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ELON SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

New Sustainability Volunteer Program

By: Bella Martin

The Office of Sustainability’s volunteer program is an opportunity for students to get involved in events on and off campus and to build a community focused on sustainable involvement and education. This program works with the Office of Sustainability as well as student organizations to foster a campus wide sustainable initiative and offer a variety of events and activities. Volunteers benefit from personal and professional development, field trips, and a chance to support their

community by giving back and inspiring others.

This year, volunteers have gotten to engage in local lake cleanups, food packing with Campus Kitchen, and on-campus education at dining halls and athletics events. Monthly “Weigh the Waste” tables at campus dining halls allow volunteers an opportunity to educate their peers. A behind the scenes tour of Lakeside Dining Hall was given to provide insight on how food is sourced, prepared, and disposed of with sustainability in mind. “I think knowing what happens with the food we are all eating, and not eating, is very important,” said first-year volunteer Juliana Wilson. She has also volunteered at several “Weigh the Waste” tables to spread awareness about food waste.

Off-campus events, such as the Lake Mackintosh cleanup this past fall, offer opportunities to support the community outside of Elon. “The kayaking lake cleanup was a great way to interact with the Alamance County community while also promoting sustainability. I met new people and contributed to community conservation all while doing what I love,” said Caroline DiGrande, another first-year at Elon who joined the volunteer program during the fall semester. Volunteers are also helping plan activities for the upcoming Earth Week.



Volunteer Program Cont.

Participants are expected to attend one meeting per month and can pick volunteer opportunities that interest them and work for their schedule. If you're interested in joining, please virtually join the next meeting via [WebEx](#) on Wednesday, April 8th at 6pm. Please contact Bella Martin at bmartin24@elon.edu for more information.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Ryan Kirk

By: Kaitlynn Dixon



Dr. Ryan Kirk is an associate professor of geography and environmental studies. As the coordinator for the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) minor, Kirk teaches courses in spatial technologies, water resources management, research methods, and various aspects of urban planning and urban design. Within these courses, Kirk chooses to emphasize both possible solutions and the positive changes we have already made as a society, showing students that while it's important to criticize environmental policies, it's also important to keep a positive outlook. Dr. Kirk also works with the Love School of Business to increase curricular integration between sustainability and business.

Aside from the courses he teaches, Dr. Kirk encourages sustainability through his research, which focuses on the use of GIS for environmental resource management and urban planning. Some of his current work includes quantifying the ecological and economic benefits of the Haw River Trail in Alamance County, studying sediment and carbon cycling in our local streams, and helping to identify and ameliorate the barriers to healthy food and quality-of-life amenities in our local cities.

Kirk's passion for sustainability stemmed from his grandfather, who was a career forestry professional. He learned early on how sustainable forestry practices are good for both economic and environmental reasons. "It always struck me as the best way to do things: let's figure out how we can help our economy in ways that help (or at least don't irreparably harm) our environment," says Kirk. Today, Dr. Kirk and his family strive to continually improve their understanding of the impacts between lifestyle and consumer choices, specifically keeping in mind the ways in which small tweaks can lead to more sustainable, and thus, more rewarding behaviors.

Staff Spotlight: Dr. Rodney Parks

By: Keelan Baldwin

Dr. Rodney Parks is the university registrar and assistant vice president as well as an assistant professor in human service studies. Dr. Parks prioritizes a sustainable philosophy at home and at Elon by focusing on the small everyday steps to reduce his environmental impact. He has a formal education of Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and incorporates them in his Adventure Therapy courses. He believes,

Staff Spotlight Cont.

“exposure and encouraging people to truly see the nature around us can give people the space necessary for them to make a conscious choice to help the earth.” He sees small acts, such as picking up trash along the Haw River Trail, as a positive sign that people are changing their mindsets about the environment.

Dr. Parks is an active member of a few sustainable organizations. He has attended conferences through the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) that happens annually in North Carolina. AEE is a global community of experiential educators and practitioners with the shared goal of elevating the field of experiential education. In addition, he attends the Global Academic Programs (GAP) conference each year. GAP is a semester or year of experiential learning taken usually after high school and before college where students can travel, engage, and increase their professional and personal awareness. Dr. Parks takes what he learns through these conferences and applies it to his Adventure Therapy courses. Next year, he plans to require each student to get LNT and Wilderness First Aid certified during his courses.

Dr. Parks realizes that it is difficult for older generations to prioritize sustainable living. He states, “older people always see sustainability as an issue for younger generations or they are too old to start anything new.” He tackles this battle by reminding everyone that “50 is the new 40” and there is always time to start new practices. Within his classroom, he requires his students to do group sustainability projects that focus on areas that are not already naturally sustainable. Students have been extremely creative by coming up with ideas such as making a wallet out of used granola bar wrappers!



Student Spotlight: Abbi Decker

By: Michael Ebaugh

Abbi Decker, a junior Honors Fellow and environmental education major, has spent her time at Elon researching the direct relation to nature-based education and the profound effects it can have on young children and their learning behaviors. Abbi began her research during her first year at Elon and will submit her thesis next year (her senior year). So far, her findings point out gender relations in the natural world and their impact on how children in today’s world view nature and establish relationships with the Earth. As she and Dr. Scott Morrison, Abbi’s research mentor and associate professor of education, finish their research at Eastlawn Elementary School, Abbi is excited to reveal her findings, something she believes will add value and insight to parents and others who have a significant influence on children day-to-day.

Aside from her research, Abbi, who was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, is a passionate environmentalist who does her part not only to consume less, but also goes out of her way to ensure her peers are actively pursuing a waste-free lifestyle. As a conscious consumer, she also shies away from red meat and eating out in efforts to reduce her carbon footprint. When asked a quote that has inspired her in her personal life, Abbi believes “We have to show our kids how to fall in love with the Earth before they can be asked to save it.”



GET INVOLVED

Digital Earth Week: April 20-24

20 | Monday
Trash Challenge
Outdoor Yoga

21 | Tuesday
Politics and Pastries
Shop Sustainably

22 | Wednesday
Animal Protection Alliance Trivia
Documentary: *Fenceline: A Company Town Divided*

23 | Thursday
Tips for Growing Your Own Food

24 | Friday
Plant-Based for the Planet

ELON SUSTAINABILITY

Find more information on events and prizes [here](#).



Elon has partnered with UCapture, a green-tech company that funds environmental projects and applies coupon codes, at no cost to you, when you shop with over 7,500 online stores.

How Does It Work?

When you shop using UCapture, partner stores pay commissions. UCapture uses 66% of these commissions toward high-quality, third-party verified carbon offset projects, which are then retired in Elon's name, reducing Elon's carbon footprint.

Download the free browser extension at www.ucapture.com/elon

Submit to the Sustainability Projects Database!

What is it?

Online platform of past or current student projects related to sustainability.

Why submit?

This is an opportunity to showcase your work and offer research ideas.

How to submit:

Either e-mail Keelan Baldwin (kbaldwin7@elon.edu) for assistance or:

1. Go to "[The Sustainability Projects Database](#)"
2. Log in with Elon username & password
3. Click "To add a project click here"

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS DATABASE STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABILITY AT ELON



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