Sports family: the Southside Rec Center! This state-of-the-art facility spans over 63,000 square feet of recreational space and is conveniently located across the street from the Commons residence halls on Bizzell Street.

With the continued expansion of the student population of Texas A&M University, Rec Sports understood the need to erect a new recreational facility to address students' needs for wellness and physical activity. Our existing facilities have long been crowded, so providing additional recreational space at a convenient location was a priority. We encourage all members to embark on their personal development journeys and believe in the right for all people to pursue self-improvement, so we set out to make physical fitness and wellness even more accessible for the Texas A&M community.

And thus, the Southside Rec Center was born.

This facility marks the culmination of a vision decades in the making, as our former director Dennis Corrington led the promotion of activity and development through excellence in service, programs, and facilities. From the original Student Rec Center that first opened its doors in 1995, we have expanded programs and services into the Penberthy Rec Sports Complex, the Physical Education Activity Program (PEAP) building, the Polo Road Rec Center, the Omar Smith Instructional Tennis Center, and now the Southside Rec Center.

The Southside Rec features 25,000 square feet of strength and conditioning space, 15,000 square feet of outdoor recreation, two indoor multi-sport courts, a recessed bouldering wall, and two outdoor sand volleyball courts. With a convenient location across the street from the Commons residence halls, students on campus have a brand-new facility in their backyard, meaning recreation is only a short walk away!



Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Southside Rec is its design. With expansive window walls and a beautiful modern, open design, the Southside Rec utilizes natural lighting throughout the facility to illuminate its indoor multi-sport courts, strength and conditioning area, central staircase, and welcoming foyer. Since the Southside Rec is the only major facility on the east side of Bizzell, the southeastern view from the strength and conditioning room is unfettered by other campus buildings, allowing students to recreate within the new facility while basking in the light of beautiful sunrises and admiring the natural view of trees, grasses, the morning sky, and the morning dew nestled upon the neighboring Golf Club at Texas A&M. While the Polo Road Rec Center offers an urban view of College Station along University Drive and the Student Rec Center posits its secure, brick interior, the Southside Rec brings the beauty of nature to the Department of Recreational Sports.

The Southside Rec Center is open seven days a week, with the facility open for use beginning at 6am Monday through Friday. Weekend hours for the Southside Rec and all other Rec Sports facilities can be found online at recsports.tamu.edu.



REC SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Texas A&M University | Fiscal Year 2022

REC SPORTS MISSION

To promote activity, wellness, and development by providing high quality, inclusive experiences and facilities for the students and community of Texas A&M University.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

96

YEARS ON CAMPUS

46 acres of outdoor space

444,000 square feet of indoor space

1,800,000 gallons of water in 5 pools

▲ **70,038**

Annual Rec members

1,416,905

Total Student Visits

37

Recognized Sport Clubs

INDOOR RECREATION SPACE



STUDENT REC CENTER
416,000 SQ. FT.



POLO ROAD REC CENTER
28,000 SQ. FT.



SOUTHSIDE REC CENTER
63,620 SQ. FT.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



619
Outdoor Adventures Trip Participants

11,863
Unique Intramural Participations

35,930
Participants at 511 Meetings & Events

4,200
Sport Club Athletes

860,878
Strength & Conditioning Participations

2,700
Climbing Wall Participants

2,572
Personal Training Sessions

63,987
Aquatics Participations

5,890
Rec-A-Palooza Attendees

9,346
Intramural Games Played

17,679
Group RecXercise Participations

1,772
Specialty Class Participations

REC-A-PALOOZA

Throughout the summer months, staff and students alike prepared for the largest Rec Sports event of the year: Rec-A-Palooza. The particularly excruciating heat of the summer months matched the intensity of the Rec Sports staff as countless hours were poured into the development of this massive event.

Come August, designs were finalized and published, reservations were made, and the event was officially a go. But when the 22nd of August showed its face and staff began organizing the event floor, inclement weather advisories flooded all lines of communication. Staff anxiously checked their phones as the hours passed, and ultimately outdoor booths and activities were relocated to avoid the impending downpour, though the question of student attendance still remained.

Despite the persistent rains, students flocked to the Student Rec Center in droves and there was an incredible number of participants and smiling faces at Rec-A-Palooza. The halls and gyms of the Student Rec Center were already decorated with games, challenges, and other activities, but the immense proportions of the Rec perfectly welcomed the over

5,000 students in attendance as they happily escaped the inclement weather and stepped into the carnival of Rec-A-Palooza.

Though the storm raged throughout the event, Rec-A-Palooza 2022 marked the largest Rec-A-Palooza in Rec Sports history; in no year prior had so many students arrived to participate in this awesome event.

“Considering how bad the storm was, we were super surprised to see so many students show up,” said Kelly VonDrehle, who orchestrated Rec-A-Palooza from conception to launch. “Seeing all of the students come in really showed us what the Aggie Spirit is all about.”

Each fall, Rec-A-Palooza welcomes new and returning Aggies to College Station, with student attendance consistently surpassing the previous year. The Department of Recreational Sports is excited to host next year’s installation of this annual event, and we look forward to greeting all who walk through our doors - rain or shine.



Sport Clubs ARCHERY



With 22 national championships won since the 1990s, the Texas A&M Archery Club is a tried and true dynasty in the collegiate archery world. Students from around the world come to Aggieland to compete for their beloved university as members of the Archery Club, and together these same archers encourage one another's development for national and Olympic-level competitions.

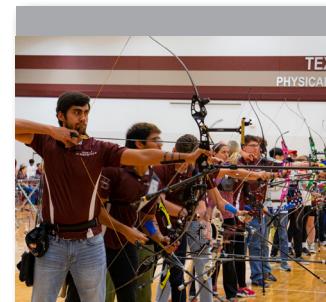
Such is the case for Venugopal Kunnavakkam, nicknamed Venu by his peers. Venu is a two-time under-18 national archery champion from Singapore who moved to the U.S. to refine his skills in a larger arena.

For Venu, coming to the United States and shooting for the Texas A&M Archery Club means participation in a higher degree of competition. By training alongside other Aggies, Venu both learns from some of the best American collegiate archers and pushes his teammates to achieve their highest potential.

"When I first moved here, I was a little lost; the campus is huge and everything, and I don't know where I was going my first week of classes," Venu said. "But you know, knowing the coaches and knowing the people on the team has really helped me find a home of sorts here."

Even more, competing for Texas A&M Archery ingrains the importance of sportsmanship, respect, and integrity. Competing next to fellow-minded individuals for Texas A&M emulates its own brand of brotherhood, and standing side by side with fellow archers motivates Venu to hone his skills as he competes alongside his newfound friends.

"Coming from Singapore, we wouldn't have a lot of archery in upper education programs," Venu said, "so I was looking to continue archery in college but also see whether I can, you know, make an Olympic team or two or three."



This past October, the Texas A&M Water Ski Club competed in the National Collegiate Water Ski Association (NCWSA) competition and won the Division 2 championship! This marks the first time in club history that Water Ski has won the NCWSA national championship.

Altogether, Texas A&M Water Ski earned over 10,000 points in the contest, being the only team in Division 2 to break five digits. Despite these impressive wins, the team values the fun and camaraderie



of the club most of all. In an interview with Rec Sports, Water Ski club members shared their fondest memories of meeting fellow skiers and breaking the bitter grimace of competition by having laughs and bringing lots of love to the sport of Water Ski, especially for amateur skiers who seek to try something new.

"Coming to college to ski and skiing in ASWA (American Water Ski Association) is night and day different, honestly," said Kristen Babaish. "In ASWA, I felt kind of pressured to win all the time, and then like, I come to college and it's like, for fun."

For Texas A&M Water Ski, the emphasis is placed not on the perfect execution of events, but on the memories and fun created between teammates and friends.

Sport Clubs WATER SKI





ONE STEP AT A TIME

Run for Recovery

On October 22, 2022, amidst the falling leaves and dropping temperatures, Intramural Sports partnered with Health Promotion to host the second annual Run for Recovery, an event dedicated to raise awareness for students recovering from drug and alcohol abuse.

Nearly 100 Aggies gathered for the early morning 5K across West Campus, and after their race, participants were welcomed to an afterparty on the Student Rec Center terrace.

With alcohol and drug use being a common part of college sociability, understanding the significance of recovery and its facets was the core mission for Health Promotion Specialist Megan Buck, who oversaw this event's success.

"I like to think of recovery very holistically, about all of the elements that are going to support a person doing well and also thriving academically and personally, so physical wellness is a big piece of that," Buck said. "The size of this event is great for just the visibility of recovery, bringing it to people's focus, but also integrating the idea of moving your body with recovery is a big piece of the equation to supporting every element of people's well-being."

This October marked the second year of Run for Recovery history at Texas A&M University. With the success of its first two years, Rec Sports is excited to see what new partnerships can be made across campus for the betterment of student and community wellness.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING



On the day of Rec-A-Palooza, nearly 200 student staff gathered at the Rec bright and early for the annual Student Leader Training, a program designed to welcome student staff back to the Rec for the new school year. The training provides students the opportunity to interact with coworkers across various program areas, share information about Rec Sports policies, and advance their personal and professional development. The event is filled with team-building games, informational/planning sessions, and various trainings. Student Leader Training 2022 proved to be the largest Student Leader Training yet as a total of 197 students were in attendance. Rec Sports proudly champions student development programs like these to promote staff development and facilitate the next generation of leaders. If you would like to help Rec Sports in the development of student leaders, please contact Drew McMillen at (979) 845-1887 or dmcmillen@rec.tamu.edu.

THE DUNN FAMILY

We were excited to catch up with Lauren and Marcus Dunn on a sunny afternoon to discover where life after Outdoor Adventures has taken them. As the Production Manager for Clos LaChance Winery in California, Lauren regularly uses her chemistry background, management ability, and even her knot tying and climbing skills when inspecting wine tanks. Marcus is a software engineer at Google and spends his time developing machine learning models. In simple terms, Marcus noted, “My organization develops machine learning models and infrastructure to identify bad actors across Google’s ad networks and stop them from ruining your browsing experience.” As we reminisced, Marcus remembered that he spent a lot of time trying to conquer the “Big Bird route” on the climbing wall and Lauren shared her fond memories of working with former Outdoor Adventures Director, Patsy Kott, who often taught

her staff rigging techniques to haul boats and store gear.

Outdoor Adventures is incredibly grateful to Lauren and Marcus for their gift that set up an endowed fund for Venture Camp, a program co-sponsored by Outdoor Adventures. They shared, “We are truly fortunate to be able to give back to something we love and couldn’t have done it without our college experience at Texas A&M University. When we discovered Venture Camp it felt right and a perfect way to give back. We want to help bring an amazing opportunity to students so that they can also experience the specialness of the A&M outdoor community.”



REC SPORTS TAILGATE

On the morning of November 5, Texas A&M Rec Sports staff and alumni came together for the department tailgate prior to the football game against the Florida Gators. Despite the early morning start time, generations of the Rec Sports family flocked to the terrace to mingle. With breakfast, games, and refreshments provided, spirits were up for the 11 a.m. game. And while the game ended with an unfortunate loss, Rec Sports staff and alumni were happy to reconnect with one another and cheer on their fellow Aggies. If you would like to participate in an event like this, the Department of Recreational Sports will be hosting its annual Rec Sports reunion next semester!

For more details, make sure to stay up to date with Texas A&M Rec Sports on Facebook or contact Drew McMillen at dmcmillen@rec.tamu.edu.



GRADUATING SENIORS

We were happy to celebrate our graduating seniors this December before they walked the stage! Students from different program areas congregated in the Student Rec Center to reminisce on memories and experiences accrued during their employment with the Department of Recreational Sports. While we are sad to see familiar faces leave the Rec, we are proud of our students' accomplishments and have faith that they will continue to grow into industry leaders in all of their respective careers!



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WALK OF CHAMPIONS

The Walk of Champions brick campaign features bricks engraved with the names of students, employees, and friends of Texas A&M. Together we can ensure that the values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service are instilled in all Aggies.

Proceeds will help Rec Sports continue to offer high quality, inclusive programs, experiences, and facilities where future Aggies can maintain their well-being, test their limits, and gain leadership skills.

To learn more, Drew McMillen at
(979) 845-1887 or dmcmillen@rec.tamu.edu.



Rec Sports

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