Join Us at the Rhythm & Roots Alumni Gathering

Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion music festival is back this year and celebrating Bristol Tennessee/Virginia’s music heritage as the birthplace of country music with over 100 bands and 13 stages of performances.

This year, all tickets for the annual music festival must be purchased directly from the BR&RR office by clicking here. King alumni who are purchasing tickets can use the code ALUMNIKING25 to receive a discount. This discount can be applied when purchasing online with the link above or in person at the Birthplace of Country Music.

Alumni and their family members who are ticket holders are invited to join us on Saturday, Sept. 11, from 1-5 p.m. at our new location Kil’n Time (818 State Street) for our annual Rhythm & Roots event. Come as you can for yummy food, refreshments, and a chance to mingle with members of the King campus community. Click here to register for the Rhythm & Roots Alumni Gathering. We hope to see you there!

Click Here to Register

Dear First-Year Student...
We are asking all alumni to please consider writing a letter to an incoming Freshman at King University. This can be as short or long as you would like. Please include personal advice, your favorite memories from King, and what the student can look forward to in these next few years. This will be an encouragement for our future alumni from those who have walked in their shoes. You may sign the letter with your name and graduation year. We will print your letter and send it to the student. Click here to submit your letter to a first-year student.

Sarah Hildebrandt Takes Home Bronze Medal

Congratulations to former King University superstar Women’s Wrestling legend Sarah Hildebrandt on winning the Bronze medal in the 2021 Olympics wrestling in the 50 kg weight class. Following her career and recent successes that put her into medal contention has been a whirlwind, and it was has been amazing to see the King Community, as well as Northeast Tennessee and the entire wrestling community, become unified in support of her pursuit. We are all so proud of all you have accomplished Sarah! Enjoy every bit of this moment.

King is Hiring

Are you or someone you know looking for a new job? King has several job
openings posted. King is looking for people who have a passion for students and Christian higher education. Click here for the current open positions at King. We hope you will consider joining us.

Alumni Spotlight - a sit down with Ryan Hardin '17

Originally from New Jersey, Ryan relocated to Jonesborough, Tennessee, with his family when he was in the 6th grade. “It was a change, somewhat of a culture shock, but a good one. Jonesborough was much smaller and slower-paced. I remember how friendly the people were when we first arrived.”

Where did you go to high school?
“I went to Tri-Cities Christian School. It is a small, faith-based school. I enjoy the small community. And when it came time to look for a college that is what I wanted.”

How did you hear about King?
“I heard about King because they are a local, faith-based school. I was looking to stay in the area where I could go home to visit but remain far enough away where I could grow up on my own. I also do track and field and I found an online form on the website and emailed the coach at the time. He reached out to me and so I sent him some videos. I guess he liked what he saw because he came out to watch a couple of my meets. Then he invited me to visit the campus.”

What was your first impression of King?
I liked the smaller school environment and the scenery. It is a beautiful campus, especially in the fall. I liked the brick buildings. I thought about a Hogwarts type of building. Plus, everyone seemed so nice. King makes you feel like you are home away from home.
What was your major?
I was a psychology major and minor in business administration.

Why psychology? What career path did you consider pursuing?
I had a lot of interest in mental health at the time. I was interested in being able to help people. The best part of the psychology program was the professors. My two favorites were Michael Pilcher Ph.D. and Kevin DeFord Ph.D. As a senior in the program, we attend the Blue Ridge Conference along with numerous other schools. To prepare we selected a subject and collected data that you present at the conference. My topic was the effects of exercise on mental health, the positive benefit. Working out is mental as well as physical. I am very into going to the gym and working out.

After graduation what did you do?
I was hired to work as a children’s mental health case manager. I did that for four years. There aren’t a lot of men in the mental health field, at least where I was, at that time. I was the only male case manager for the entire time I was there. But I felt like I was a positive male influence in the kids’ lives. Many didn’t have fathers around and were living with grandparents.

What was that experience like?
It was rewarding but it was tough. Many of the children have behavioral issues. A lot of it stems from not having order and discipline and a stable home environment. Especially in Washington County, Virginia, there are a lot of lower-income families in that area. When you have kids worried about getting meals and necessities day after day, it is difficult to concentrate on learning.

Is working in mental health something you see yourself doing over the long term?
No, actually I am already transitioning into becoming a personal trainer. While I was on the track and field team, I was always a bigger guy. After getting out of team sports and working out and exercising all the time, I continued to eat as if I was still living that lifestyle. I put on a decent amount of weight. I graduated from school at 307 lbs. That summer I decided it was time to change the way I lived. I knew I had to get my health back. It would increase my energy levels and improve my mental wellbeing. The hardest part was being disciplined with my diet. The exercise was easy because I was used to it from college. I got down to 280 lbs. on my own. I then hired a personal trainer to help me the rest of the way. I worked with the personal trainer for the next two years and dropped 95 lbs. The reality is that the transformation was gradual. And because it wasn’t a quick loss of weight, I have kept it off. I am at a happy weight for my body type around 215. This is huge because that is what I weighed as a freshman in high school. Weightlifting is a hobby. I like to be in the gym four or five times a week. Sometimes I go to the gym twice a day, once for cardio and once for weights. It is a good stress reliever for me. It beats going to McDonald’s or going out for a drink. For me, the discipline of working out permeates other factors that help improve my life. When doing something that big, like lose 95 lbs. you feel like you can accomplish anything. Other things in life won’t be as hard.

What has been the greatest challenge you have faced with fitness?
The toughest thing I ever did was the 75-hard challenge. It is mental toughness, a fitness program that lasts for 75 days. To be successful you have to work out twice a day for 45 minutes, no alcohol, no cheat meals, drink a gallon of water a day, you must read 10
pages every day of an entrepreneurial or personal development book, and if you cheat at any point you have to start over. I completed it when I was getting out of a routine with the pandemic. It was so hard. One day I found myself running outside in the snow. Another day it was a cold rain. But it was a metaphor for life. There will be hard situations anywhere that you go, and you still will have to go through them. Being able to train is hardening yourself for life. I did the 75-hard in two goes. A couple of days into it I failed and had to start over but was determined to get it the second time in one go. At the end of the day, it is about building confidence and transforming lives. I want to help people build confidence and be happy in their own skin.

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**Save the Date for KingFest - October 16th**

We are excited to announce the date for the second annual KingFest on October 16th. The event is in conjunction with Family Weekend and includes fall-themed activities, NCAA sporting events, delicious food, the Athletic Hall of Fame reception, and more. Alumni, friends, faculty, staff, students, and the greater Bristol community are all invited to KingFest. Stay tuned for more information to come.

![KingFest 2021 Banner](image)

For more info, contact Jenna Christie at 423.652.6399 or jmcchristie@king.edu.

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*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*

**Romans 12:2**

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*"When you give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed."* - Maya Angelou
Consider making a gift to King University and watch your blessings multiply in the faces of our students!

give.king.edu