

# DREAMS OF Walking on Water

*Around ten years ago, on the coasts and lakes of Texas, skylines at sunset became dotted with people seemingly standing on water. Ten years later, these stand up paddleboarders are still around, amongst fishing boats and water-skiers, as Texas waterways provide the perfect "trails" for this new breed of water sport enthusiast.*



Photo Courtesy Of: SUP Abilene Kayak Rental

Written By: Rebecca Pavaresh

## SUP ABILENE KAYAK RENTALS

ABILENE

Amy Herndon and Marsha Moreland have been avid kayakers for years and spent much of their time on Lake Fort Phantom Hill, near Abilene. "We saw people standing up on what appeared to be surfboards," Amy recalled of a trip to visit Austin, seven years ago. "We decided to try it, and fell in love with stand up paddling." Once Amy retired, she decided to start her own businesses doing something she loved. "SUP [Stand Up Paddleboarding] can provide you with a very good overall workout. ... Almost every muscle in the body is used at some point; it is a very low-impact exercise."

Amy began with a mobile rental unit operating out of a city park. There was a small waterway in town that was perfect for beginners and centrally located. The response was so great, the women knew they had to upgrade quickly to meet the demand. "Although we became an instant hit, there were drawbacks to working out of a city park. [The creek] wasn't very long and got boring after a couple of times. Also, there was not enough room to rent out for parties and private events."

Many meetings, more research, and a few setbacks later, they found a place directly on Lake Fort Phantom Hill. Amy and her entire family worked hard to build a sandy beach on the edge of a naturally-eroded dirt lake. "We had to start with a piece of land that had been

totally disregarded for more than 20 years." For a year, she and her kids cleared the area by hand, still operating out of the park. "We uncovered a boat ramp that had also been abandoned for many years. The city required a study to be done by a forensic engineer (for safety issues). After a lot of money, and even more time, we did what was required and now we boast an amazing boat ramp for our customers' easy water access." They improved the coast from a beer bottle wasteland to "a gorgeous beach paradise."

Skyler and Landyn Herndon are also instructors at their facility, sharing their mother's love of the water. And there is no shortage of interested clients with Abilene's three college campuses and a military base. "We offer kayak, SUP, and paddleboat rentals," said Amy. "Our beautiful sandy beach offers lots of shade, picnic areas, and places to fish or just sit and relax in a lounge chair. We have sand volleyball, horseshoes, and a huge fire pit for grilling."

In regards to the future, Amy remarked, "SUP isn't just a fad that will disappear in a few years; it's here to stay and gaining popularity fast ... I've always encouraged both my children to go for their dreams and this business is all of our dreams. It is something that we've done together as a family and will continue for a long time."

# SURF SUP TEXAS

SUGAR LAND

In Sugar Land, Texas, owners of Surf SUP Texas, Matt and Erin Patterson, were introduced to the sport in 2007 when it caught their eye on their honeymoon. "It looked like a lot of fun to ride one on small surf days, and I noticed people were riding them in the flatwater too," said Matt. "I had heard about how great it was for cross-training for surfers as well. It's actually probably one of the best workouts that there is. You engage your core, you work your upper body, and you even work your lower body as well."

Returning home from their honeymoon, they began to seek out local SUP offerings, with sparse results. "We first got the idea to start the business when a Texas-based SUP company was running an ad on Facebook to sell bulk order paddleboards at wholesale prices," Matt explained. "So we got all of the necessary paperwork filed and became a dealer for them. Then it grew from there. We started with rentals and parties, and then we started offering lessons and got into SUP racing as well."

In the beginning, there was no brick-and-mortar location. "Having a mobile operation is great because we are able to bring the boards to the water and people don't have to transport the boards on the roof of their cars or the back of their trucks," described Matt. He credits the City of First Colony for early success, as they have been "awesome to work with and they have treated us really well." As for "paddleboarding season," the first year really made a few things clear to the Pattersons. "Interest kind of tapers off after Labor Day, and the phones usually stop ringing right after Halloween, except for the occasional person wanting to buy a SUP for Christmas." The Pattersons will take guests out any time they desire though, as Houston's winters are quite mild. Matt remarked, "Our season usually

picks back up in March around spring break and really starts to get busy in May. July is probably our busiest month."

Their love for paddleboarding may be year-round, however the demand for it is not, so Matt and Erin both have day jobs. Their spring and summer though is full of SUP and bringing this water sport to the public. Their free time is spent perfecting their skills and teaching others. They even participate in races in various parts of the state and Matt explained he would love to see more in their area, "It would be great to have a few more races in Sugar Land. We worked with the Texas Dragon Boat Association last year to supply SUPs to their October Races. I actually won the Gold Medal in the Surf Style Category for the race in October 2016." Matt and Erin are working with the Hyatt Place on Brooks Lake in an effort to bring SUP excursions to their guests. "It's close enough to Houston to be convenient, but it's not connected to any major industry, so the water quality is very good for paddling. Also any event on the coast is great too."

SUP offers something for everyone. SUP yoga and SUP pilates are available for those interested. "You can take your dog on the board, you can take your small kids on the board (with a proper life jacket, of course), you can ride waves, you can race, and so much more. It's a really versatile sport," Matt said. "Truthfully though, the best workout you can do on a SUP is just paddle as hard and fast as you can for as long as you can." For those less workout-inclined, "It's not as hard as a lot of people think. You can usually get the hang of it in one lesson, and after that you can build on what you've learned and advance as fast or as slow as you want."



Photo Courtesy Of: Surf SUP Texas

# WATERSIDE SPORTS, LLC

L A K E B E L T O N & L A K E G R A N B U R Y

For Troy Davis and his wife Nancy, their passion for stand up paddleboarding (SUP) goes hand in hand with their lifetime love for the water. After selling their construction company in 2009, they moved from Georgetown, Texas to Costa Rica, where their passion for the sport grew to new heights. “During that time, we started manufacturing custom bamboo stand up paddleboards, [a company] now known as Bambu SUP,” Troy explained. In a relatively short amount of time, the popularity of the sport spread across the globe. “Many people paddle for the relaxation and tranquil environment or for the great workout it provides.” The Davises owned a condo on Lake Belton, where they would stay on trips home from Costa Rica. Troy remembers, “During one of those visits, Nancy and I were on our back patio enjoying a glass of wine and we both said to each other, ‘Why isn’t anybody paddling on this lake?’”

They immediately began making inquiries, beginning the journey of bringing SUP to the area. With encouragement and help from his neighbor Tom Edwards, Morgan’s Point Resort, and Texas Parks and Wildlife, they quickly developed a plan to bring paddling trails to the community. “We decided to manufacture 50 Bambu boards for retail, we purchased both single and tandem Ocean Kayaks, trailers, etc. and launched Waterside Sports, LLC.,” said Troy, describing the rental side of the business. “Since the grand opening of Waterside Sports, Morgan’s Point Resort now has several paddling trails for the community’s enjoyment.”

After opening in 2012, things got busy quickly. The public was unknowingly waiting for SUP as a new activity to pursue on the lakes in the area. In the beginning, they would deliver to various parks, rivers, and Lake Belton. Eventually, the demand required a location right on the water, and they moved their original location to Frank’s Marina to further the access that customers desired. “When we first started Waterside Sports, our staff and ourselves did not need to go to the gym because we carried our equipment up and down the Morgan’s Point Marina boat ramp, trailered and un-trailered our equipment on a daily basis, and even cleaned the equipment after every rental right on the water,” Troy remembered. “We all look back and laugh at how much work we had to do on a daily basis compared to being in a central location now. We have come a long way since then with both of our locations and we hope that the community continues to enjoy Waterside Sports for many more seasons to come.”

Temporary locations gave way to permanence as the business took hold and grew. “Since that time we have been able to expand our business and are operating Waterside Sports on both Lake Belton and Lake Granbury,” Troy said. “Both Nancy and I were very excited at the response we received from the community. The support has been amazing and we are happy that we have been part of introducing this sport to the Central Texas area.” Retired military, Troy enjoys overseeing the operations on both lakes, making sure the atmosphere is fun for the clients and staff. “I love seeing the look on our new clients when they finally get the technique down and paddle off into the sunset!”



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Photos Courtesy Of: Waterside Sports, LLC

