

Recreation Leadership: Where Business Meets Adventure

My name is Mallory Taylor and I was born and raised in Newsoms, Virginia also known as the “Home of the Jumbo Peanut.” I learned early in life the importance of agriculture, hunting, and working outdoors to have a productive, sustainable lifestyle in this small southeastern town. Being raised in a 1800s farmhouse surrounded by fields, pecan trees, and long dirt roads, rooted me in the simplicity of nature. I never had a childhood of technology and gadgets, but instead I grew up making mud pies and finding arrowheads in the endless fields that I called my backyard. Some people would call my childhood deprived but I enjoyed my time in nature and the solitude I found while away from the world around me. Growing up in a town where there were more hunt clubs than stoplights led me to realize how dependent my small town life was on nature. Little did I know that these childhood memories would form and guide me to my future career.

When it came time to apply for colleges, there was no second-guessing what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I chose to attend Ferrum College where I am currently a junior majoring in Recreation Leadership. Ferrum offered me countless opportunities to participate in outdoor activities and to study abroad. During my freshman year, I spent three weeks of my summer studying abroad in Costa Rica. I visited indigenous communities and helped to rebuild and reestablish ecotourism in Costa Rica. For my 20th birthday, I received rafting trip on the Gauley River in West Virginia from my parents. There was no better gift for me. I was able to witness first-hand the excitement and adventure of rafting Class V rapids, while seeing how beautiful “Wet and Wild West Virginia” was. I loved the adventures that I was able to partake in and I

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realized that I was being drawn into the recreation and leisure field more and more each day. My love and passion for adventure, nature, excitement, solitude, action, risk, and simplicity played a major role in my decision of a career goal.

Over the past few years when I have been studying at Ferrum I have found myself more embedded in nature, and seeking to go back to my roots. The Appalachian Trail served as my “home away from home” for most of my college years. It acted as a source of solitude for me during exams, stress, and just random weekend trips. I enjoyed every minute I spent on the trail taking in nature and clearing my mind. Finding out more about myself and being able to release stress in a place that I felt so comfortable was such a blessing for me. I felt achieved and relaxed after hiking for hours in nature. I took multiple trips to MacAfee’s Knob and every hike was different from the next. I invited friends to experience the thrill and solitude that I was so passionate about. In passing, I met many people from all over the world and various walks of life while I hiked and realized that we each may have had different motives but we all loved and cared for nature all the same. It was always a new adventure and I became more and more drawn into nature as the years continued to go by.



Picture taken of Mallory Taylor at the summit at MacAfee’s Knob on the Appalachian Trail. (May 2010)

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My simple childhood, love of the outdoors, and passion for nature all have one major detail in common. They each shaped my life and made me who I am today. Each nature experience I was a part of took me back to the childhood that I loved so much. It took me back to simple times where there was no “hustle and bustle”, technology didn’t run everyone’s life, and where I felt at home again. Adventuring to new destinations and getting involved in various outdoor activities reminded me of the passion and simple pleasures I enjoyed at a younger age. These experiences now have transferred from hobbies and fun times to a career.

Deciding to go into a career in the recreation field was not an easy choice to make. Today’s society does not completely understand the concept of choosing a job that you love over a job that will result in a large paycheck. Regardless, I chose that I wanted to be happy. I know that I enjoyed my childhood and I love nature, I couldn’t have asked for a better career field. I hope that making the decision to choose what I loved over money will pay off. But either way, I know that I will still be happy with working in the best office I could ever ask for, the outdoors.