

The Added Touch

Hotel and Restaurant Management Program

Fall 2015

GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR



Photo taken at the ICHRIE meeting this year.

It is my great pleasure to once again bring greetings from the Hotel and Restaurant Management Program at Auburn University and to invite you to read the latest installment of "The Added Touch" newsletter. As with previous years we have much to report and I hope you will enjoy catching up on our latest "happenings."

Faculty wise, I am pleased to report that we are "solid as a rock" and faculty are as industrious as ever. They continue to set a standard for teaching excellence that leads the college and they continue to conduct meaningful research that shapes industry practice.

Of particular note has been Dr. Ayoun's work on internationalization, Dr. Douglas's work on tracking technologies and Dr. Martin's work on sports fans utilizing the FMRI facility on campus. I am also pleased to report that Drs. Douglas, Lee, Martin and Rahman each received grant funding to support their research this year. No doubt they will all have a very bright future with these ongoing projects. Dr. Ayoun needs a special mention of his work in co-organizing the *Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality*. This year's event was held at the Dead Sea Resort in Jordan and our very own HRMT program was a co-sponsor and host. This afforded us remarkable exposure in the Middle Eastern region. It is also worth noting that one of our very own doctoral students, Ms. Han Chen won the Best Paper Award at this conference. For my part I just concluded my year as President of our peer professional body ICHRIE (International Council of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education). This was a tremendous honor and afforded me a great opportunity to showcase our program, faculty and students across the globe. The exposure was invaluable.

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GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Dr. O'Neill delivered the opening address at ICHRIE conference 2015.



Programmatically not much has changed in the last year. Our previous course changes have all now gone into effect and students are progressing quite well. There was a little concern about the student body reaction to our mandating of study abroad, but they have been very supportive of this graduation requirement and embraced it with a huge degree of excitement. One change that is worthy of reporting is the fact that our annual Hospitality Gala will now be held in the fall semester of each year moving forward. It is worth noting that this is now the largest grossing annual fundraiser at Auburn. This year's event is set for November 12 and will coincide with this year's home game against Georgia. The supporting class will now be taught over two semesters each year affording students and our hotel partners a lot more time to plan for this event. There is also a feeling that there will be a lot less competitive pressure with other events at this time of year. So if you haven't purchased your ticket yet, go online to do so.

As you know the department launched a new Graduate Certificate Program in Brewing Science and Operations in the fall semester of 2014. This is a one-year program that aims to prepare graduates for careers in the commercial brewing sector. I am happy to report that we graduated our first class this past August with 15 students receiving their certificates at our a graduation ceremony at Red Clay Brewing in Opelika. Red Clay is a recent startup by one of our very own alumni, Mr. John Corbin and it proved to be the perfect location for this event. If you haven't been to Opelika in a while you need to swing by and say hello. We are currently underway with our second cohort and it looks as though are third beginning August 2016 is already a sellout.

Looking to the future we are currently in planning mode for two new minor study options: one focusing on hospitality management and one on event management. There has been an increasing demand among cognate and non-cognate students on campus for both for some years now and it seems the time may now be right to offer these study options. In the past we lacked financial incentive but with the university about to change its budgetary model to reward innovation and creativity in programming, the timing could not be more perfect. So watch this space over the coming year and let's see what happens.

Our study abroad programs continue to go from strength to strength with options for straddling the globe. Our European Backpacking tour was a sell out again this past year and saw students visit a total of 11 European cities to engage in epicurean tourism. While not developed by HRMT faculty, the Department also offered a Mediterranean Diet Tour for the first time last summer. Faculty worked with partners at the GUSTO Lab in Rome to offer students an educational gastronomic extravaganza. This year we are hoping to offer our Jordanian and Bahamian study tours in addition to programs to Ireland with the Dublin Institute of Technology and Austria with the Management Center in Innsbruck. We have just finalized two exchange agreements with the latter and I shall be leading our first group to Dublin in early spring.

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GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

We continue to work closely with the Guild of Master Sommeliers to offer their introductory certificate program each year as well as with Trincherro Family Estates and the Society of Wine Educators to offer their Certified Specialist in Wine Certification Program. I am delighted to report that both the Guild and Trincherro have shared their long-term perspective on both programs and they have locked them in as part of their annual programming schedule. Naturally this affords us the ability to continue to add value in a differential sense to our students' education. Add both to our annual California Study Tour and it is easy to see how Auburn continues to appeal to the brightest and best when it comes to a college education that matters.

Finally, I would ask that you join me in welcoming the newest members of our HRMT Advisory Board. Mr. Chappall Gage of Susan Gage Caterers; Mr. Parker Duffy with Tailgate Guys and Mr. Barry Wiss from Trincherro Family Estates. As with all of our board members, these folks give freely of their time, talent and treasure to develop our program. So if you see them on campus stop and offer them a great big Auburn Family welcome.

I am sure that there is much more that I could say right now, but I will leave this up to our faculty, students and alumni. Please do enjoy this edition of the "Added Touch!"

War Eagle!

Martin

FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Martin O'Neill received an Honorary Doctorate from the North American Food Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM) Association during its 2015 annual meeting in Anaheim, California. He is in the midst of his year as Immediate Past President for International CHRIE.

Dr. Baker Ayoun published "Tomorrow's Hospitality Leaders of America: Their willingness to Accept a Future Expatriate Assignment" with Louis Rowe (HRMT graduate alumni) and Khalid Eyoun (HRMT doctoral student) in the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*. This paper received the Journal's *Article of the Year Award*.

Dr. Alecia Douglas and Dr. Imran Rahman have been awarded two internal funds this year. Congratulations!!

Dr. David Martin will lead the Eta Sigma Delta trip to New York City this year.

Dr. Yee Ming Lee presented about food allergies in the *Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality*. She was also invited as a guest speaker to the Tourism and hospitality Program at Mahidol University International College in Thailand.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

European Backpacking Trip

By Mary Taylor

The Europe trip was the best month of my life. I know it sounds cliché and all, but seriously it was. Not only was it spent surrounded by wonderful people with a passion for the same things I loved, but it was spent experiencing the best of each city we visited- something most people only dream of doing. This whole experience clearly taught me how hard work and preparation lead to success. It taught the importance of respecting other cultures in order to fully immerse into the intimate details and history each new place has to offer. Most importantly though, it taught how passion translates into the real world and tangibly gave each of us the ability to see and decipher our passions in this industry more deeply. This trip was truly indescribable.



The trip centers on each student planning one city and seeking to make each city better and more memorable than the next. In short, the experiences in each city are tailored to be the best way to all each city has to offer, in the short time we had in each. In the big picture, this means that this is an elite tour of Europe because hours and hours of planning go into each minute spent in every city. This ensures the few days in each place will be the best possible experience it could be. The planning process will push you to look deeper than what tourist sites have to offer in order to find the authentic experiences that truly expose the heart of each city. The trip itself will push you to learn about yourself as a leader and as a friend, and how to respect the knowledge of others and push yourself to not overlook all of the details that have gone both into the planning, and into the surroundings. Seriously, if you are even slightly considering this trip, do it. You will not regret it. I have experienced a lot of wonderful things in my life but this by far has been the best. I want everyday to go back and am so thankful I got the opportunity to go.



STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

European Backpacking Trip

By Rachel SoloRio

This summer I had the chance to spend 28 days in Europe that have forever changed my life. My professor, 10 other students and I backpacked throughout 11 cities in Europe. Through this culinary tourism trip we learned a lot about food, beverages, and other cultures and their culinary aspects. During this time spent overseas, one of the biggest things I gained from this trip was 10 new best friends who make me laugh, encourage me to be a better person, and make me want to be the best version of myself.

Through traveling the world with them we got to learn and giggle a whole lot! We got to stuff our faces with the best pasta the world has to offer, attempt to be athletic on bike tours, climb lots of stairs without passing out, take some overnight trains, and then of course selfies, selfies, and more selfies. These five pictures couldn't do a better job at showing how incredible of an experience this trip was! I am forever grateful for Auburn University, my college, and these girls. I wouldn't trade this experience for the world! And thank goodness I have the rest of my senior year to spend with this amazing group!



HRMT EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Eta Sigma Delta (ESD) International Hospitality Management Honors Society News

By Alecia Douglas

This past academic year (2014-15), the Auburn University Chapter of the International Hospitality Management Honors Society welcomed 14 new students to the membership while saying goodbye to 18 graduating members. Under new leadership for the 2015-16 academic year, the society looks forward to welcoming another batch of talented HRMT undergraduate and graduate students in the annual Fall Initiation Ceremony to be held on Thursday, November 12. The new ESD Board comprises of President Payton Thornton (Senior), Vice-President Mary Elizabeth Woodward (Senior), Secretary Skylar Albritton (Senior), and Committee of 19 Representative Mary Cameron Taylor (Junior). The society is currently active in the planning of the annual ESD trip to New York City on November 5 – 9 to participate in the National ESD Breakfast and General Meeting sponsored by Marriott International as well as attend the Annual International Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Show re-branded as The Hotel Experience Show at the Jacob Javits Center.

The event is the largest, most dynamic exhibition for the hospitality industry in the world, and students will participate in some of the seminars, meetings and vendor sessions. Students will also participate in a number of site visits and informational interviews with different leaders in the business to include The Loews Regency Hotel, The Marriot Marquis, The Dead Rabbit, The Crosby Street Hotel, among others. As it relates to service initiatives of the organization, the society will head efforts to support a spice drive for the local food pantry and organize the annual spring Auburn/ Opelika Restaurant Week.

Last year, ESD donated over 100 jars of spices to the local food bank and held the first annual Restaurant Week April 13-17, which saw the participation of 7 local restaurants in an effort to raise monies to purchase a new refrigerator for the Community Market. The society has pledged to lend volunteer support to pre-thanksgiving preparations with the local food bank.

For more information on ESD activities for the 2015-2016 academic year, contact President Payton Thornton (apt0005@auburn.edu) or Dr. Alecia Douglas (acdouglas@auburn.edu).



HRMT EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Eleventh Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

By Alecia C. Douglas

Sixteen HRMT undergraduate students participated in the 11th annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California, May 11-16. After being selected from a competitive pool of candidates, students were exposed to some of the finest wineries, vineyards, resorts and restaurants in the famed wine region during an intensive six-day study tour. Successful students presented strong evidence of work experience in Food and Beverage, Catering or Hotel Operations, had a good knowledge of the program and its goals, and clearly demonstrated or articulated their passion for the beverage industry. Unlike previous years, selections for next year's 2016 tour will be decided on during the Fall 2015 semester; interested students should anticipate announcements this semester.

The 11th Annual Tour delivered on the promise of offering a variety of exceptional and unique experiences from exclusive tours and rich learning exercises to decadently catered meals. From "vine" to "dine", the annual tour provided a firsthand view of all aspects critical in the production of wine and champagne through to their pairing with the finest and freshest produce the region has to offer. Sites included in this year's tour were Carmel Valley Ranch, Talbott Vineyards, Trinchero Family Estates, Franciscan Estates, Quintessa, Beringer Estates, Culinary Institute of America, Far Niente, Oxbow Market, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, Seguin Moreau, Domaine Carneros, Fisher Vineyards and the Torc Restaurant. Each venue was simply incomparable, outstanding in its own right and provided unique insights for this year's participants who were actively engaged with professionals at the height of their careers.



This "classroom in the valley" experience was enriched with conversations from prominent leaders in the California wine country who highlighted their experiences in the industry while giving students much appreciated advice on navigating their prospective careers. Gary Pisoni of Pisoni Vineyards and Carol Chorbajian of CCM&E Destination Management Services engaged with students over dinner and breakfast, respectively, at Carmel Valley while Winemaker Dan Karlsen of Talbott Vineyards took students on a private exclusive tour of the facilities. A graciously hosted lunch by Valeria Huneus at Quintessa was followed by a memorable dinner and tour at Far Niente with Proprietress Beth Nickel and Hillary McGonigle, Directory of Hospitality. The experience was not without several competitions where students, donors, organizers, administrative personnel, and faculty competed in a team blending exercise at Franciscan and Bocci Ball tournament at Trinchero.

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HRMT EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Eleventh Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

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Other notable experiences included a food and wine pairing seminar with Jerry Comfort at Beringer Estates, an interactive barrel making demonstration with Douglas Rennie, Master Cooper at Seguin Moreau, facilities tour of Robert Sinskey Vineyards with Winemaker Jeff Virnig topped off with a fantastic dinner in the caves, champagne tasting at Domaine Carneros and a culinary masterclass dinner prepared by Chef Sean O'Toole of Torc Restaurant and complimented with wine pairings from Emmanuel Kemiji, Master Sommelier and Proprietor of Miura Vineyards and Clos Pissarra.

The annual trip is made possible through the extensive planning and networking efforts of tour organizers, Mr. Hans Van Der Reijden and Mrs. Lisa Van Der Reijden, who have lead and coordinated a challenging array of activities in the program for eleven solid years. Instrumental in securing funding for the "all-expenses paid" experience could not have been possible without the deep relationships formed by Mrs. Kristy Myers, Director of Development for the College of Human Science. Faculty involved in the selection process and intensive pre-trip preparation classes help to ensure that HRMT's best students are sharpened ahead of the life-changing experience. Overall, the passion and support of the team has been back over the years by the generosity of many donors who share in the vision of providing life-altering learning experiences to the next generation of hospitality and tourism leaders. Without the continued support of all our wonderful donors this hallmark trip would simply not be possible.

HRMT Scholarship

By Alecia C. Douglas

A total of \$6000 in scholarship monies were awarded to five (5) HRMT undergraduate students from The American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation for the 2015-2016 academic year for tuition, fees and books. The scholarships were awarded on the basis of merit and are co-administered through the HRMT program. Additionally, two (2) HRMT undergraduate students were awarded a total of \$2,500 for the Alabama and Tourism Industry Scholarship Award administered through the Alabama Travel Council. Students interested in external industry related scholarship opportunities are encouraged to contact Dr. Alecia Douglas (acdouglas@auburn.edu) to obtain more information.



Barrel making demonstration.

HRMT EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

HRMT Career and Internship Fair

By David Martin

The Career and Internship Fair, held on October 28, was the largest ever with 47 companies represented, including:

United Johnson Brothers
PCH Hotels and Resorts
Pappas Restaurants
Russell Lands
North Pointe Hospitality Group
O'Charleys Restaurant and Bar
Capella Hotel Group



Alabama-Tennessee CMAA Joint-Chapter Meeting

By Imran Rahman



Photo taken at the Alabama-Tennessee CMAA joint chapter meeting.

The CMAA Alabama-Tennessee joint chapter meeting was hosted at the picturesque Belle Meade Country Club in Nashville, Tennessee. The meeting included a fun educational workshop by renowned leadership expert Mr. Phillip Van Hooser. As part of the workshop, Mr. Hooser showed how to manage change, increase productivity and build confident leaders in the club industry. Four HRMT students along with Dr. Imran Rahman represented Auburn University's CMAA chapter at the meeting. Students connected with club managers in Alabama and Tennessee, learned more about Alabama's CMAA chapter, and experienced the warm hospitality of the Belle Meade Country Club.

FEATURED STUDENTS

Payton Thornton was honored as a “Star of the Alabama Hospitality Industry.” Meanwhile, Katherine Blaedow received the Kirk Kirkland Memorial Scholarship.



By Payton Thornton

I began working for Bob's Victory Grille as they opened in July 2013. I began work as a hostess and worked my way up as a trainer for the new employees. For the 2013 year I won Front of House MVP for our Auburn restaurant, as well as MVP of the month multiple times. The summer of 2015 I became the first Manager-in-Training Intern for the company, Aloha Hospitality. Through my internship I worked my way through the entire restaurant and every position. I spent the first half of my summer working through dish, kitchen, pizza kitchen, expo, bar, serving, and everything else that falls between. The second half of my summer was spent learning to be a front of house and heart of house manager. This included everything from 5 am kitchen inventory to payroll and manager on duty. After finishing my internship I am able to fill any position on any given day. I am now considered a "key" or part-time manager. I learned so much this summer about the restaurant industry and myself. I am so grateful for all of the

opportunities and trust my managers have given me the past 2+ years. Winning the Alabama Stars of the Industry award for Front of House Restaurant Employee of the Year is an honor. As I am getting ready to graduate in May, I am excited to see where my life after graduation will lead me.

By Kayla Blaedow

My first job was in high school, as a dishwasher at a small locally owned coffee shop. I loved it. After high school I went to Southern Union State Community College where I gained my Associates in Science. While I attended Southern Union, I worked my way up from a hostess to a certified trainer at Olive Garden. After I graduated from Southern Union I began working on my degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management at Auburn University. This is also when I decided to begin working at Ariccia Trattoria. At Ariccia Trattoria, I quickly worked my way from a server to a certified trainer. While at Auburn, I've had the pleasure of attending the 11th Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California. This experience brought to light to me how much I enjoyed the beverage side of my industry.



Now, I am preparing to leave for Italy on the Joseph S. Bruno Study Abroad in Italy study abroad program this spring. I am incredibly thankful for this opportunity. While I am in Italy I will be obtaining my second minor in International Studies. When I return to the states I will need to complete my Internship before graduating. I hope to intern for a winemaker or distillery in the Northwest. I want to build a career in the beverage industry as an educator and a creator.

GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Graduate Student Association (HRMT GSA)



By Baker Ayoun

The HRMT graduate program is excited to announce the establishment of the “HRMT Graduate Student Association, HRMT GSA.” This student-run association, which is comprised solely of HRMT graduate students, will promote a positive environment for the professional and personal achievement of all HRMT graduate students, in addition to offering networking opportunities and social events. An Executive Committee composed of three officers (President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer) will lead the association in its first year. The officers were elected by HRMT graduate students and started their activities this fall.

Newly elected Executive Committee of HRMT SGA. From left Han Chen, Erol Sozen, and Brooke Ladner.

Distinguished Visiting Graduate Professors

Dr. Muzafer Uysal (Virginia Tech) and Dr. Jay Kandampully (The Ohio State University) were guests on the *HRMT Distinguished Visiting Professor Series* this past year. The HRMT graduate program hosted Dr. Uysal in Fall 2014, who presented to HRMT graduate students on the topic of quality of life and tourism. Dr. Kandampully visited the HRMT program in Spring 2015 and presented on the topic of trends in service quality. Over three days, each of the distinguished guests engaged students and faculty on issues of intellectual significance. HRMT students got the opportunity to interact, meet, and hear from these academic experts sharing their experiences, personal philosophies and lessons learned through their successful careers.



GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality

By Baker Ayoun

In May 2015, the HRMT Program co-organized and co-hosted the *Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality*, at the Dead Sea, Jordan. The event set out to put special emphasis on the consequences of the recent political, economic and societal transitions in the Middle East region for the tourism and hospitality industry. The conference brought together delegates from such countries as Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, France, Saudi Arabia, USA, and Germany, and government officials, university administrators, and industry leaders in Jordan.



In addition to the research presentations, the conference included two special general sessions. In the first session, industry leaders and government decision-makers deliberated the implications of the recent events in the Middle East region for the industry. In the second, tourism and hospitality educators and deans exchanged ideas about responding to emerging challenges associated with ever-changing business environment. This conference is the first of its kind the HRMT program is organizing outside the US, and it was a great success!



Dr. Ayoun delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of *Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality* on behalf of Auburn University,

GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Jordan 2nd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality

By Han Chen



I was honored to have participated and presented at the Jordan Second International Tourism and Hospitality Conference, which was organized by the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management (FTHM) at Yarmouk University (YU), and our HRMT Program. The conference was held from May 12-16 at the Dead Sea, Jordan, which is a world famous tourist destination that attracts thousands of tourists to visit every year. The conference itself is a cultural exhibition with attendees from countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, France, Germany and the U.S. The conference presentations have two different tracks, which are English and Arabic. We had several impressive discussions on topics in sustainable tourism and hotel restaurant management fields. The conference also provided vibrant opportunities for collaborations among industry professionals, researchers from different culture backgrounds, association executives, and graduate students from various disciplines. It also put special emphasis on understanding the consequences of the recent political, social and economic transitions in the Middle East on tourism and hospitality management.



Another important component of this conference was its cultural excursions to Amman, the capital city of Jordan, and As Salt, the ancient capital city, as well as Petra, the new world wonder. During our trip, we also had the chance to visit a traditional Jordanian family and had dinner with them. All these opportunities provided by the conference organizers helped international attendees like us learn more about the Jordanian culture. Besides, the paper I presented was awarded the best paper at the conference, which made my experience even more memorable. In conclusion, the experience of participating in this conference benefited me both in learning about research and also exploring different cultures.

NEWS FROM OUR SERVICE EXCELLENCE LABORATORY

The Hotel at Auburn University is proud to announce Chef Leonardo Maurelli III as the new Executive Chef. Chef Maurelli is returning to The Hotel at Auburn University after five years including an impressive performance as Executive Chef at Central in Montgomery, Ala. creating a unique brand for himself that he plans to integrate into the hotel's culinary team.

Born in the Republic of Panama and having lived in Alabama since he was 11-years-old, Chef Maurelli's cooking style is marked by the unique blend of his family's Latino and Italian heritage as well as the years he has spent living in the South. He brings even more of the artisan craft to the Hotel with a strong emphasis on local responsibility. He actively seeks distributors who support the local community in regards to farming efforts and



"We are so excited to have welcomed Chef Maurelli back as Executive Chef," said Hans van der Reijden, Managing Director of The Hotel at Auburn University. "This position requires an ability to juggle multiple culinary efforts, team members and the ability to teach Food Production in the Hospitality Management Program at Auburn University from which he graduated. His incredible leadership skills and keen instincts for the culinary arts will serve him well. We are also very happy for him to return to his alma mater and our hotel where he first embarked on his

Chef Maurelli will join additional new culinary team members including Brandon Burleson, the new Executive Sous Chef who is also an Auburn Hospitality Management graduate, and Paul Diaz, the new Chef de Cuisine for Ariccia Trattoria & Bar. The new team, led by Chef Maurelli, is taking on some of his personal brand and leadership qualities. Chef Maurelli expresses a deep passion for the opportunity to pass on his skills and experience to help his team and aspiring students thrive and achieve savory success.

"I am excited to lead the team and integrate my unique style that I have developed with the help and influence from my mentors including those I worked with previously at The Hotel at Auburn University," said Maurelli. "Most of all I am excited to be home on The Plains!"

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Parker Duffey

Parker Duffey ('06), who earned a horticulture degree from the College of Agriculture, began laying the groundwork for his business ventures at the age of 23. He and his wife, Melanie ('07, '09), who he met in accounting class at Auburn, both worked full-time jobs, and would work on the business after work hours. As this idea matured, Parker joined forces with fellow Auburn grad, Michael Otwell ('03) and began pursuing a relationship with Auburn University. After several months of meetings with Auburn University and Auburn Athletics officials, their company, Tailgate Guys was eventually launched in 2009 through an official partnership with Auburn Athletics.

Tailgate Guys built its model as a reserved, turnkey tailgate system and quickly evolved to a full service event management group. Tailgate Guys hosted roughly 3,000 guests in its inaugural season and now hosts up to 30,000 guests per weekend in the Auburn campus alone. Tailgate Guys earned a spot on Inc. magazine's list of the nation's top 5,000 fastest-growing companies in 2014 and 2015 and ranked 17th among Alabama businesses both years. Parker also opened a sister company, The Event Group Rentals, in 2014. The Event Group aims to apply the same exceptional service and attention to detail that has made Tailgate Guys a regional brand. The Event Group has since expanded from its founding location of Auburn to include Gainesville, Florida as well. To date his businesses have grown more than 2,200 % since 2009.

Through these companies, Parker and Michael have created more than 100 jobs in the last year alone and have expanded operations to four states – Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Texas. Their business model, which centers on partnerships with universities for tailgating and special events, has been embraced by Auburn University, the University of Florida, Georgia Tech, University of Texas, Texas A&M, Chick-fil-A Bowl, and the Cotton Bowl.

In 2013, Tailgate Guys earned recognition from Food & Wine magazine for creating one of the "Top Five College Football Tailgate Scenes" and have been featured in a wide variety of hospitality, trade, and press publication, including Southern Living, USA Today, Sports Illustrated and Sports Business Journal.

Parker and his wife Melanie support a variety of non-profit organizations, including Storybook Farms, the EAMC Foundation, and The Jule Collins Smith Museum. He also served on the board of directors for the Auburn Chamber of Commerce, and currently serves on the board of directors for Storybook Farm as well as the HRMT Advisory Board.



THE HOTEL AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY AND DIXON CONFERENCE CENTER



Centrally located near the shops and restaurants of downtown Auburn, AL, The Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center is just a short walk from the excitement of Auburn University and a diverse array of cultural and entertainment attractions. Whether in town for the big game, a special party or a productive business meeting, the hotel is the front door to Auburn with 236 guestrooms and suites that offer true Southern hospitality in an ideal setting. For a modern-Italian atmosphere with dishes inspired by Italy and the Mediterranean, visit Ariccia Trattoria (A*T), located inside the hotel. An open kitchen and outdoor terrace add character to this restaurant which serves breakfast, lunch, dinner, cocktails, Sunday Brunch and offers take-out service. Ariccia features an espresso bar and unique wine list, and has a private dining room for special events. Located next to Ariccia, Piccolo is Auburn's only true lounge experience for specialty cocktails and a large variety of appetizers and desserts. The menu features a variety of small plates perfect for sharing, refreshing cocktails and Piccolo Bottle of Champagne. Live jazz performances take place on Fridays and Saturdays (except on home football game weekends). The property is managed by the Atlanta-based Capella Hotel Group. For additional information or reservations, please call (800) 228-2876 or visit www.auhcc.com.





Auburn University HRMT Program

The Added Touch
HRMT Newsletter edited by:
Yee Ming Lee, PH.D., R.D., C.H.E.
Assistant Professor
Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and
Hospitality Management
College of Human Sciences
Auburn University
Email: ymlee@auburn.edu

For questions or enquiries about the HRMT
Program, please contact:
Ms. Tanya Stringer
Administrative Support Assistant
Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality
Management
328 Spidle Hall
Auburn, AL 36849
Phone: 334-844-4261
Fax: 334-844-3279

Please visit our website at: <http://www.humsci.auburn.edu/hrmt/>