

West Texas A&M University  
Alumni Association eNewsletter  
**JUNE 2017**



WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION eNEWSLETTER



let's catch up.  
**BUFFALUM.COM**

## Alumna Impacting Women's Rights in a Global Way

By **Brittany Castillo '14**

She followed her passion for international human rights and found herself working with victims of political warfare in the middle of East Africa.

As an applicant of the School for International Training, Olivia Trabysh '15 was invited to the Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Seminar to study the sociopolitical factors in Rwanda and Uganda. During the day, she worked with former child soldiers and at night, she bonded with her host family practicing the Kinyarwanda language.

Her experience abroad was invaluable and revealed the significance of being a strong proponent for peace in her own community. When she returned to the United States, Trabysh felt a sense of responsibility to invest in social issues closer to home.

"I feel very responsible for the outcome of rural places in the U.S. My values and compassion for others really came from [Amarillo]," Trabysh said. "I want to unite our country rather than feel like parts of it don't exist."

In 2016, Trabysh was chosen as the Development and Communications Coordinator for the Urgent Action Fund for



Women's Rights. The organization, based in San Francisco, was established to support women's rights activists by providing grants and building alliances worldwide. Led by activists, rooted in feminism, the group works to fund grassroots leaders in countries facing critical human rights situations.

"I work for an organization that funds self-care for activists. I've always been politically active and concerned about people caring for themselves, and I've found the two are linked," Trabysh said. "The more you take care of yourself, the more fight you're going to have to continue fighting the fight needed in your community."

As a passionate humanitarian, Trabysh has made a life of volunteering and advocacy. She grew up in Alberta, Canada, heading several school organizations while running self-esteem campaigns empowering her peers. With aspirations of a career in International Human Rights Law, she chose WT for the affordability and location near her family. She remained active in leadership organizations like Students for Global Connections, Rogers LEAD WT and President's Ambassadors, while also volunteering as an English as a Second Language instructor, grief counseling facilitator, a Court Appointed Special Advocate for Children, and a sexual assault advocate. She graduated with a B.A. in English literature and worked for the Amarillo Area Foundation before joining the global efforts of the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Rights.

"I wanted to be a human rights attorney. I could have never guessed this job for myself, but there is something about taking time to trust your intuition," Trabysh said. "I've always been involved in taking care of people and now my job has to do with what I used to do volunteering."

By directly contributing to global initiatives, Trabysh is pursuing her mission of promoting peace by empowering individuals. She attends peace conferences to learn new strategies for building alliances and recently joined the She Should Run Incubator for women considering running for office.

"I'm learning how women legislate and influence policy building. I do see myself being involved with the Southern Poverty Loss Center, the American Civil Liberties Union or something that bridges global issues and my more domestic roots," Trabysh said. "You have to care for the area that raised you, and for as much as I thought WT wasn't global enough, I'm really thankful that I feel tied to the Panhandle and responsible for how it develops. I'm finding my role."

## **Friends Honor Glen Parkey with Leadership Scholarship at WTAMU**

West Texas A&M University President Walter Wendler and the Buffalo Council honored former Amarillo mayor Glen Parkey '60, and the establishment of the Glen Parkey Scholarship for Leadership Excellence at a special scholarship lunch June 10 in Amarillo.

The scholarship, established by friends and colleagues through the Buffalo Council to honor Parkey, will be awarded annually in a minimum amount of \$2,500. Recipients must be classified as a junior student at WTAMU who has been accepted into the Dyke and Terry Rogers LEAD WT program. Students from Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma are eligible to apply. If the recipient meets all leadership and academic requirements of the LEAD WT program, the scholarship award will be renewed for the student's senior year.

"Scholarships are critical to keeping the cost of higher education as low as possible and attaining a degree without a heavy debt burden," Wendler said. "We are grateful to have this endowment, honoring such an instrumental Panhandle leader and legendary Buffalo."

A leadership scholarship is a fitting tribute to Parkey. The WTAMU alumnus has worn many leadership hats throughout his long and distinguished career. He served as Amarillo's mayor from 1987-89 and has played a key role in the development of downtown Amarillo. Parkey, founder of Sterling Properties, a commercial real estate development and management company, also served as chairman of the WTAMU Foundation Board, the Children's Learning Centers and was the former president of the Amarillo Junior Chamber of Commerce, Amarillo Board of Economic Development and Amarillo Jaycees. In 2006, Parkey was named the Amarillo Globe-News Man of the Year.

A longtime supporter of WTAMU, Parkey chaired a drive in the early 2000s that raised \$2 million for scholarships. He also helped establish the University's engineering program. He is a 1994 WTAMU Distinguished Alumni Award recipient and was inducted into the WTAMU School of Business Hall of Fame in 1998.

For more information about the Glen Parkey Scholarship for Leadership Excellence, contact the WTAMU Foundation at 806-651-2070 or the Buffalo Council at 806-358-2446.

## Teacher Fills Spare Time Making Jams and Jellies

By Brad Newman

The savory, from-scratch delights from Sheri Thurman's kitchen are beloved by many. Strawberry Rhubarb Jam. Razzleberry Jalapeno Jam. Blackberry Apricot Cobbler Jam. Old Fashioned Apple Butter. Thurman '95, makes these and other fresh jams, jellies, and fruit butters from her Amarillo home. She sells her goods – more than 1,000 jars each year – under the moniker Sheri's Country Cupboard.

Thurman is a math interventionist at Gene Howe Elementary School. But practically every spare minute – “in the evenings, on the weekends, any time I can,” she said – is spent creating and canning her edible wares.



All of Thurman's products are distinctly artisan. Most of the fruit she uses is handpicked locally. Plums – one time, Thurman and her family picked 40 gallons at one time – grown in sandy soil on property in Wheeler County. Peaches and apricots from the back yards of neighbors and friends. Grapes from a vineyard near Hedley.

“Many people have offered to let me pick from their trees,” she said. “And any time I see a particular fruit on sale at the grocery store, I think, 'I can make a jam out of that.' It's a fun challenge.”

Thurman prepares her products by hand: Washing and chopping fruit, measuring and mixing in ingredients, boiling and (of course) taste testing. “I like taking classic

recipes” – many passed on from her mother – “and then adding my own touch, tweaking them with different combinations,” she said. A batch that will fill seven to 10 jars takes about 90 minutes to finish, Thurman said.

“There's nothing she makes that's not amazing,” said Nicole Johnston '01 and '05, principal at Gene Howe Elementary School, who bragged on Thurman's apple pear butter and her wild sand plum jelly. “She is truly gifted in the kitchen.”

Once the jam or jelly or butter is complete, Thurman ladles it into sterilized jars and seals

them. Each jar is labeled and topped with a circular piece of fabric, which Thurman selects and prepares herself. Thurman sells her products at various local craft shows and other events, including the Canyon Farmers Market, open from late June through October. She also takes and fills custom orders. Her customers are a constant source of encouragement and joy.

"I love it when people will connect a memory to a specific flavor," Thurman said. "Sometimes it makes them remember people they love and good times they've had."

"So much love goes into every jar," said longtime patron Melinda Batchelor of Amarillo. "It's like buying from a really good friend. Plus, everything she makes is fresh, and the flavors she puts together are unique, creative. I buy as many jars as I can carry, for myself and to give as gifts to all my friends. I love it."

Thurman makes regular posts about her business on her Facebook page (search for Sheri's Country Cupboard), including when and where she will be selling and photos of her products.

## Heard from the Herd

From Kelsey Bratcher McGee '01 '03, Dallas

Tuesday we went to Six Flags. Standing in line for the Shockwave, I noticed a young man and his mom step up and I looked at his shirt...maroon with a white Texas and a Go Buffs hand sign! I said "Nice shirt! I'm a Buff too!" I believe he is going into his sophomore year. I didn't catch his name, but the four of us enjoyed the loopy loop ride!

Then tonight...I was at work with The Rangers and saw a man wearing a WT hat. I stopped him to chat. James Elza (Amarillo) with his Sigma Nu fraternity brother. I was a Sigma Nu Sweetheart! lol. We had a great chat! I asked him if we could take a selfie...



This season already I've run into quite a few Buff Alumni at baseball games. Even one of the current Lady Buff Basketball players has been spotted!

From David Sims '67, San Antonio

Last month, we went downtown for a San Antonio Fiesta event in the King William District. While there with friends, a guy walked up and asked, "Did you go to WT"? (He saw my WT lanyard). He wasn't an alumnus but was from Amarillo.

Next, walking down the street, a policeman stopped me and asked, "Can we talk a minute?" I raised my hands and said, "Yes". He said I could put my hands down and asked if he could take a picture with me. He said his daughter went to WT and loved it! He was going to send her our "selfie" with my WT hat showing.

The same day, a buddy of mine was renting a car here. The man behind the counter said he played basketball for WT a couple of years. His name was James Alex. He said he gets messages all the time from the Alumni Association! We're putting WT on the map! My day was made. I've never had three "WT encounters" in three hours (in San Antonio)! Go Buffs, Go!

## From the Director



DJ • GAMES • FOOD PAIRINGS • PHOTO BOOTH

Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum

**CRAFTS & DRAFTS**

**PPHM**  
PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM

**SATURDAY, JULY 15TH 5:30-8:00PM**  
SIP ON SUDS AND CREATE CRAFTS

**\$50 A PERSON INCLUDES SWAG BAG**  
Purchase your tickets at [panhandleplains.org](http://panhandleplains.org)  
or by calling 806-651-2242

# Upcoming Events

**New Student Send-Offs: Alumni, join us as we welcome the newest Buffs from your community** (more information at [buffalum.com](http://buffalum.com))

**July 10**

Fort Worth

6:30 p.m., Landmark Bar & Grill, 3008 Bledsoe

**July 11**

Dallas

6:30 p.m., The Lot, 7530 E Grand Ave

**July 13**

San Antonio

6:30 p.m., BJ's Brewhouse, 17503 IH 10 W

**July 12-16**

Music Department Alumni Reunion

Thursday - Imperial Taproom, 6:30 p.m.

Friday - meet at Best Western Canyon or get tickets to see TEXAS

Saturday - band camp concerts, tour of Sybil B. Harrington Fine Arts Complex

Saturday evening - buffet dinner in the Alumni Banquet Hall, 6:30 p.m.

Contact **Alice Flanagan** to attend or for more information.

**August 13**

Midland Summer Sunday Lawn Concert

6-9 p.m., Museum of the Southwest, 1705 W Missouri Ave, Midland

Grab a blanket or lawn chair and join us on the front lawn of the historic Turner

Mansion. Live music by The Shades, food and the chance to meet or catch up with other alumni.

**September 15**

Inauguration of West Texas A&M University President Walter V. Wendler

1:30 - 3 p.m. Investiture Ceremony

3 - 5 p.m. Community Reception

**Oct. 14**

Homecoming 2017

**BuffAlum.com** - for details on upcoming events

**University calendar** - for a complete schedule of campus events

**gobuffsgo** - for complete schedule of WT athletic events

WTAMU Alumni Association 102 N 25th Street, Canyon TX 79016  
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