



The Shorthorn: File photo

Juan Angel “Angelo” Rios, alumnus and former UTA Radio DJ, was known for his positive attitude and lifting people’s spirits

BY MEGAN CARDONA
The Shorthorn staff

When asked to describe UTA alumnus Juan Angel “Angelo” Rios, mentors and peers used the words funny, kind and supportive. On Aug. 29, they returned this support by gathering at the Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Heart Center to say their goodbyes to Rios, who was in critical condition and died later that night at the age of 32.

Julienne Greer, theater arts assistant professor, said she had never seen such a crowded hospital room.

Although Rios had a physical disability that had him utilize a power wheelchair, he rose above the challenges and left an impact on others, Greer said.

As a student, Rios served as a DJ at UTA Radio. Known as “DJ Angelo,” he covered sports, hosted a music show and conducted interviews.

Alumnus Dylan Fry, who co-hosted UTA Radio’s “The Fry and The Guy” with Rios, said he will remember Rios as a mentor, his partner in crime and a brother.

For two hours a week, Fry and Rios would get together in the studio to talk about MLB, WWE and other sports-related topics. Fry said Rios

would always go straight into the segment ready to have fun, often cracking small jokes to break up a serious sports talk segment.

Lance Liguez, UTA Radio faculty adviser, said Rios loved broadcasting and being involved with the program but would often take semesters off because of health issues.

“There would be a little time off where you wouldn’t see him for a little bit,” Liguez said. “I would see him, and I’d go, ‘Hey, what are you doing? Let’s get you back on.’”

Sarah Rose, disability studies minor director, taught Rios in two of her classes.

Rose recalled times in her history of disability class when Rios would challenge people’s preconceptions and assumptions about disability. His humor and provocative comments would help move class discussion further.

“He would push them in a really productive way,” Rose said.

Rebekah Chojnacki, Honors College academic adviser and UTA alumna, met Rios when they both lived on campus.

Chojnacki said Rios knew how to cheer her up, and they’d always share a laugh.

“He was one of the kindest and sweetest people that I’ve ever met,” Chojnacki said.

When feeling stressed or overwhelmed, Chojnacki said Rios would give her perspective about how it was all temporary.

One of the best memories UTA alumna Allie Beaurline has of Rios is a trip they took to a museum with their disability studies class. It was the first time he rode in her car, and Beaurline was worried his wheelchair wouldn’t fit.

The two made it to the museum without incident, and Beaurline said she remembered hanging out with Rios at the museum as an awesome experience.

Time spent with him was never wasted, she said.

“He was there for me, and he would always just talk to me, reassure me,” Beaurline said. “It’s sad that he’s gone.”

Leaving the hospital, UTA alumna Laura Baker left Rios a Dallas Stars hat because of his love for the Metroplex sports teams.

Baker was student congress president when she was at UTA and said one of her favorite memories of Rios was how he would come down

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Allie Beaurline
UTA alumna

Angelo

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to the University Center basement where she worked and spend time with her.

Rios was the kind of person that could uplift one's spirit, she said. He represented what it meant to be part of the UTA community.

"You feel like you're part of a family," Baker said. "And he [made] you feel like that."

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