

VASTRA TRIBUNE

Official Newsletter of the Virginia Therapeutic Recreation Association



VASTRA Mission:

"To promote the profession of Therapeutic Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation professionals in the Commonwealth of Virginia"

Welcome!

BY: SAOIRSE HENEGHAN AND BREE CHEATHAM

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the VASTRA TRibune! This issue is brought to you by the Longwood University Therapeutic Recreation Program in Farmville, Virginia. In this issue you will find information on how Therapeutic Recreation students, practitioners and agencies in the state of Virginia has had to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue includes articles about the Circle Center, and an interview with Mary Branzelle, CTRS, a spotlight on Sara Jarrett, the current co-president of VASTRA, and an interview with Madellyn Carr, a junior therapeutic recreation student at Longwood offering advice to other students to navigate this difficult time. Finally, you will find contact information, social media links, upcoming events, and membership access.



Pictured Above: Longwood University Therapeutic Recreation, Supervision and Administration of Leisure Services Senior Class

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Adapting to COVID-19



Pandemic Programming

By: Carrie Bailey, Julianne Brick & Faith Lawhorne

The hit of the global pandemic took a toll on everybody worldwide including local organizations. Mary Branzelle, CTRS shared her agency's initial response to rising cases involved "limiting visitors and only allowing staff and participants" in order to protect their health and safety. During the interview, Mrs. Branzelle also shared that Circle Center conducted their caregiver annual survey shortly after the pandemic began and found "58% of caregivers reported a decline in their loved one's functioning... 87% reported lack of socialization as a key issue in the decline... and 74% reported increased stress involving caring for the individual." From parks and recreation organizations to community programs and even long term care, everyone realized they needed to quickly change their approach to ensure programs were still accessible to their clients. A local Virginia Beach news article stated "city leaders say the creative efforts from the Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion team were so successful and that they are launching more programs this fall that are open to everyone and not just those with disabilities" (Kavanagh, 2020). In Richmond, during the months of March and April, Sportable held a "Coast to Coast Challenge" for athletes to participate in virtually. Participants

could use any equipment that they had and were able to stay active and motivated during the lockdown.



Branzelle notes some of Circle Center's virtual programs "were PowerPoints while others were pre-recorded interventions such as seated exercise and cognitive reminisce." As we move forward during these time, Mary Branzelle shares "caregivers accepted the risk of the virus and trusted us enough to know we would do all we can to mitigate any risk and keep their loved one safe. We take that trust to heart every day." Another article states the use of virtual reality saying "the features and theories proposed by the virtual reality conception can be effectively employed to solve and confront many of the issues arising nowadays" (Singh et al., 2020). Becoming educated on virtual reality could be beneficial in the future for circumstances other than COVID-19.

References:

- Branzelle, M. Personal Communication. October 9, 2020.
Davis, M. (2020, March 30th). *Despite isolation, Sportable keeping athletes active.*
NBC12. <https://www.nbc12.com/2020/03/31/despite-isolation-sportable-keeping-athletes-active/>
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<https://www.wtkr.com/news/virginia-beach-parks-and-rec-creates-virtual-summer-camp-program-for-people-with-disabilities-to-keep-them-connected>
Singh, R., Javaid, M., Kataria, R., Tyagi, M., Haleem, A., & Suman, R. (2020). Significant applications of virtual reality for COVID-19 pandemic. *Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Review.* 661-614.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.05.011>

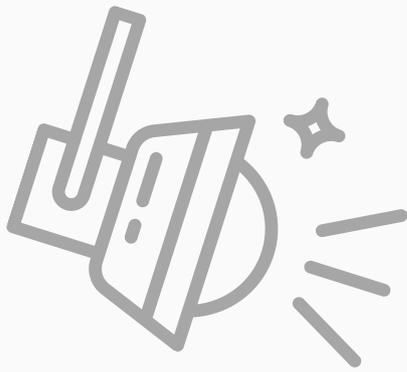
"Caregivers accepted the risk of the virus and trusted us enough to know we would do all we can to mitigate any risk and keep their loved one safe. We take that trust to heart every day."

MARY BRANZELLE

Lancers Lead; The New VASTRA Co-Pres.

Sara Jarrett, CTRS @ The Virginia Home

BY: ALLYSSA BALALLO & OLIVIA POWELL



Advice to Sara's younger self:

"Just continue to push yourself out of your comfort zone, get involved; encourage your passions!"

-SARA JARRETT

Q: WHAT CAN GRADUATING TR STUDENTS EXPECT?

A: "UPON GRADUATION, IF STUDENTS JOIN VASTRA THEY WILL BE ADDED TO AN EXCLUSIVE FACEBOOK PAGE. ON THIS PAGE, MEMBERS HAVE FOUND JOB OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN POSTED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. YOU WILL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE EXPOSED TO SEASONED CTRS PROFESSIONALS WHO WILL HELP YOU REFINE YOUR SKILLS. WHILE REFINING YOUR SKILLS, YOU WILL ALSO BE BUILDING PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS WITH SIMILAR VALUES. BECAUSE OF THE CONNECTIONS YOU ARE DEVELOPING, YOU WILL BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO POSSIBLY ASK QUESTIONS PRIOR TO INTERVIEWS."

A: "A benefit that members will see aside from reduced price on continuing education unit's is the networking. VASTRA allows you to utilize the tight knit community by hosting socials, networking opportunities at conferences. Therapeutic Recreation is a small community so knowing others within itself is very beneficial."

Q: WHAT OTHER BENEFITS COME WITH BECOMING A MEMBER OTHER THAN THE DISCOUNT FOR TR CONFERENCES?

The Virginia Home, Richmond , VA

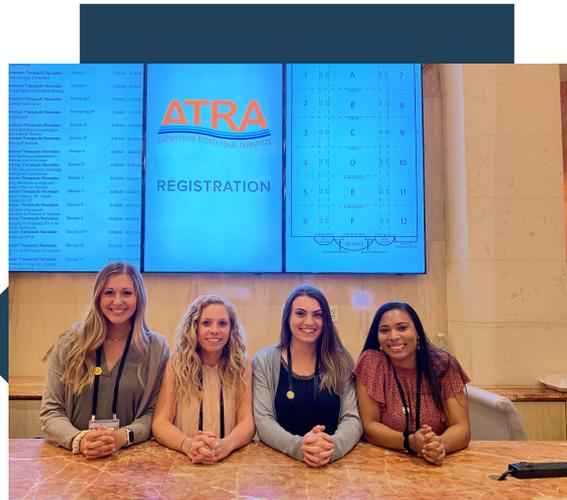


Longwood TR Takes the Spotlight

By: Melrica Williams and Andraya Jackson

TR Students Travel for Their First ATRA Conference

In September 2019, four students and two professors of the Longwood Therapeutic Recreation program traveled from Richmond, Virginia to Reno, Nevada for the ATRA conference. Student Erin Chauncey and professors Dr. Kirstin Whitely DHA, CTRS and Dr. Susan Lynch were chosen to present on a year long project about an intervention we facilitated at Longwood called Healthy Innovations. Healthy Innovations is a program where surrounding elementary, middle, and high schools in the Farmville area allowed their special education classes to bring those students to take part in interventions planned and facilitated by students of the TR program. Interventions ranged from crafts and card games in the lab to socialization and a variety of sports or active games in the gym.



Pictured are students and alumni of the LU TR program: Jordan Talley, Lexi McLaughlin, Erin Chauncey, Melrica Williams



Pictured are the 2020 executive board members for TRO: Carrie Bailey, Olivia Powell, Andraya Jackson, Dr. Kirstin Whitely, Melrica Williams, Faith Lawhorne

How are we staying connected during COVID-19?

In hopes to keep everyone in the TR major from experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation, the Therapeutic Recreation Organization (TRO) used social media as a platform to stay connected to its members. On Instagram, TRO shared resources as a reminder for engaging in meaningful activities during a time of uncertainty.

During National Therapeutic Recreation Week, the organization highlighted a few of its members by sharing pictures of how they have been spending their leisure time during the summer. Each member was able to say their piece on what TR means to them and how they are already or will start advocating for the profession.

Student Success Corner

An Interview with Madellyn Carr, Class of 2022

BY: LOGAN LEVINE AND REBECCA LOCEY

When it comes to Therapeutic Recreation courses and programming, there are many routes a student can take to ensure success. We sat down with Madellyn Carr, a junior Therapeutic Recreation student here at Longwood University, to ask for her advice on how Therapeutic Recreation students can succeed within their programs.



Q: What resources do you use to be successful as a therapeutic recreation student?

A: "The school's library! It seems simple but all available resources are right at your fingertips. I've spent nights just in there for fun because that's what it's there for- to be used!"

"Professors! I can't stress enough how willing they are to help. You can learn so much from them because their job is to teach you. Their passion alone will show you so much."

"Textbooks. Of course you won't buy every single one, but they are so beneficial as you move through recreation therapy courses, especially when you lead facilitations."



Greenwood Library, Farmville, VA



Maddy Carr, Suffolk, VA

Q: What is a highlight of being a therapeutic recreation student?

A: "I love how close-knit our community is and that we get so many opportunities to get involved before getting into the field to practice. Our professors love to see us succeed and are always there to help us strengthen our skills."

Q: Any other advice you have for college students?

A: "Believe in yourself and find your confidence. Whether that happens in the classroom, through a friend, in an organization- finding your voice helps you step out and find what you're passionate about."

"Get involved with your major! This helps build connections, grow your passion, and it can be a lot of fun!"

Get Involved

Moving Virtual

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Due to COVID, VASTRA will not be offering any in-person workshops or conferences at this time. We will be hosting a series of virtual workshops during in February in honor of Therapeutic Recreation month. This will be open to members as well as non-members. Keeping CTRS's in the state of Virginia up to date on EBP in the field even amidst this pandemic. CEU hours from these will be comparable to the amount of CEUs available from a day workshop. See the VASTRA Facebook page for more information.

By: Nora Saxman



What: Live Virtual Workshops

When: Early 2021

For Whom: Members & Non-Members

How much: TBD



"I joined VASTRA in 2016 because when I moved to Virginia, I needed a way to connect with other RTs and earn CEUs. A TR organization such as VASTRA had everything I was looking for: networking opportunities, workshops, and conferences."

Rose Robinson



"My favorite part of being a member of VASTRA is the ability to attend high-quality local workshops and conferences. This provides CEU opportunities, but more importantly the opportunity to network with other recreational therapists in Virginia."

Betsy Kennedy

Become A Member

By: Hayley Phaup

Cost

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Professional: \$50

Associate: \$40

Student: \$20

Current Membership

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Professionals: 67

Students: 20

Total: 87 members



Sarah Sprague, CTRS

Membership/Social Media/Website Rep

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Where To Find Us!

Why Should You Follow Us?

Facebook Information: VASTRA's Facebook page is a private page accessible to current and inactive members that is run by Sarah Sprague. The benefits of joining the Facebook page include networking, employment opportunities, internship opportunities, and information about upcoming workshops, conferences, and social events. If you join the page, you may even be highlighted during the Recreational Therapy month of February!

Pilot of Twitter and Instagram: On these social media accounts, you can find information regarding workshops, highlights on students that attend them, and other information to help spread the word about our profession. The accounts are fairly new to VASTRA and we recommend you follow and spread the word so that more people can see what we have coming up. We hope to advocacy of the mission of VASTRA through both social media accounts.

Upcoming Events: We are developing our virtual platform for virtual webinars to earn CEUs for professional development. Be on the lookout for a poll to determine what are the best days/times for the webinars.



Additional and Upcoming Socials Information:

Northern Virginia

Top Golf: Loudon 20356 Commonwealth Center Dr., Ashburn, VA 20147 Thursday, February 6 from 6:00pm-8:00pm

Richmond Area

Slingshot Social Game Club: 3301 W Clay St, Richmond, VA 23230 Thursday, February 20 from 6:00pm-8:00pm

Virginia Beach Area

TBD

Roanoke Area

Lee-Hi Lanes: 830 Apperson Dr. Salem, VA 24153 Wednesday, February 12 from 6:00pm-8:00pm

Please contact Sarah Sprague at sarah.sprague1234@gmail.com if you have any questions!

BY: LANA FIGG AND EVELIN SALAZAR

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Twitter: VA_RecTherapy

