Attendance reaches record high at MAACness, successful alumna returns for book signing

By Andrew Silver and Lauren Varga

Midnight MAACness, launched the Homecoming celebration weekend, with a very festive evening of fun, food and prizes.

Other events during the weekend of Oct. 15 to 17, included Bronctoberfest, the Homecoming King and Queen ceremony, a book signing by Susan Polis Schutz, creator of Blue Mountain greeting cards, Alumnia Awards, Homecoming Dinner and numerous reunions.

Lights, Camera, MAACtion was the theme behind this year’s annual Midnight MAACness, held in the Alumni Gym at 11:30 p.m.

Student Government Association (SGA), Emerging Leaders program and the athletic department co-sponsored this past weekend’s extravaganza. The hard work and contribution led to the event’s success.

“This is the best one I have seen in all of my four years here,” said Haley Baum, the president of the SGA.

Dave Keenan, the director of campus life, said that the event turned out successfully.

“I would think this year we had our largest turn-out, with around 1,200 to 1,300 people attending the event,” he said.

Many of the freshmen said they enjoyed the experience of putting this event together and that it was the cooperation and work effort that was behind the success of this evening. Other students said they were surprised at how well the event went.

“The result was 10 times better than I thought it would be,” said Rachel Kendrel.

An area director of Residence Life, Jamil Mosley and his dance team kicked off the evening with their own performance. After their dance, Mosley informed the audience they were in for a night of entertainment.

The first act of the evening was a performance from the Rider Dance Team. The preparation by the Dance Team was beneficial because of the support they received when they took center stage.

“We’ve been practicing for a while, and we think we did a really good job,” said dance team member Lanette Hoghton.

After the Dance Team, the event featured an ice cream eating contest. Some of the contestants weren’t sure if they wanted to involve themselves in the first place.

“Somebody signed me up, so I had to represent,” said ice cream eating champ Dominic Cline.

“The Rider Cheer and Stunt Team provided all the tricks and moves to enlighten the cheering crowd after the ice cream contest.

“I am really proud of the team, they are going to do great things this season,” said Charie Kravitsky, the cheerleading counselor.

The Rider Dance Team went out on the floor for one more jig. The students also applauded members of the homecoming court who made an appearance.

“It was really fun, I feel like a real celebrity,” said Homecoming Queen Kat Zimoulis.

During the event, the Bronc Band also “did a tremendous job,” according to Keenan.

The event concluded with a bang as the Rider men’s and women’s basketball ran through the curtain to kick off another exciting season of Bronc Basketball. Coach Don Harnum was ecstatic to notice the enthusiasm and support from the students.

“I think this was terrific, an unbelievable way to kick off the season, very few schools this size generate enthusiasm like this,” said Harnum.

Throughout the evening, students referred to as the Rider Screammers, painted their faces in the colors of Rider and chanted for their school.

“It went better than expected, this whole thing was easier than I thought it would be,” said Jeremy Friedman, a Screamer.

“It’s a great tradition at Rider. It’s one of those types of events that helps us build school spirit and pride in the institution—and these programs,” said Keenan. “It’s a great opportunity for the organizations to come together. It’s a real community program.”

Another highlight of the weekend was the book signing by Susan Polis Schutz, a graduate of the class of 1966, and co-creator of Blue Mountain Greeting Cards. Her autobiography, Blue Mountain: Turning Dreams Into Reality, was available at the signing table or in the bookstore. The event lasted from 2 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, as many people lined up to meet her and get the book signed.

Her other books include Bronctoberfest, a gift of free, entitled One World, One Heart, which contains her poems and illustrations by her husband, Stephen Schutz.

Now, Bluemountain.com, a website that allows users to send personalized, animated greeting cards with Schutz’s poetry, to other users all over the world, has sold about half a billion regular greeting cards and more than one billion have been ordered online.

Schutz was a member of Delta Phi Epsilon sorority while attending Rider, and said that her experience at Rider was an inspiration to her.

“A lot of my poems are written about my sorority sisters,” she said. “We encourage each other. Rider offered a good education and a lot of friendships. I had some great classes.”

Schutz, who was named the Distinguished Alumna of the Year award later that night at the alumni dinner, also gave some advice to current students.

“You have to follow your passion,” she said. “If you do that, success will come. If you don’t, and you just go out looking for success, it won’t work.”

The Homecoming King and Queen competition took place on Saturday from 5 to 7 p.m. in the BLC Theater, with Rob Giorgio and Kat Zimoulis as the winners of the competition.

The Alumni Awards were held after in the Cavalla Room from 5 to 9 p.m., with approximately 135 people, according to Natalie Pollard, Director, Gift Planning Development.

The awards that were given out during the dinner included the Young Alumni Award, given to Tywanette “Missy Williams” of the class of 1981, and the Distinguished Alumni Award, which was awarded to Bernard V. Vonderschmitt of the class of 1981.

Susan Polis Shutz signed a book for Bonnie Rozanski’s, President Rozanski’s wife, during her signing on Saturday.