

1. Name: **Kirsten Smithson**
2. Graduation year: **December 2014**
3. Favorite outdoor activities and favorite places to play at UTC and Chattanooga: **I enjoy just about anything with water. I love all the beautiful hiking trails in Chattanooga and the surrounding area!**
4. Job Title: **Program and Aquatic Coordinator**



5. Briefly explain what you actually do for your job: **I manage the Aquatics (Pool and Splash Pad play areas) for the Town of Smyrna. I manage my aquatic staff, certify my staff in current Red Cross Lifeguard skills, and put together and work community events for the Town of Smyrna. Events like: Boat day, Kayak events, trail hikes in the park, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, Halloween in the park, 5K events, Pups at the Pool, Movies in the park, Music on the lawn. Just to name a few.**

6. What made you choose Outdoor Recreation as a degree program? **I went into school wanting to pursue a degree in physical therapy. I started to think about my future life, and questioned if that was a job I would love for the rest of my life. I started thinking about activities I enjoy doing and started digging deeper into what all majors were offered at UTC. I came across Outdoor recreation/ Sports and Leisure Studies and I knew that would be a career that I would love, and “Work” wouldn’t be work.**

7. What experiences helped shape you while you were at UTC (personally and professionally)? **I learned the most in the “Fun Classes”, the classes that were hands on; hiking and backpacking, field experience classes, internships. The classes where you actually get up and move around, involving yourself in activities, those are the classes I learned the most in.**
8. What do you wish you had known/done while you were at UTC to prepare for the profession? **I wish I would have been more involved, I wish I would have gotten outside more and taken full advantage of Chattanooga and all it has to offer. The more activities you are a part of, the more connections you make, which will, in the long term, help you to find a job in that field.**
9. What kinds of things should someone do if they wanted to get your job? (Be honest about where they should invest their time-- getting certifications, making connections, volunteering, academic achievement, etc.). **Volunteering and getting to know as many people in the field. The more people you know the easier it will be to get the job. Also, experience is everything! People like to know that you know what you are doing, so get out and volunteer and learn all that you can. I went into the work force with several certifications: Red Cross- lifeguard, CPR, AED, First Aid. Nols- Wilderness First Responder. The ones mentioned are the ones that my employer was really happy that I had.**
10. What are the challenges and blessings of being in this profession? What frustrates you and what keeps you there?
  - a. **Challenges: I have not come across many challenges that directly relate to this field. The most challenging thing I have found is that there is always a lot going on. Programs, events, lessons, etc. Planning all these events at once can be stressful, but it’s great to see the impact that we have on our community.**
  - b. **Blessings: The people of our town, our community, that’s what keeps me loving my job! One of my favorite programs I do is swim lessons. I love seeing these new swimmers learning these skills, and seeing them year after year, at the pool and at community events.**