The Tent Peg
So be you named Ben, Debby, Andrew
Or Maurice Phipps
We are all going to great places
Today is our day and it's waiting for us
So move those mountains and go get on your way

“Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!”

~Dr. Seuss' “Oh, The Places You'll Go”

“A place that means caption” Cullowhee, North Carolina. By JB Powell. Photo was taken at the airport looking towards Western Carolina University on a snowy day.

Cover: “Waterfall Trail” Balsam Mountain Trust Preserve, North Carolina. By Myranda Sherrill

TO and FRO
By JB Powell

Oh, the places you’ll go
And the places you know
And the people that mean
The most to you

From the fresh new starts
To becoming silly old farts
From tops of trees to the bottoms of the seas
Remember the adventures you’ve had

You’ve seen lots of faces
And you’ve been lots of places
There’s been hard days
And there’s been easy days
The people and days that change your ways

So the skills we have learned will show us the way
Because we all have found out we will get lost
On our way to be leaders to teachers in the out doors
So step with care so we don’t have to Z-drag
Or use out first aid skills on your butt

With the skills we learned from PRM 250 to PRM 495
We will succeed
Oh yes indeed
Its 99.99% guaranteed
We will move mountains big or small

Oh, The Places You’ll Go
From your editors

The greatest adventure is what lies ahead, today and tomorrow are yet to be said, those chances and changes are all yours to make, the mold of your life is in your hands to break.
-Jason

A wise man once said, “To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all”. That wise man was Irish writer, Oscar Wilde. What he is telling us is that life is precious and it’s meant to be lived to the fullest, not taken for granted and wasted away on things that don’t truly matter. If anything, that statement should teach us to love ourselves, each other, and the lives that we live.
-Myranda

Thank you to everyone that submitted an article, poem, photo, or piece of art! It was very difficult to decide whose would make it to the final Tent Peg. Everyone did an amazing job! A special to Ben Tholkes, Maurice Phipps, and Debby Singleton for their contributions to the Tent Peg and their guidance and advice that aided us in our role as editors!

"Beach Sunset" Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Photo taken with a Samsung S4 Galaxy. Jason Opliger.
It’s The Little Things in Life

By Anthony Lombardi

This is a picture of my dear friend, who I found trying to make his way across a trail. I still to this day have no idea how I managed to get him to trust me long enough to not only stay in my hand, but get on my finger and pose for a picture like this. This little frog has been one of my favorite finds because he always reminds me that you do not need to climb a 6,000 foot peak, hike 15 miles in a day, or even go on a weeklong solo hike to feel consumed by nature….sometimes all it takes is the little things. I think as park and recreation professionals we should take a second to sit down and get a sense of what’s around us. Look at the ground beneath you to expose the vast community of insects and the unmarked highways they seem to travel on. Look at the trees and think about how long it took them to become what they are today and the hundreds of different species that one tree is home to. In today’s world I think more and more people are losing their connection to nature, and hiking in a state park is not the only way to get them back to it. My little friend and I just want to remind you that the little things in life, no matter how small, are just as, if not more, important then the big picture!
I looked at Kyle and said "we are longboarding". We knew or know had or has ever done before and it hit me, therefore, we thought to ourselves how we could make that distance on a bike in one day if we wanted. In mind for so long. When planning this we knew we made immediately we knew this was the chance to do a mini excursion of the cross country bike trip we have had. For about the first ten miles. From there on and until we hit the sand three days later we stayed along the shoulder of the road, where at times only having a few inches between the white line and the grass. It took a lot of getting used to having cars fly by us, some within an arm length of the road, where at times only having a few inches between the white line and the grass. It took a lot of getting used to having cars fly by us, some within an arm length.

It was 8am and a cool summer morning in late May that we doubted checked our boards and bearings, threw our packs on our backs and hit the open road. We tried to take the safest route possible, however for those who know the state of South Carolina at all, you know there is no way of making this trip without staying on some type of highway or back road that is heavily populated. After going only two miles in the first hour we quickly realized that this excursion was going to be a lot more difficult than we originally thought. The first day was the only day we had any type of side walk to ride on and it lasted for about the first ten miles. From there on and until we hit the sand three days later we stayed along the shoulder of the road, where at times only having a few inches between the white line and the grass. It took a lot of getting used to having cars fly by us, some within an arm length at excess speeds of 50 MPH, but once we did we started making up some ground.

Going 170 miles with nothing but the clothes on your back, a bag full of cliff bars and slim jims, and a tarp to sleep on when the sun sets. The type of adventure that leaves you broken, bruised and beaten by the end of it, but yet so accomplished at the feat you just conquered it. This type of adventure can only be done with sheer will power, determination, lots of courage, and yes, a mindset that might actually prove to be certifiable in some countries. It is adventures and journeys like this that will show you who you really are and what you are really made out of. When you feel bruised, beaten and broken, will you get up and keep moving, or throw in the towel. I know I can speak for Kyle and I and say we don’t ever want to look back 50 years down the road and say what if, or I wish I had done this or not given up on that.
Future Hope
By Weston Smith

It was a sunny, yet chilly, November day as we stood atop Black Balsam Knob waiting for the sun to set. The wind was fierce, as it always is, making the 50 degree weather seem more like 30. My hands were shaking but not just because of the wind. I was about to make the biggest decision of my short 21 years of this earth. I checked my pocket to assure myself that it was still there, I took a deep breath and dropped to one knee. As the sun set on Black Balsam Knob that day I asked the woman I was sure of from our very first date to marry me. She blurted out a few, “OMG’s”, before saying yes and letting me slip my life savings onto her finger. It was worth every penny watching her eyes light up when she saw it and as she stumbled over roots on the way down watching it sparkle. The first time I hiked to the summit of Black Balsam Knob, I knew it was a special place. It now holds a special place in both of our hearts.

As my time at Western is coming to an end, I think back on what a journey it has been. I think back on all the wonderful memories I have made and how big of an impact the past four years has and will have on my life. It has been a fun ride. I have experienced all that Western has to offer. I’ve made lifelong friends and met the woman of my dreams. In this season of reflection I am also looking forward to the future and the new things we will experience, the many people we will meet. I don’t know where we will end up but I am looking forward to all the places we will go, together!

My Journey to the Outdoors
By Erin Baker

Growing up, I loved the outdoors. I loved climbing trees, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, just about anything outside. As I got into middle school, I got into competitive sports and I loved every second of it. My seventh grade year, I played basketball and ran track. That year, I broke my foot. My eighth grade year, I played basketball, played travel AAU basketball, and ran track. With travel ball and track season both at the same time, there were days that I would go straight from track practice to travel ball practice. With all of this activity, I ended up being diagnosed with quad tendonitis in my left knee. I went through physical therapy and I decided right then and there, I was going to be a physical therapist. As I continued to play sports, my knee became worse. I went to more physical therapy, and I started to love that profession more.

As I started college at Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton, North Carolina, I was a Physical Therapy Assistant major in goals of graduating with my Associates degree and transferring to get my Bachelors in Athletic Training. That plan didn’t work out and I left community college a year early and transferred to WCU as an Athletic Training major. After one semester, I decided it was time to do what I love and not think about money.

Since I was 17, I had been working at Lake James State Park in Nebo, North Carolina. My love for the outdoors started to reignite. Coming to Western was a decision based off of what I could see myself doing in my life. Western offered both majors I was looking at, so I wouldn’t have to deal with transferring again.

I decided to change my major to Parks and Recreation Management to become happy. At this point, I was just diagnosed as manic depressive. Yes, I still have my moments where I am depressed and unhappy, but since changing my life direction to Parks and Recreation, I have never been happier in my life! Now as I am fast approaching graduation, anxiety is kicking in and I have no idea what I’m going to do afterwards. I want to be a Park Ranger, but that is a very competitive field now, hopefully, fingers crossed, I can get that job. If not, and I haven’t gotten job in 5 years, I plan on going back to culinary school. So keep your eyes open, you might see me on Cutthroat Kitchen!

Thank you to all of the lifelong friends I have made in this major, the faculty and their guidance, and family for supporting me through this journey in life!
In a matter of months I will be placing a hat on my head and walking across a brightly lit stage to the applause of my fellow classmates and my family. Graduation isn’t something new to me, I’ve done it before many times. However this graduation is a little different. Every graduation so far in my life has been two things; an ending as well as a starting point. This one is an ending, as in the ending of my school career. It’s also the starting point for the rest of my life. No more classes, no more papers at three in the morning, no more classwork to fall behind on. You would think this would be something exciting. However it also will bring about an end to a lot of things I enjoy. Meeting new friends, laughing with other students about teachers, and suffering through semesters with other students, together. Now that this is coming to a close, it makes me start to think about where I have been and where I will be going.

Before I came to Western I was a tall lanky kid who had no idea what he was doing. Now that I am preparing to graduate I realize I am still a tall lanky kid who has no idea what I’m doing but now I have debt. Growth.

It’s a bit troubling, having the feeling of spending almost all of my life in school and not having anything to show for it. I thought there was no way I haven’t learned anything in my entire life. I had to sit down and really think, what I know. Algebra? Poetry? Chemistry? Literally nothing. Then I started thinking about when I first showed up here on campus. I thought I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to keep going to school and I wanted to make an environment that students would want to be in. Then I observed my first high school class. Within thirty minutes of that day, I knew that this is not the place I would want to be in. After I realized I didn’t want to be a teacher I didn’t know what to do. I looked at some of the other majors and couldn’t find anything I liked. So I went home for the summer and went back to lifeguarding which was my normal summer job. I ended up speaking to my boss about my situation and she suggested Parks and Recreation. So I thought why not, and enrolled in the introductory course.

Fast forward to now, I’m getting ready to graduate with a degree in Parks and Recreation and I can’t wait to get into a job. I can’t wait to get into the community and make a difference. I can’t wait to be at the soccer fields on Saturday mornings. I can’t wait to run summer camps and plan paddleboard programs. Once I started thinking about what I want to do with my life, what I want to help with and work with, I realized what I had learned. I want to do these things because it’s something I’ve done before, in and out of school. I learned that it’s not about math equations or poems, it’s about the experiences I’ve had. The rock climbing, the paddle boarding, the business plans, through those experiences I was able to cultivate an idea of who I want to be and what I want to do with my life. When you go to college you don’t just learn program plans and how to write a thesis statement, you learn who you are. You learn through your friends, your activities, and your thoughts. I learned more about myself living on my own than a textbook could have ever taught me.

I don’t know where I’m going, I have a good idea of the direction but not the destination. But with the lessons I’ve learned about myself and the things I want to be I think I’ll be okay. I hope anyway.
Making the decision to go to college was a natural progression for most of my classmates as they exited high school and continued their education at Western. For me, the journey to get to Western took more than 25 years, even though I had decided this was going to be my school many years ago.

I spent most of my adult life as an employee, a mother and a wife, but no matter what particular “hat” I was wearing at the time, I didn’t forget my desire to continue my education. My decision to have a family meant that I needed money to live and support them. I worked a number of jobs during that time, but eventually I attended a local community college to get my Associates Degree in Paralegal Studies. I spent a number of years working in different law firms, eventually getting to the point in 2002 that I was completely burnt out with the work. Most of the positions required a long commute for me from Dunn to Raleigh, I was stuck in an office all day, and found no enjoyment at all in the work. I set out to find a position closer to home and in a different field, however, all the doors seemed to close as I was told I was overqualified and that I should try the local law office to see if they needed help. I eventually gave in and applied for another legal assistant job with a law firm in Raleigh. I didn’t know it at the time, but that decision changed my life.

This was just one of many cases she won due to the ingenuity and work ethic that I witnessed every day. No matter how well known she became, she always treated me with the same level of respect and provided me encouragement that I never received in my life. It was Ann that kept pushing me to reach out for my dream of going to college. She wouldn’t let me leave it and always told me I could do it if I wanted it badly enough. I have had to use the work “was” when talking about Ann here because she is no longer with us. Ann was diagnosed with breast cancer, and although she fought it with the same rigor and spunk that I saw her battling her opponents with every day, she lost her last fight in August of 2014 after finding out the cancer had spread to her spine and brain. In the weeks before her passing, I was able to visit with her a couple more times. During the first visit, Ann was visibly weak but as always she wanted to know about me and she expressed how proud she was of me for doing what would make me happy in life by finishing my education. On that last visit, Ann was not responsive but I was allowed to be by her side, holding her hand and coming to peace with the idea that she would go soon. Ann died on August 16, 2014, one day before I left for Western Carolina University to begin the journey that I had waited to come years.

That first semester was difficult to get through as I struggled daily with Ann’s passing. However, I knew she would be upset with me if I let anything impact my studies and hold me back from being able to take advantage of this opportunity that I had fought so hard to get. If it was one thing that Ann taught me, it was how to fight. I will never forget her for the inspiration and true role model she was to me. Ann would be proud to know that after almost two years since her passing, I am almost at the end of my successful journey at Western and am ready to start the rest of my life to live my dream - to be happy in whatever I choose. I know she is watching over me and smiling somewhere as I get closer to this goal.

In the summer of 2009 I chose to be a counselor in training at a Boy Scout Camp called Camp Bud Schiele. Going into this I did not where it would lead and I really didn’t care at the time. All I knew was the next year I would have a better chance of getting hired as actual camp staff for the summer. I spent two weeks that summer volunteering my time to learn how camp staff worked. I could not wait to join the staff and get paid for going to summer camp, at least which is how I looked at it at the time. The next year when I was 15 years old I got hired as a camp counselor at Camp Bud Schiele. I loved it so much that I said I would have done it for free! After a couple years I often found myself saying that it would probably be my last summer and that I was going to find something that paid more and maybe a little different. Each year though I found myself back at Camp Bud Schiele.

Then I got an offer to be the Camp Commissioner for the summer. This is one of the higher positions at camp and is considered upper management. I did this job for two summers and it was the best summer’s I had at Camp Bud Schiele. Near the end of the summer of 2015 some of the other office and management staff and I were talking about starting up a High Adventure Program. I started the planning and took the lead. I expressed interest in the program and began to put some of it together.

This summer I will be completing my Capstone Internship for PRM and applied for various positions. I told the staff at Camp Bud Schiele that were over camp hiring and programs that I had done this in case I got a job offer I could not refuse. The opportunity to run the High Adventure Program would be very exciting, at the same time I still wanted to do something different since I would be using this summer for my internship.
Above left is a photograph of Ann Majestic, the inspirational woman that helped shape Jennifer’s destiny at Western Carolina University. Above right is a photo of Jennifer and her boyfriend, Mike visiting the Gettysburg National Military Park in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

This photo was taken at the confluence of the East Inlet Creek and Echo Creek in the Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo was taken with a Samsung digital camera. By Cory Linder.
Lately, everyone has been asking about the places my peers and I will go. My future is a hot button topic that is debated daily while talking to my parents, my friends, and in class; everyone seems to know where I should go except for me. Graduation is approaching quickly, and it’s scary that soon my safe haven will no longer be the Green Room. I’ve come to love higher education, and I’m reminded daily that Parks & Recreation Management is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. Most people are lucky to be influenced by one professor in their college endeavors, but I have had four in the PRM program alone that have greatly affected my professional and emotional development. When I look back on some of my classes where my professors pushed me to rock climb (even though I was only three feet off the ground and started crying in front of everyone), it made me realize how important it is to find the fine line between my growth and panic zones. Although working for (what feels like) thousands of hours on a semester long program proposal, I had the unique opportunity to make my peers some of my closest friends. Often times we take these instances for granted because they’re hard at the time, but these are actually formative moments where we can look back and realize just how hard we’re capable of working.

The problem for me is that I know that I am capable of working hard, but I’m not sure in what direction to put forth effort. Ultimately, I know my goal is to be a professional in the recreation industry (probably as an educator or interpreter), but I’m not certain of the finite details to get to that destination. Not knowing where I’m supposed to go next is daunting, but I’m trying to embrace it. I won’t be young forever, and I don’t have responsibilities or obligations to anyone else except me. Sometimes I get frustrated that I can’t skip time and wake up one morning fully emerged in my career, but the journey is what builds character. Being uncertain keeps my mind open to new opportunities and adventures that come my way.

It’s okay to not know where you’re going to go and what you’re going to do after graduation. As long as you have a goal in mind and you keep working for that goal then you are making progress. It’s easy to get caught up in an idealistic view of the working world where a job will just land in your hands, but that won’t happen without some hard work. Perhaps we will keep living like broke college students waiting for a break after we graduate, or maybe we’ll be lucky enough to begin the career of our dreams - no one knows the future. To my friends and peers graduating soon, take it easy, work hard, and enjoy the ride. Years from now we’ll wake up and wonder where all the time went. Don’t stop pursuing happiness, a career that brings you joy, and stories to tell your grandchildren.

This sketch combines several of my passions into one piece. As a recreational professional, I am looking to promote active lifestyles in the midst of the concrete jungle. The city provides an exciting, yet challenging atmosphere to involve the various communities in outdoor excursions and engage the population in physical activity. The rose represents my goal to raise awareness of Alzheimer’s disease and serve that population through my career. The rose comes from quote within my family to have “Roses in December”, representing the power of positive memories in the darker times of your life.
What is lost? What is hidden? We all venture into the outdoors for some reason. We venture for the leisure or sometimes for the challenge. Other times we go out because we have no choice. What’s lost inside of you? What’s calling your name? Will you go? Go and find what’s lost.

Going outdoors is about so much more than just completing a hike. It’s about more than successfully rolling a kayak. It’s about what it means to us on the inside. It’s the sense of accomplishment you get after completing the latest bouldering problem or the healing that comes from spending days in the wilderness. The wild is built into our souls. We try and replace it with money, man-made things, and accomplishments, but at the end of the day nothing can substitute the breath of fresh air as you gaze out into a valley from the pinnacle of a mountain. There’s something in the human nature that calls us outside.

Humans were not made to sit in front of a screen all day checking messages and seeing the highlights of others’ days. We were made to overcome struggle and accomplishments, but at the end of the day what is going to make me the most money or what job is going to be steady and dependable. Looking back, it turns out those are extremely important aspects to consider but would a job like that make me happy? What is the point in spending 30 to 40 years at a job that makes you miserable, angry, or bored? But I was a kid then and I didn’t need to spend so much time worrying about a career, I needed to worry about exploring the woods or what new video game was coming out so I could play it with my friends.

When I was 9 years old I joined Cub Scout Pack 438 and had a great time made a bunch of friends and could not wait to go to Boy Scouts and learn how to camp, hike, and do all these outdoor activities more on my own. The Orange District Annual Crossover Ceremony was held on February 5, 2005 and it was my year to crossover. I had to choose between joining my friends in the newly formed Troop 438 or join some of the guys that I didn’t know well in the well-established Troop 467. It was a tough choice but I chose to join Troop 467 and become better friends with the guys from that troop. Little did I know that the leadership in that troop would inspire me to pursue a career in what I think is the most meaningful and exciting job that exists today, a Park Ranger with the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation.

A little over a year later, I discovered that my Scoutmaster of the troop was the Park Superintendent of Eno River State Park. I began asking questions about his job and became fascinated with having a job where you go out into the woods, making sure people are having a fun time, protecting the environment you work in, and teaching those who visit about the environment and why the park protects the area. That job sounded like a dream come true to me. I asked my Scoutmaster, “What do you need to do get a job like yours?” and he told me that I should work as a seasonal for a few summers after I turn 18. That is exactly what I did. In February of 2013 I got a call from Jordan Lake State Recreation Area to interview for a position there. I was extremely excited at that interview when I got a job offer to be an Assistant Park Ranger at Seaforth Day Use Area at the lake. I started on Memorial Day weekend, which I later found out was the busiest weekend of the year for Jordan Lake. I learned a lot of skills easily and made friends with nearly all of the rangers there. At the end of September, my season was over and I had to focus on my studies at Alamance Community College.

Since that summer I have worked at 2 other state parks over the past 3 years and made several new contacts including the chief park ranger for the State of North Carolina. I have led interpretive talks, completed several large and small-scale projects, rescued wildlife and helped research certain plants, answered numerous questions that have made me think critically and some so simple that I feel foolish for entertaining but that’s a part of the job. I have loved my summers working for the state parks but I feel that I am ready to move on to becoming a permanent park ranger and being in a park everyday instead of just every summer. To become a park ranger in North Carolina, you must have a bachelor’s degree and I chose Western Carolina University. Where better to study parks and recreation than a university surrounded by land dedicated to parks and recreation? I have been at Western Carolina for a year and one half and next fall semester will be my last. I look forward to graduating and joining the spring 2017 Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) class to become a North Carolina certified law enforcement officer.

Challenge Course. Photograph taken by Todd Murdock.

It’s something that’s hard to put into words. I want you to experience it for yourself. Only then will you find what’s been lost. So, go. Seek and find. It’s waiting for you.

Where have you been and where you will go?

By Brandon Davis
This is not required before I become a park ranger but it is required after I am hired. If there are no jobs available immediately after graduation, I hope that this certification would help me in quickly being chosen for a position once it opens.

I cannot predict exactly what my future will hold. I could spend 30 plus years with the state parks and retire, I could work a few years and find another career that I love even more, I could win the lottery and buy a nice house on the ocean with awesome views and watch my equity grow. Life is full of mysteries. I do know that I love being outdoors, I love helping people, and I love protecting what should be protected. To me that is the numerous acres acquired by the state for preservation and recreation and it will be an honor to serve the state park system and the more than 20 million people that visit our parks each and every year. Here’s to the past, here’s to the future, here’s to parks and recreation.

Over 20 years ago, the Parks & Recreation Management program underwent a re-visioning to place more emphasis on outdoor education and leadership. This re-visioning was led by Dr. Maurice Phipps and Dr. Ben Tholkes; who brought new ideas, a fresh perspective, and a wealth of experience to WCU. In 1996, they hired Debby Singleton to teach courses within the commercial recreation focus area and to help teach a wide variety of core classes. Throughout the years, the core instructional staff, with assistance from a talented pool of adjuncts, has led and taught countless Parks & Recreation Management majors. In 2014-2015, Dr. Phipps began phased retirement and we welcomed Dr. Andrew Bobilya to our PRM faculty. As we entered this time of transition, we started thinking about opportunities to give back something to our students, especially those who need financial assistance to help them meet their professional and personal goals.

In 2014, the PRM faculty had the opportunity to explore creating a scholarship for our program. During the spring of 2015 we completed the scholarship paperwork and began fundraising. Fundraisers have included a community dance, the Cullowhee Canoe Slalom, alumni and faculty donations. The Phipps-Tholkes-Singleton Scholarship is on track to be endowed for $10,000 by 2020. Each year our goal is to raise $2,000 for the scholarship.

Once the scholarship is endowed, we can open the application process to our students. If the scholarship reaches its monetary goal prior to 2020, we can start awarding scholarships sooner.

The process to donate to the scholarship is fairly easy. To give online, just go to this link: http://www.wcu.edu/giving-to-wcu/areas-to-support/college-and-units/CEAP/index.asp and select “Make a Gift to Parks & Recreation Management”.

For more information about the scholarship, contact one of the PRM faculty.
Each semester, Dr. David Belcher, WCU’s Chancellor, recognizes students you have earned a 3.8 GPA during the previous semester at WCU. On April 1, 2016, seven PRM majors and one GMIT-Ireland Exchange PRM major were recognized at a ceremony for their Fall 2015 academic achievements. This celebration of academic achievement is WCU’s way of recognizing and commemorating student success and academic excellence. These PRM students have earned a significant honor and are role models that have demonstrated their commitment to academic and personal excellence. We are very proud of these students!

**PRM Majors:**

**GMIT-Ireland Exchange:** Fian McCabe

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**PRM Program Recognized for Academic Excellence**
By Debby Singleton

The Parks & Recreation Management Program received the WCU Academic Program of Excellence Award on April 22, 2016. The award recognizes an academic program for their significant achievements and accomplishments to the university, their college and department, as well as their students. Through a nomination and application process, the PRM Program was selected based on the "quality of accomplishments, the relationship of accomplishments to WCU’s Vision 2020 Strategic Plan, mission and goals, the collaborative and the sustained effort involved in realizing the achievement". Along with a campus wide recognition and plaque, the PRM Program will receive $10,000 to recognize our established record of excellence.

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**I Am Going On an Adventure**
By Myranda Sherrill

Even from an early age I had a free and adventurous spirit. Being cooped up indoors, never doing anything or going anywhere, just wasn’t enough for me. I had to explore, to run free, and venture off into the world, even if no one else wanted to join me. As a toddler, I ran like a wild child all over the local park near my home. My mother would take my sister and I there as often as she could and I would climb every tree, bench, or piece of playground equipment. I investigated every bird’s nest, hole in a tree, or creature that I could. I can honestly say that I am very much the same as an adult.

Though I can’t remember the last time I played on a playground at the park, I do feel the same intrigue with the world that I did as a child. Back then, I didn’t understand what I was all about and I certainly had no idea that my love for exploring would create such a passion within me to see the world and experience it for every bit it is worth. I always have the desire to go somewhere new and try something that I have never tried before. I feel fulfilled when I venture away from home and take a risk in meeting new people, exploring different cultures, and seeing new sights. To be frank; the world is so big and full of wonder that there is no excuse not to explore it. To travel the world and set myself free from a mundane life is my biggest dream. Those like me, with a restless spirit, feel exactly what I feel, the urge to break away and live an exciting and thrilling life.

I want to climb every mountain, visit every country, sail all seven seas, and experience every culture of the world. Everything that I do with my life gets me one step closer to my dreams! I made it to high school and graduated with a diploma, I am in college and am going to graduate very soon, I am pursuing a career that takes me to interesting and new places, that challenges me in important ways, and I think that it’s only a matter of time before I get to venture out into the world even farther and with the opportunities that I see all around me, I will be living my dreams in no time.

So, when I think of “Oh, the Places You Will Go”, I think of where I will go and what I will see. And the exciting thing about it is, I can go everywhere and see everything! In the words of Mr. Bilbo Baggins of the Shire; “I am going on an adventure!”
“Where We Come Alive”
By Spencer Johnson

- **Method:** This picture was shot with a Canon Rebel T3i with an 18-55 mm. lens.

- **Where:** In complete honesty, I have no idea where we were. My friend, who you see on the right, and I were spending a couple of days at his cabin, that is located in the back-woods of Morganton, NC, and decided to go on a hike. He said he knew of an overgrown trail that led to a beautiful old dam, and it did not disappoint. Even though this place was beautiful and amazing, the real beauty was in the journey. Through poison ivy and sticker leaves, our day was short and our laughs were long.

- **Inspiration:** My friend on the right and I had been shooting these “Indiana Jones” themed pictures for fun for quite some time. He and I were always going on adventures together, thus the idea of “Montana Norman & So-Jo” was born.

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My Career Journey
By Hana Miller

Unlike the kids who dreamed of what they wanted to be when they grew up, I was the kid who could care less about careers. Instead of focusing on careers, I wanted to enjoy my time as a kid and have fun with what was going on around me. The fun seemed to cease once I reached high school. I had to make a decision on what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing. After taking a career test, to determine my strengths, I decided to major in Recreational Therapy.

I attended WCU in Fall 2013 with a major in Recreational Therapy. However, the start in my career path did not begin until I was a sophomore. At this point, I no longer had a passion for Recreational Therapy and switched my major to Parks and Recreation Management.

As I remember writing my essay to declare myself a Parks and Recreation Management major, I started getting a clear idea for what I wanted for my focus. In the major, there are five different focus areas: community recreation, outdoor leadership, health and wellness, commercial recreation and resource recreation management. Since my desire was to work in a parks and recreation department, I decided to concentrate in community recreation.

A big lesson I took away from the Parks and Recreation Management program at Western is that it is not an easy major. After taking my first class, I thought that the major was going to be super easy. However, once I got into my upper level classes, my thoughts changed. The workload got harder but I realized why the classes were so challenging. The professors wanted to give us assignments that would prepare us for the work field. Along with our assignments came group projects that helped us get to know others in the classroom. It gave me the opportunity to work with others who think and learn differently.

As I walk away with a Parks and Recreation Management degree in the spring of 2017, I will take away many skills that will help me in my future career. Some of these skills include time management, creating budgets and program planning. I will also take away that no matter what happens, you will always have to work with a diverse group of people. Their thoughts may not agree with yours, but you all come together to get the job done.

Looking back on my life, I am happy I made the decision to switch majors. If time could rewind, I would have thought deeper about what I wanted to go into rather than picking something right off the bat. But, sometimes, we must make changes that will benefit us in the end.

In conclusion, I leave you with my number one lesson I want to share about any field you want to go into, “no matter what you do, you should be passionate about it.” Without that passion or drive, then what is the point of being there?
What will I see?
By Chase Sneed

Little hop, little skip
Little dodge, little dip
Through the big forest I zip
Over a stream I leap
And up the mountain I creep
Oh the places I will see
As I explore the world of Olympic National Park
I began to wonder why it is so dark
So I made my slow disembark
Down the mountain and around the lake
I was startled when I came across a snake
Oh the things I will see
I wondered on the way down
If I will ever come back around
To the place that left me dumbfound
The lakes and mountains
Will again look like the heavens
Oh the places I will see

Galloping Around
By Katie Burke

Oh, the places I plan to go on horseback. In the future I hope to see myself working in the equestrian field. Working with horses and people. Helping people form a passion and connection to horses. My first step was to work in the equestrian field at the Hickory Nut Gap Barn, where I completed my mini-internships.

The next step to gain more experience in the equestrian world is to work at The Kentucky Horse Park this summer. My capstone internship will allow me to learn more about different types of horses and teach visitors of the park about the horses. Working as an intern will help me get my foot in the door for future job opportunities.

After the internship, I plan on graduating from Western Carolina University. Then my third step will be to apply to the Biltmore Estate Equestrian Center or at their trail barn. Another option I have is applying for an internship at KESMARC (Kentucky Equestrian Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Center). I also plan to apply and travel to different internships to gain more knowledge about horses.

Horses are a passion of mine and I want to have career working with them. Each horse is different which makes working with them interesting. Horses can be laidback and easy, some stubborn, high strung or super spoiled. Each have their own personalities, so it makes it exciting working with them.

There are no boring days at a horse barn because there is always something to do and horses are always entertaining to watch and interact with. I understand that the equestrian field does not come with high pay or a lot of benefits. Being around horses, for me, is like having free therapy sessions. It is relaxing, it lowers my stress levels, and it just makes me feel calm and happy.
Misty Mountain View

By Evan Williams

This picture was taken from “Pretty Place” located at Camp Greenville about 10.2 miles from Dupont State Forest. While normally you can see for miles on a clear day, my dog Tuck and I showed up on a cloudy day to enjoy the sounds of the wind and mysteriousness of the mountain. I took this picture with my Kyocera Brigadier cell phone when Tuck decided to jump up beside the cross.

Memories From The Journey

By Raynor Ward

From the enchanting swamplands of the coastal plains of North Carolina, to the majestic mountains of North Carolina, to the historic mystical Savannah, Georgia, to the arid vast lands of Iraq, and back to the place I call home, Western North Carolina. I have been up and down the coast of the United States and once to Denver, Colorado. Western North Carolina is still where I would prefer to rest my feet any given day. The places that my life journey have taken me are far and near, some joyous, some dangerous but all have given me the opportunity to grow and learn. As I now finish my last year as a Parks and Recreation Management major I reflect upon some of these moments that have lead me to this point.

As a child growing up, my family did not have much, but what we did have was a love for adventure, family time, and sharing. We would take trips often to the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. I grew up on the coast and was also surrounded by swamplands, which had rivers and lakes. The largest lake happened to be Lake Waccamaw, a portion of which is also a North Carolina state park, I spent many summer days and nights there when we were not at the beach. The rest of my time not spent in school or at church, was in nature. I have been organizing camping trips since I was ten. The first few trips began in the backyard and slowly moved to the tree line and then deeper into nature. My friends and I would look forward to the trips every weekend, as we grew older.

During my young adult life I chose to attend Western Carolina University for a degree in history. While at Western, my love for the outdoors grew, but not as much as I would have liked. My attention was wide and not focused, like many young adults in that stage of life. I did go on many day hikes and explore local swim spots. Once I returned a second time, I truly capitalized on the wonders of this great natural area.

Post college I worked in retail back on the coast of South Carolina and after a couple years I felt as though I was in a rut. I joined the United States Army and challenged myself and fell back in love with nature and living life to its fullest. After traveling for a little bit while in the army, I slowly cast my focus back to Western Carolina University for another undergraduate degree.

Once accepted to Western for a second time I pursued Health and Physical Education with the focus on adventure education. I took the adventure education course during the summer of 2014 and made the decision to switch to Parks and Recreation Management, and haven’t looked back since. I have flourished and truly grown more in the past two years than I have in six years.

What the future holds for me after completion, I am not sure of, but I do know that it will be amazing and I will thoroughly enjoy it because I will be working in the outdoor industry getting paid to do what I truly love. There will be days that the work will be a job and have tasks I may not enjoy, but there will be many days out weighing those. This is a passion for me, it is only a job when you have moments of not loving what you do, but even still we can do our best and make a difference.
What is a PRM program review and why do we need to do one? I ask that same question every time we are told it is time for our review. Actually, PRM never did a program review for the first 15 years Maurice and I were in the program. Ten years ago, we were told to do our first program review and this year (2016) we prepared for and hosted our second program review. Program review is actually an interesting process and even though it is a lot of work, we find out a lot about our program every time we do a review. The program review process begins with gathering all the information we can about the PRM program. The review documentation includes information about our students, our faculty and our classes. The document we prepared for this review totaled over 750 pages of information. A hard copy of this document is stored in Andrew’s office if you would care to look it over.

The second part of the program review process is to submit the names of two internal and two external reviewers. The review team spends 3 days on campus looking over all aspects of our program. The members of our review team were: Dr. Karla Henderson from North Carolina State University, Dr. Mark Wagstaff from Radford University, Dr. Charlie Parrish from WCU and Dr. David Strahan from WCU. I feel we were very fortunate to get a well-qualified and professional group of examiners. Dr. Henderson and Dr. Wagstaff are well known and respected in the parks and recreation profession and it was great to have them visit our campus and examine our program. Ten of our PRM students had the opportunity to lunch with the review team and share their opinions about the program with them. The review team also toured Reid Gym and visited with our PRM adjunct faculty.

Before the PRM program review team left Cullowhee, they gave us a preliminary result of their findings and later, they sent us a written report on their visit. One area that impressed the committee was the way PRM used the abundant resources of our area to design our nature-based courses. The committee was very impressed with the students they were able to visit with during their time on campus. They said the PRM students were, “articulate, passionate and thoughtful.” The committee was also pleased with the support PRM is given by our department and our college. The committee also looked for ways in which the PRM program could be strengthened and improved. Currently, PRM has 5 focus areas and the committee felt we might strengthen our program identity by narrowing the scope of our program. This might also result in changes to our program’s required courses and possibly our guided elective choices. The committee also felt the addition of a challenge/adventure course to the WCU campus would strengthen our program and benefit the entire WCU community. Other recommendations by the committee included: providing PRM with a dedicated classroom and lab space for our activity courses, consider providing resources for a PRM faculty member for the Community Recreation area, consider seeking accreditation for the PRM program. The next step in the program review process is for Maurice, Debby, Andrew and I to examine the committee report and make plans for the future of the PRM program.
Sunrise Over Blue Ridge Mountains
By Caitlin Morgan
Len Foote Hike Inn Dawsonville, GA
Nikon D3200  35mm

This photo is special to me because I took this during the sunrise of a two-day hike that my mom and I did. Photography is one of my biggest passions, which gives me the opportunity to remember and cherish memories that I will carry with me later on through life. It gives me comfort that I can take a picture at every place I will go, and I’ll never forget how I made it to wherever I am now and in the future.
PRM Program Review
By Dr. Ben Tholkes

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When the Tree Spoke
By Dominic Conseza

So said the tree
That the leaves will turn
And the wind will blow
For no fortune was written
That did not sow good things
Even the trampling of the earth
By hoof and foot
Cannot keep the soil dark forever
And though my loses leave me bare
It is then I can see myself
And the others around me clearly
No longer a songbird in my boughs
But louder still the truth
That sounds clear in serenity
And so it is there
I find that I can remember
Then my leaves will grow
And the wind will blow
So said the tree
Misty Mountain View

By Evan Williams

This picture was taken from “Pretty Place” located at Camp Greenville about 10.2 miles from Dupont State Forest. While normally you can see for miles on a clear day, my dog Tuck and I showed up on a cloudy day to enjoy the sounds of the wind and mysteriousness of the mountain. I took this picture with my Kyocera Brigadier cell phone when Tuck decided to jump up beside the cross.

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“Where We Come Alive”
By Spencer Johnson

- **Method:** This picture was shot with a Canon Rebel T3i with an 18-55 mm lens.

- **Where:** In complete honesty, I have no idea where we were. My friend, who you see on the right, and I were spending a couple of days at his cabin, that is located in the back-woods of Morganton, NC, and decided to go on a hike. He said he knew of an overgrown trail that led to a beautiful old dam, and it did not disappoint. Even though this place was beautiful and amazing, the real beauty was in the journey. Through poison ivy and sticker leaves, our day was short and our laughs were long.

- **Inspiration:** My friend on the right and I had been shooting these “Indiana Jones” themed pictures for fun for quite some time. He and I were always going on adventures together, thus the idea of “Montana Norman & So-Jo” was born.

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By Hana Miller

Unlike the kids who dreamed of what they wanted to be when they grew up, I was the kid who could care less about careers. Instead of focusing on careers, I wanted to enjoy my time as a kid and have fun with what was going on around me. The fun seemed to cease once I reached high school. I had to make a decision on what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing. After taking a career test, to determine my strengths, I decided to major in Recreational Therapy.

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A big lesson I took away from the Parks and Recreation Management program at Western is that it is not an easy major. After taking my first class, I thought that the major was going to be super easy. However, once I got into my upper level classes, my thoughts changed. The workload got harder but I realized why the classes were so challenging. The professors wanted to give us assignments that would prepare us for the work field. Along with our assignments came group projects that helped us get to know others in the classroom. It gave me the opportunity to work with others who think and learn differently.

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In conclusion, I leave you with my number one lesson I want to share about any field you want to go into, “no matter what you do, you should be passionate about it.” Without that passion or drive, then what is the point of being there?
PRM Students Recognized for Academic Excellence
By: Debby Singleton

Each semester, Dr. David Belcher, WCU’s Chancellor, recognizes students you have earned a 3.8 GPA during the previous semester at WCU. On April 1, 2016, seven PRM majors and one GMIT-Ireland Exchange PRM major were recognized at a ceremony for their Fall 2015 academic achievements. This celebration of academic achievement is WCU’s way of recognizing and commemorating student success and academic excellence. These PRM students have earned a significant honor and are role models that have demonstrated their commitment to academic and personal excellence. We are very proud of these students!

PRM Majors:

GMIT-Ireland Exchange: Fian McCabe

PRM Program Recognized for Academic Excellence
By Debby Singleton

The Parks & Recreation Management Program received the WCU Academic Program of Excellence Award on April 22, 2016. The award recognizes an academic program for their significant achievements and accomplishments to the university, their college and department, as well as their students. Through a nomination and application process, the PRM Program was selected based on the “quality of accomplishments, the relationship of accomplishments to WCU’s Vision 2020 Strategic Plan, mission and goals, the collaborative and the sustained effort involved in realizing the achievement”. Along with a campus wide recognition and plaque, the PRM Program will receive $10,000 to recognize our established record of excellence.

I Am Going On an Adventure
By Myranda Sherrill

Even from an early age I had a free and adventurous spirit. Being cooped up indoors, never doing anything or going anywhere, just wasn’t enough for me. I had to explore, to run free, and venture off into the world, even if no one else wanted to join me. As a toddler, I ran like a wild child all over the local park near my home. My mother would take my sister and I there as often as she could and I would climb every tree, bench, or piece of playground equipment. I investigated every bird’s nest, hole in a tree, or creature that I could. I can honestly say that I am very much the same as an adult.

Though I can’t remember the last time I played on a playground at the park, I do feel the same intrigue with the world that I did as a child. Back then, I didn’t understand what I was all about and I certainly had no idea that my love for exploring would create such a passion within me to see the world and experience it for every bit it is worth. I always have the desire to go somewhere new and try something that I have never tried before. I feel fulfilled when I venture away from home and take a risk in meeting new people, exploring different cultures, and seeing new sights. To be frank; the world is so big and full of wonder that there is no excuse not to explore it. To travel the world and set myself free from a mundane life is my biggest dream. Those like me, with a restless spirit, feel exactly what I feel, the urge to break away and live an exciting and thrilling life.

I want to climb every mountain, visit every country, sail all seven seas, and experience every culture of the world. Everything that I do with my life gets me one step closer to my dreams! I made it to high school and graduated with a diploma, I am in college and am going to graduate very soon, I am pursuing a career that takes me to interesting and new places, that challenges me in important ways, and I think that it’s only a matter of time before I get to venture out into the world even farther and with the opportunities that I see all around me, I will be living my dreams in no time.

So, when I think of “Oh, the Places You Will Go”, I think of where I will go and what I will see. And the exciting thing about it is, I can go everywhere and see everything! In the words of Mr. Bilbo Baggins of the Shire; “I am going on an adventure!”
This is not required before I become a park ranger but it is required after I am hired. If there are no jobs available immediately after graduation, I hope that this certification would help me in quickly being chosen for a position once it opens.

I cannot predict exactly what my future will hold. I could spend 30 plus years with the state parks and retire, I could work a few years and find another career that I love even more, I could win the lottery and buy a nice house on the ocean with awesome views and watch my equity grow. Life is full of mysteries. I do know that I love being outdoors, I love helping people, and I love protecting what should be protected. To me that is the numerous acres acquired by the state for preservation and recreation and it will be an honor to serve the state park system and the more than 20 million people that visit our parks each and every year. Here’s to the past, here’s to the future, here’s to parks and recreation.

Over 20 years ago, the Parks & Recreation Management program underwent a re-visioning to place more emphasis on outdoor education and leadership. This re-visioning was led by Dr. Maurice Phipps and Dr. Ben Tholkes; who brought new ideas, a fresh perspective, and a wealth of experience to WCU. In 1996, they hired Debby Singleton to teach courses within the commercial recreation focus area and to help teach a wide variety of core classes. Throughout the years, the core instructional staff, with assistance from a talented pool of adjuncts, has led and taught countless Parks & Recreation Management majors. In 2014-2015, Dr. Phipps began phased retirement and we welcomed Dr. Andrew Bobilya to our PRM faculty. As we entered this time of transition, we started thinking about opportunities to give back something to our students, especially those who need financial assistance to help them meet their professional and personal goals.

In 2014, the PRM faculty had the opportunity to explore creating a scholarship for our program. During the spring of 2015 we completed the scholarship paperwork and began fundraising. Fundraisers have included a community dance, the Cullowhee Canoe Slalom, alumni and faculty donations. The Phipps-Tholkes-Singleton Scholarship is on track to be endowed for $10,000 by 2020. Each year our goal is to raise $2,000 for the scholarship.

Once the scholarship is endowed, we can open the application process to our students. If the scholarship reaches its monetary goal prior to 2020, we can start awarding scholarships sooner.

The process to donate to the scholarship is fairly easy. To give online, just go to this link: http://www.wcu.edu/giving-to-wcu/areas-to-support/college-and-units/CEAP/index.asp and select “Make a Gift to Parks & Recreation Management”.

For more information about the scholarship, contact one of the PRM faculty.
What is lost? What is hidden? We all venture into the outdoors for some reason. We venture for the leisure or sometimes for the challenge. Other times we go out because we have no choice. What’s lost inside of you? What’s calling your name? Will you go? Go and find what’s lost.

Going outdoors is about so much more than just completing a hike. It’s about more than successfully rolling a kayak. It’s about what it means to us on the inside. It’s the sense of accomplishment you get after completing the latest bouldering problem or the healing that comes from spending days in the wilderness. The wild is built into our souls. We try and replace it with money, man-made things, and accomplishments, but at the end of the day nothing can substitute the breath of fresh air as you gaze out into a valley from the pinnacle of a mountain. There’s something in the human nature that calls us outside.

Humans were not made to sit in front of a screen all day checking messages and seeing the high-lights of others’ days. We were made to make our own stories. We were made to overcome struggle and look back and feel pride because of it. Where have you been and where you will go?

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Challenge Course. Photograph taken by Todd Murdock.

It’s something that’s hard to put into words. I want you to experience it for yourself. Only then will you find what’s been lost. So, go. Seek and find. It’s waiting for you.

Where have you been and where you will go?

By Brandon Davis

What do you want to do when you grow up? That is one of the most important questions an American will ever face in their lifetime, yet like all great questions, not everyone has an answer to it. As a kid, when I thought about what I wanted to do for a career my first thought was not what is going to make me the most money or what job is going to be steady and dependable. Looking back, it turns out those are extremely important aspects to consider but would a job like that make me happy? What is the point in spending 30 to 40 years at a job that makes you miserable, angry, or bored? But I was a kid then and I didn’t need to spend too much time worrying about a career, I needed to worry about exploring the woods or what new video game was coming out so I could play with my friends.

When I was 9 years old I joined Cub Scout Pack 438 and had a great time made a bunch of friends and could not wait to go to Boy Scouts and learn how to camp, hike, and do all these outdoor activities more on my own. The Orange District Annual Crossover Ceremony was held on February 5, 2005 and it was my year to crossover. I had to choose between joining my friends in the newly formed Troop 438 or join some of the guys that I didn’t know well in the well-established Troop 467. It was a tough choice but I chose to join Troop 467 and become better friends with the guys from that troop. Little did I know that the leadership in that troop would inspire me to pursue a career in what I think is the most meaningful and exciting job that exists today, a Park Ranger with the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation.

A little over a year later, I discovered that my Scoutmaster of the troop was the Park Superintendent of Eno River State Park. I began asking questions about his job and became fascinated with having a job where you go out into the woods, making sure people are having a fun time, protecting the environment you work in, and teaching those who visit about the environment and why the park protects the area. That job sounded like a dream come true to me. I asked my Scoutmaster, “What do you need to do get a job like yours?” and he told that I should work as a seasonal for a few summers after I turn 18. That is exactly what I did. In February of 2013 I got a call from Jordan Lake State Recreation Area to interview for a position there. I was extremely excited about that interview when I got a job offer to be an Assistant Park Ranger at Seaforth Day Use Area at the lake. I started on Memorial Day weekend, which I later found out was the busiest weekend of the year for Jordan Lake. I learned a lot of skills easily and made friends with nearly all of the rangers there. At the end of September, my season was over and I had to focus on my studies at Alamance Community College.

Since that summer I have worked at 2 other state parks over the past 3 years and made several new contacts including the chief park ranger for the State of North Carolina. I have led interpretive talks, completed several large and small-scale projects, rescued wildlife and helped research certain plants, answered numerous questions that have made me think critically and some so simple that I feel foolish for entertaining but that’s a part of the job. I have loved my summers working for the state parks but I feel that I am ready to move on to becoming a permanent park ranger and being in a park everyday instead of just every summer. To become a park ranger in North Carolina, you must have a bachelor’s degree and I chose Western Carolina University. Where better to study parks and recreation than a university surrounded by land dedicated to parks and recreation? I have been at Western Carolina for a year and one half and next fall semester will be my last. I look forward to graduating and joining the spring 2017 Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) class to become a North Carolina certified law enforcement officer.
Lately, everyone has been asking about the places my peers and I will go. My future is a hot button topic that is debated daily while talking to my parents, my friends, and in class; everyone seems to know where I should go except for me. Graduation is approaching quickly, and it’s scary that soon my safe haven will no longer be the Green Room. I’ve come to love higher education, and I’m reminded daily that Parks & Recreation Management is one of the best things that has ever happened to me.

Most people are lucky to be influenced by one professor in their college endeavors, but I have had four in the PRM program alone that have greatly affected my professional and emotional development. When I look back on some of my classes where my professors pushed me to rock climb (even though I was only three feet off the ground and started crying in front of everyone), it made me realize how important it is to find the fine line between my growth and panic zones. Although working for (what feels like) thousands of hours on a semester long program proposal, I had the unique opportunity to make my peers some of my closest friends. Often times we take these instances for granted because they’re hard at the time, but these are actually formative moments where we can look back and realize just how hard we’re capable of working.

The problem for me is that I know that I am capable of working hard, but I’m not sure in what direction to put forth effort. Ultimately, I know my goal is to be a professional in the recreation industry (probably as an educator or interpreter), but I’m not certain of the finite details to get to that destination. Not knowing where I’m supposed to go next is daunting, but I’m trying to embrace it. I won’t be young forever, and I don’t have responsibilities or obligations to anyone else except me. Sometimes I get frustrated that I can’t skip time and wake up one morning fully emerged in my career, but the journey is what builds character. Being uncertain keeps my mind open to new opportunities and adventures that come my way.

It’s okay to not know where you’re going to go and what you’re going to do after graduation. As long as you have a goal in mind and you keep working for that goal then you are making progress. It’s easy to get caught up in an idealistic view of the working world where a job will just land in your hands, but that won’t happen without some hard work. Perhaps we will keep living like broke college students waiting for a break after we graduate, or maybe we’ll be lucky enough to begin the career of our dreams - no one knows the future. To my friends and peers graduating soon, take it easy, work hard, and enjoy the ride. Years from now we’ll wake up and wonder where all the time went. Don’t stop pursuing happiness, a career that brings you joy, and stories to tell your grandchildren.

This sketch combines several of my passions into one piece. As a recreational professional, I am looking to promote active lifestyles in the midst of the concrete jungle. The city provides an exciting, yet challenging atmosphere to involve the various communities in outdoor excursions and engage the population in physical activity. The rose represents my goal to raise awareness of Alzheimer’s disease and serve that population through my career. The rose comes from quote within my family to have “Roses in December”, representing the power of positive memories in the darker times of your life.
Above left is a photograph of Ann Majestic, the inspirational woman that helped shape Jennifer’s destiny at Western Carolina University. Above right is a photo of Jennifer and her boyfriend, Mike visiting the Gettysburg National Military Park in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

This photo was taken at the confluence of the East Inlet Creek and Echo Creek in the Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo was taken with a Samsung digital camera. By Cory Linder.
Making the decision to go to college was a natural progression for most of my classmates as they exited high school and continued their education at Western. For me, the journey to get to Western took more than 25 years, even though I had decided this was going to be my school many years ago.

I spent most of my adult life as an employee, a mother and a wife, but no matter what particular “hat” I was wearing at the time, I didn’t forget my desire to continue my education. My decision to have a family meant that I needed money to live and support them. I worked a number of jobs during that time, but eventually I attended a local community college to get my Associates Degree in Paralegal Studies. I spent a number of years working in different law firms, eventually getting to the point in 2002 that I was completely burnt out with the work. Most of the positions required a long commute for me from Dunn to Raleigh, I was stuck in an office all day, and found no enjoyment at all in the work. I set out to find a position closer to home and in a different field, however, all the doors seemed to close as I was told I was overqualified and that I should try the local law office to see if they needed help. I eventually gave in and applied for another legal assistant job with a law firm called Tharrington Smith in Raleigh. I didn’t know it at the time, but that decision changed my life.

The moment I met Ann Majestic, the attorney I would end up working with for the next 12 years, I knew she was someone special. Although I was already tired of working in the legal profession, I was drawn to this position and to Ann. She became the most encouraging and influential person in my life. During all my years with her, my admiration grew and she is someone that will always hold a special place in my heart, no matter where life takes me. Ann was a nationally known and a very intelligent and work ethic that I witnessed every day. No matter what well known she became, she always treated me with the same level of respect and provided me encouragement that I never received in my life. It was Ann that kept pushing me to reach out for my dream of going to college. She wouldn’t let me leave it and always told me I could do it if I wanted it badly enough.

I have had to use the word “was” when talking about Ann here because she is no longer with us. Ann was diagnosed with breast cancer, and although she fought it with the same rigor and spunk that I saw her battling her opponents with every day, she lost her last fight in August of 2014 after finding out the cancer had spread to her spine and brain. In the weeks before her passing, I was able to visit with her a couple more times. During the first visit, Ann was visibly weak but as always she wanted to know about me and she expressed how proud she was of me for doing what would make me happy in life by finishing my education. On that last visit, Ann was not responsive but I was allowed to be by her side, holding her hand and coming to peace with the idea that she would gone soon. Ann died on August 16, 2014, one day before I left for Western Carolina University to begin the journey that I had waited to come true.

That first semester was difficult to get through as I struggled daily with Ann’s passing. However, I knew she would be upset with me if I let anything impact my studies and hold me back from being able to take advantage of this opportunity that I had fought so hard to get. If it was one thing that Ann taught me, it was how to fight. I will never forget her for the inspiration and true role model she was to me. Ann would be proud to know that after almost two years since her passing, I am almost at the end of my successful journey at Western and am ready to start the rest of my life to live my dream - to be happy in whatever I choose. I know she is watching over me and smiling somewhere as I get closer to this goal.

In the summer of 2009 I chose to be a counselor in training at a Boy Scout Camp called Camp Bud Schiele. Going into this I did not where it would lead and I really didn’t care at the time. All I knew was the next year I would have a better chance of getting hired as actual camp staff for the summer.

I spent two weeks that summer volunteering my time to learn how camp staff worked. I could not wait to join the staff and get paid for going to summer camp, at least which is how I looked at it at the time. The next year when I was 15 years old I got hired as a camp counselor at Camp Bud Schiele. I loved it so much that I said I would have done it for free! After a couple years I often found myself saying that it would probably be my last summer and that I was going to find something that payed more and maybe a little different. Each year though I found myself back at Camp Bud Schiele.

Then I got an offer to be the Camp Commissioner for the summer. This is one of the higher positions at camp and is considered upper management. I did this job for two summers and it was the best summer I had at Camp Bud Schiele. Near the end of the summer of 2015 some of the other office and management staff and I were talking about starting up a High Adventure Program. I started the planning and took the lead. I expressed interest in the program and began to put some of it together.

This summer I will be completing my Capstone Internship for PRM and applied for various positions. I told the staff at Camp Bud Schiele that were over camp hiring and programs that I had done this in case I got a job offer I could not refuse. The opportunity to run the High Adventure Program would be very exciting, at the same time I still wanted to do something different since I would be using this summer for my internship.
Growing Up Too Fast
By Colt Miller

In a matter of months I will be placing a hat on my head and walking across a brightly lit stage to the applause of my fellow classmates and my family. Graduation isn’t something new to me, I’ve done it before many times. However this graduation is a little different. Every graduation so far in my life has been two things; an ending as well as a starting point. This one is an ending, as in the ending of my school career. It’s also the starting point for the rest of my life. No more classes, no more papers at three in the morning, no more classwork to fall behind on. You would think this would be something exciting. However it also will bring about an end to a lot of things I enjoy. Meeting new friends, laughing with other students about teachers, and suffering through semesters with other students, together. Now that this is coming to a close, it makes me start to think about where I have been and where I will be going.

Before I came to Western I was a tall lanky kid who had no idea what he was doing. Now that I am preparing to graduate I realize I am still a tall lanky kid who has no idea what I’m doing but now I have debt. Growth.

It’s a bit troubling, having the feeling of spending almost all of my life in school and not having anything to show for it. I thought there was no way I haven’t learned anything in my entire life. I had to sit down and really think, what I know. Algebra? Poetry? Chemistry? Literally nothing. Then I started thinking about when I first showed up here on campus. I thought I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to keep going to school and I wanted to make an environment that students would want to be in. Then I observed my first high school class. Within thirty minutes of that day, I knew that this is not the place I would want to be in. After I realized I didn’t want to be a teacher I didn’t know what to do. I looked at some of the other majors and couldn’t find anything I liked. So I went home for the summer and went back to lifeguarding which was my normal summer job. I ended up speaking to my boss about my situation and she suggested Parks and Recreation. So I thought why not, and enrolled in the introductory course.

Fast forward to now, I’m getting ready to graduate with a degree in Parks and Recreation and I can’t wait to get into a job. I can’t wait to get into the community and make a difference. I can’t wait to be at the soccer fields on Saturday mornings. I can’t wait to run summer camps and plan paddleboard programs. Once I started thinking about what I want to do with my life, what I want to help with and work with, I realized what I had learned. I want to do these things because it’s something I’ve done before, in and out of school. I learned that it’s not about math equations or poems, it’s about the experiences I’ve had. The rock climbing, the paddle boarding, the business plans, through those experiences I was able to cultivate an idea of who I want to be and what I want to do with my life. When you go to college you don’t just learn program plans and how to write a thesis statement, you learn who you are. You learn through your friends, your activities, and your thoughts. I learned more about myself living on my own than a textbook could have ever taught me.

I don’t know where I’m going, I have a good idea of the direction but not the destination. But with the lessons I’ve learned about myself and the things I want to be I think I’ll be okay. I hope anyway.
**Future Hope**  
By Weston Smith

It was a sunny, yet chilly, November day as we stood atop Black Balsam Knob waiting for the sun to set. The wind was fierce, as it always is, making the 50 degree weather seem more like 30. My hands were shaking but not just because of the wind. I was about to make the biggest decision of my short 21 years of this earth. I checked my pocket to assure myself that it was still there, I took a deep breath and dropped to one knee. As the sun set on Black Balsam Knob that day I asked the woman I was sure of from our very first date to marry me. She blurted out a few, “OMG’s”, before saying yes and letting me slip my life savings onto her finger. It was worth every penny watching her eyes light up when she saw it and as she stumbled over roots on the way down watching it sparkle.

As my time at Western is coming to an end, I think back on what a journey it has been. I think back on all the wonderful memories I have made and how big of an impact the past four years has and will have on my life. It has been a fun ride. I have experienced all that Western has to offer. I’ve made lifelong friends and met the woman of my dreams. In this season of reflection I am also looking forward to the future and the new things we will experience, the many people we will meet. I don’t know where we will end up but I am looking forward to all the places we will go, together!

**My Journey to the Outdoors**  
By Erin Baker

Growing up, I loved the outdoors. I loved climbing trees, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, just about anything outside. As I got into middle school, I got into competitive sports and I loved every second of it. My seventh grade year, I played basketball and ran track. That year, I broke my foot. My eighth grade year, I played basketball, played travel AAU basketball, and ran track. With travel ball and track season both at the same time, there were days that I would go straight from track practice to travel ball practice. With all of this activity, I ended up being diagnosed with quad tendonitis in my left knee. I went through physical therapy and I decided right then and there, I was going to be a physical therapist. As I continued to play sports, my knee became worse. I went to more physical therapy, and I started to love that profession more.

As I started college at Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton, North Carolina, I was a Physical Therapy Assistant major in goals of graduating with my Associates degree and transferring to get my Bachelors in Athletic Training. That plan didn’t work out and I left community college a year early and transferred to WCU as an Athletic Training major. After one semester, I decided it was time to do what I love and not think about money.

Since I was 17, I had been working at Lake James State Park in Nebo, North Carolina. My love for the outdoors started to reignite. Coming to Western was a decision based off of what I could see myself doing in my life. Western offered both majors I was looking at, so I wouldn’t have to deal with transferring again.

I decided to change my major to Parks and Recreation Management to become happy. At this point, I was just diagnosed as manic depressive. Yes, I still have my moments where I am depressed and unhappy, but since changing my life direction to Parks and Recreation, I have never been happier in my life! Now as I am fast approaching graduation, anxiety is kicking in and I have no idea what I’m going to do afterwards. I want to be a Park Ranger, but that is a very competitive field now, hopefully, fingers crossed, I can get that job. If not, and I haven’t gotten job in 5 years, I plan on going back to culinary school. So keep your eyes open, you might see me on Cutthroat Kitchen!

Thank you to all of the lifelong friends I have made in this major, the faculty and their guidance, and family for supporting me through this journey in life!
Life is a journey. It is this ongoing, never ending journey full of fun, full of hurt, full of laughing, and loving, and even full of crap sometimes. Life is full of ups and it is full of downs and it takes you places you never thought you would’ve gone or maybe even places you never thought you could’ve gone. Never the less, you go places. You may even stumble into a few wild adventures along the way. The type of adventures where you make late night Cookout runs at two in the morning because you’re starving and just got paid that day, or maybe you take an adventure that is a little bit more extreme. The type of adventure where the opportunity to partake only comes around once in this lifetime. I’m talking about the type of adventure that takes you somewhere, somewhere faraway to a distant land. Where the selected method of traveling might not be of the most common, the most desired or really even the easiest to use. One hundred and seventy miles and three days later we would not have made it without the teamwork and self-discipline that took place, and yes, every drop of blood, sweat, and tears was worth it. For four years now my best friend Kyle and I have always wanted to bike across the country once we graduated and seeing that neither of us have graduated yet we have not made the trek, however I can tell you it is soon to come. What I can say we have done is packed up one morning and headed to Myrtle Beach South Carolina, from Fort Mill South Carolina on four wheels, just not the traditional four wheels of a car. When we decided to go to Myrtle Beach for the summer immediately we knew this was the chance to do a mini excursion of the cross country bike trip we have had in mind for so long. When planning this we knew we could make that distance on a bike in one day if we wanted. Therefore, we thought to ourselves how we could make this something very challenging that no one we knew or know had or has ever done before and it hit me, I looked at Kyle and said “we are longboarding”.

It was 8am and a cool summer morning in late May that we doubled checked our boards and bearings, threw our packs on our backs and hit the open road. We tried to take the safest route possible, however for those who know the state of South Carolina at all, you know there is no way of making this trip without staying on some type of highway or back road that is heavily populated. After going only two miles in the first hour we quickly realized that this excursion was going to be a lot more difficult than we originally thought. The first day was the only day we had any type of side walk to ride on and it lasted for about the first ten miles. From there on and until we hit the sand three days later we stayed along the shoulder of the road, where at times only having a few inches between the white line and the grass. It took a lot of getting used to having cars fly by us, some within an arm length at excess speeds of 50 MPH, but once we did we started making up some ground.

Going 170 miles with nothing but the clothes on your back, a bag full of cliff bars and slim jims, and a tarp to sleep on when the sun sets. The type of adventure that leaves you broken, bruised and beaten by the end of it, but yet so accomplished at the feat you just conquered it. This type of adventure can only be done with sheer will power, determination, lots of courage, and yes, a mindset that might actually prove to be certifiable in some countries. It is adventures and journeys like this that will take you to places you never thought you would go or could go. It is adventures and journeys like this that will show you who you really are and what you are really made out of. When you feel bruised, beaten and broken, will you get up and keep moving, or throw in the towel. I know I can speak for Kyle and I and say we don’t ever want to look back 50 years down the road and say what if, or I wish I had done this or not given up on that.
It’s The Little Things in Life

By Anthony Lombardi

This is a picture of my dear friend, who I found trying to make his way across a trail. I still to this day have no idea how I managed to get him to trust me long enough to not only stay in my hand, but get on my finger and pose for a picture like this. This little frog has been one of my favorite finds because he always reminds me that you do not need to climb a 6,000 foot peak, hike 15 miles in a day, or even go on a weeklong solo hike to feel consumed by nature….sometimes all it takes is the little things. I think as park and recreation professionals we should take a second to sit down and get a sense of what’s around us. Look at the ground beneath you to expose the vast community of insects and the unmarked highways they seem to travel on. Look at the trees and think about how long it took them to become what they are today and the hundreds of different species that one tree is home to. In today’s world I think more and more people are losing their connection to nature, and hiking in a state park is not the only way to get them back to it. My little friend and I just want to remind you that the little things in life, no matter how small, are just as, if not more, important then the big picture!
TO and FRO
By JB Powell

Oh, the places you’ll go
And the places you know
And the people that mean
The most to you

From the fresh new starts
To becoming silly old farts
From tops of trees to the bottoms of the seas
Remember the adventures you’ve had

You’ve seen lots of faces
And you’ve been lots of places
There’s been hard days
And there’s been easy days
The people and days that change your ways

So the skills we have learned will show us the way
Because we all have found out we will get lost
On our way to be leaders to teachers in the out doors
So step with care so we don’t have to Z-drag
Or use out first aid skills on your butt

With the skills we learned from PRM 250 to PRM 495
We will succeed
Oh yes indeed
Its 99.99% guaranteed
We will move mountains big or small

Oh, The Places You’ll Go
From your editors

The greatest adventure is what lies ahead, today and tomorrow are yet to be said, those chances and changes are all yours to make, the mold of your life is in your hands to break.
-Jason

A wise man once said, “To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all”. That wise man was Irish writer, Oscar Wilde. What he is telling us is that life is precious and it’s meant to be lived to the fullest, not taken for granted and wasted away on things that don’t truly matter. If anything, that statement should teach us to love ourselves, each other, and the lives that we live.
-Myranda

Thank you to everyone that submitted an article, poem, photo, or piece of art! It was very difficult to decide whose would make it to the final Tent Peg. Everyone did an amazing job! A special to Ben Tholkes, Maurice Phipps, and Debby Singleton for their contributions to the Tent Peg and their guidance and advice that aided us in our role as editors!

"Beach Sunset" Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Photo taken with a Samsung S4 Galaxy. Jason Opliger.
So be you named Ben, Debby, Andrew
Or Maurice Phipps
We are all going to great places
Today is our day and its waiting for us
So move those mountains and go get on your way

“A place that means caption” Cullowhee, North Carolina. By JB Powell. Photo was taken at the airport looking towards Western Carolina University on a snowy day.

“Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You’re off to Great Places!
You’re off and away!”

~Dr. Seuss’ “Oh, The Places You’ll Go”
