

**HOTEL,
CONTINUED**

"I've had parents email me and call me interested for their high school student about to come to Arkansas State," McDaniel said. "I've had student interest in the program. Dr. Washam, our dean, has gotten feedback from high school students at a preview day. So we already have some excitement about the program."

The hotel industry offers many different jobs and McDaniel said the field is a good field for job placement.

"I think this is going to be a very exciting opportunity for students for several reasons," McDaniel said. "I think it's a very flexible industry with more flexible hours. A lot of opportunities because there are so many different levels within hotel management. You have food and beverage, you have the operations side, you have the sales side. It covers so many different areas and the list could go on and on."

The grand opening itself was a large event and there were guest speakers, a wide array of food and live music. A-State's Student Government Association was in attendance.

"I was very impressed," A-State SGA President Erika Tuck said. "It is beautiful in



Arkansas State soccer player Megan McClure starts her work as the live artist at the Embassy Suites grand opening. The event also featured live music, guest speakers, food and drink, a charity event, and much more.

Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief

there and very modern. It's a really nice place, I would very much like to take a stay-cation in that hotel."

Tuck said SGA's attendance to the event was important because SGA is the liaison

between students and faculty at A-State.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity for that place," Tuck said. "I think that's so great (that students can get a job there right out of school).

Then they're starting a whole new degree for hospitality. I think that itself is amazing. It's opening up jobs, it's opening up a whole new career path, which I would have loved. I wish it had been built four years ago."

Both Tuck and SGA Vice President Drew Roberson said they liked the introduction of the Embassy Suites' staff. The staff was introduced through a reenactment of a scene in "The Greatest Showman." There was

also a fundraiser for City Youth Ministries at the opening.

Prominent guest speakers attended the event including ASU System President Dr. Chuck Welch and Governor Asa Hutchinson.

"It was cool to see Governor Hutchinson," Roberson said. "I probably enjoyed Chuck Welch's speech the most, because I know he's been with the project the whole time, behind the scenes and the nitty-gritty work of it. I liked the perspective he brought to it."

Roberson commented on the pipeline the hotel could establish between A-State students and itself.

"I think that's perfect," Roberson said. "Obviously we're all here to get a job at the end of it or continue to go on to grad school one of the two. To have an established organization like Embassy Suites, I was impressed with their reputation. I wasn't really aware of their reputation until some friends of mine were like 'Embassy is the real deal, they're big time.' To have that right on campus and to have that pipeline, I think it will be really good for our students. And then also for A-State in general, to attract more and more people."

**ENROLLMENT,
CONTINUED**

That degree is still very much worth it, though, Terry argues.

When applying for jobs, those pieces of paper still matter according to Terry.

In the workforce, automation is replacing more and more jobs, and those without some form of higher education may be out of

work sooner than later.

Terry also argues a college education is vital for meeting and connecting with potential future employers and provides several avenues for success outside of the classroom.

"In 10 years, you're 28 with four kids and you're a truck

driver," Terry said. "But there aren't jobs for truck drivers anymore. What do you do now? Most likely, you'll end up as an online student trying to get a degree."

A record graduation rate also played into the decline in enrollment, but Terry was

hesitant to feel too optimistic about the overall situation. Students cannot graduate if they don't first enroll, after all. If that number keeps dropping, graduation numbers will as well in time.

Though it is a very complex issue with a plethora of factors

playing in, the fact is enrollment is declining at Arkansas State. It is an issue to raise concerns over. Terry offered one simple action that could go a long way in fixing the problem.

"Students at Arkansas State need to go back to their high schools and their friends and tell

them why college is important," Terry said. "Sure, they can make great money at (insert business here) but at some point they'll realize that isn't what they want to do. (At Arkansas State) they can find their passion and move forward."

A-State rugby holds fundraiser and helps the community

**KRISHNAN COLLINS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

The Arkansas State rugby team embarked in events off the pitch to raise money for the squad and to help the community.

The rugby team participates in fundraisers every year as the team uses the money it gets from fundraisers to pay for necessary items and travel. Being a club sport, rugby does not get all of the funding NCAA sports get on campus.

"It's huge," A-State No. 8 Jake Ray said. "It's what kind of keeps us afloat. All our kit that we get every year, the jackets, the shirts, the track pants and things we wear to games, all of that comes from our fundraising. New balls, new tackle bags, everything that teams on campus get like football and soccer and those guys get from the school, we have to get that ourselves. It's definitely monumental."

The team sold pink rugby t-shirts through the end of February and the beginning of March as one of the team's fundraisers this year.

Winn Knight, a former A-State rugby player who had an ongoing knee injury, now acts as the team manager. Knight played an essential role in organizing the selling of the pink shirts.

"Winn Knight, he's basically been our team manager this year," Ray said. "I think it was his idea because we had the same few fundraisers our coach sets up and then Winn has been trying to expand it a lot more. We've sold shirts to sororities and all the pink shirts we sell in the student union. So Winn's kind of been putting the team on his back with that."

The rugby team wore pink shirts themselves in support of Blake Anderson's wife, Wendy Anderson, when she died.

"We originally, back around October, we got pink shirts in support of that," Knight said. "We only got them for the team, but a lot of the community wanted pink shirts as well. So we've been selling more of them. It's just fundraising for us. We don't get as much funding as some other sports on campus. As of right now it would probably be for future expenses or locker room stuff. We're



Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief

A-State rugby sold pink shirts to raise money for the team. The Red Wolves hit the road March 28 to take on Davenport in A-State's regular season finale.

trying to build, basically out of shipping containers, a facility. Or if we need it, depending on where we go in the playoffs, travel expenses and expenses for the team."

The rugby team participated in other fundraisers besides just selling shirts.

"We've done bubbles and bingo," Ray said. "It's like a big auction with only women of Jonesboro. They play bingo

and all drink champagne. Most of the money I think goes towards rugby and that one is our biggest one. We sold shirts to sororities. We have at the beginning of every year sponsor forms. So every player has to either pay \$300 out of his pocket or his parents', or we can go around town and we can fill out a sponsor form. So we can go to like Kroger, or a lot of lawyers or banks around here do

it. They give us money and then they can have their name on our jerseys or posters and stuff like that."

The team raises money for itself, but the team also gives back to the community. March 5, the team helped the Make-A-Wish Foundation at Houlihan's, the new restaurant attached to the Embassy Suites hotel on A-State's campus.

Players from the team stood outside and inside the restaurant handing fliers to customers and informing them that if the customer wanted, 10% of their meal could go to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Freshman hooker Victor Cabrera participated in the event.

"I mean I hope it's a good thing," Cabrera said. "I hope people enjoy the fact that we're willing to put in a small amount of time as a team to try to make money for people in need."

The team did other things in the community in the past and Ray said the team enjoys helping the community.

"We like to help the community," Ray said. "When the community sees that we're helping and doing our part,

it's easier for them to give us money or give us more fans. So it's kind of a mutual benefitter. I always volunteer at schools and it's a blast. You know none of us seem that big and then we go volunteer at an elementary school and we're like heroes to them, these giants that are playing D1 rugby. It's definitely great team bonding. It humbles us a bit and makes us realize we're actually helping out in ways so it's pretty cool."

Back on the pitch, after beating the No. 1 team in the nation and handling Clemson, the Red Wolves suffered two consecutive losses on the road. A-State gets a much needed two weeks off before taking on Davenport March 28 in the Red Wolves' regular season finale.

"We have two bye-weeks before we play again so this week we just have weight training and speed and conditioning stuff," Ray said. "So we're clearing our minds of rugby a little. So hopefully we'll bounce back next week with everyone switched on and ready to go and ready to play and all have a way better attitude about it."