**South Texas College**

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pictures: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cfxG5YOo03kjkBPNGokwu_KEKuF79fYr?usp=sharing>

**Country *Strong*: The Secret STC Life of a KTEX Radio Star**

Listeners know her only as “Amanda Mae,” their KTEX host for hot country hits and insider celebrity interviews.

What they don’t know is that when she’s not bopping along to Blake Shelton and Gabby Barrett, Amanda is also a South Texas College kinesiology grad, with a reputation for high-intensity cycling, weight training, and core workout classes at Gold’s Gym.

Growing up in the radio business, Amanda has rubbed elbows with stars like Brad Paisley, Maddie & Tae, and the Midland band. But when it comes to her career, she’s humming a different tune.

“Actually, my dream job would be something fitness related,” admits the in-shape South Texan.

That dream began at STC. Amanda had taken a gap year after high school and was ready to do something more… She just wasn’t sure what.

“I wanted to stay here in McAllen,” recalls Amanda, who began to get “a feel for things” in her initial general education classes at STC. After being homeschooled her entire life, coming to campus was a whole new experience. She loved the structure and camaraderie in her classes, and in the collegiate environment, she was finally ready to pull a Kacey Musgraves and *follow her arrow.*

Amanda was working at the gym at the time and having a blast, but she needed more hands-on experience to advance her career. So, she chose the science of movement as her major.

“It was so much fun,” recalls the STC student about her kinship with kinesiology. “I love that department so much.”

As Brooks and Dunn might say, the *hard-working woman* continued her radio gig, prerecording her shows while she pursued her associate degree. Soon, though, her cover would be blown.

“One guy found out I was on the radio the same time I was doing school,” recalls Amanda with a laugh. “He was like, ‘I thought you just went to the bathroom and recorded on your phone!’”

While she was flattered to hear that classmates and teachers listened to her show, when it came time for school, Amanda was 100-percent focused on fitness. From basketball to outdoor recreation, where she learned how to read a compass and pitch a tent, the program showed her the power of physical activity to improve overall wellness. It also pushed her limits.

“I grew up doing dance,” admits Amanda. “I can’t hit a baseball. I cannot do a slam dunk.”

Trying her hand at group sports became an exciting challenge. Meanwhile, she discovered a whole new world of career possibilities, not just in coaching and managing, but in teaching, broadcasting, exercise science and even fitness instruction.

“There are so many different fields of kinesiology that people don’t know about,” Amanda says.

She credits the “uplifting and supportive” kinesiology department at South Texas College for opening her eyes. In particular, she’s grateful to have been connected to her mentor, Program Chair Dr. Rebecca De Los Santos.

“I was asking her big-picture things,” says Amanda. “She gave me a lot of good advice.”

In fact, it was Dr. De Los Santos who recommended her student for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

During her last semester at STC, the radio star landed a yearlong internship with the Rio Grande Valley Vipers, an NBA Development League affiliate of the Houston Rockets and the 2019 G League Champs.

As the team’s media intern, she connected with radio and television stations to deliver tickets and make sure everything was set for upcoming games. The highlight was planning an entire game program, featuring a halftime show that celebrated the team mascot’s birthday.

“I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I’ve never done anything like this before,’” remembers Amanda, who was elated at the opportunity to wish “Fang” — a giant basketball-jersey-wearing snake — a very happy 11th year. For the birthday bash, she invited teams from far and wide, gathering mascots from Brownsville to Rio Grande City to participate.

Fans were delighted by the antics of dozens of mascots clowning around and putting on a spectacular show. Amid the chaos, Amanda found time to be thrilled that all of her hard work had paid off: “It was so crazy, but a very awesome experience.”

The STC student’s success came as no surprise to Dr. De Los Santos.

“She handled her internship well, and the organization was quite happy and pleased with her work,” says the proud professor. “She is a well-rounded individual, and I am sure she will succeed in all she does.”

After earning her associate degree, Amanda decided to return to her alma mater for the new [Personal Training Certificate](https://news.southtexascollege.edu/conquering-fitness-and-career-goals-new-personal-trainer-certificate-launches-healthy-careers/) to boost her career even more.

“Something I really want to do is open up my own gym,” says the exercise enthusiast. She knows South Texas College’s Personal Trainer Certificate will “definitely come in handy.”

If you visit Thompson’s gym someday, *she hopes you dance.* She says that while there are plenty of sports fitness facilities, very few of them seem to cater to dancers: “I want to fill that gap.”

With the PT certificate, she looks forward to going the extra mile. Currently, Amanda works as a certified group fitness instructor, but can’t yet provide one-on-one guidance or set up meal plans. “But with that Personal Training Certificate, I could,” she says. “And eventually, that’s where I want to go.”

The country music connoisseur is even sharing her love of movement over the airwaves, encouraging listeners to stay active during the pandemic.

“You can ride your bike, you can run, you can play at the park,” advises the host, especially for those working from home. “Sitting down all day is not going to do you very well… That’s going to take a toll on your body.”

Amanda is also an on-air advocate for the “It’s Time Texas” eight-week challenge, in which cities across the Lone Star State compete to be the healthiest community. According to the challenge’s website, 80 percent of the RGV is considered overweight or obese, with a diabetes rate that is 20 percent higher than Texas as a whole. The challenge depends on fitness fans like Amanda to help fight that trend.

“McAllen came on top three years in a row now,” in the challenge, beams the proud proponent, who also [helped the community rack up some serious points](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=181581466379222&ref=watch_permalink) in the challenge. “I was able to help them out and promote that.”

Looking back on her time at STC, she’s proud to have not only earned a degree and shaped a dream career, but to have also become part of a tight-knit college community.

“I know that if I went to a big university, I would just be a number,” says Amanda. On top of developing a special relationship with faculty and classmates and taking advantage of one-of-a-kind opportunities at STC, she also was able to save on tuition, as well as room and board, by staying close to home.

For the dancin’ DJ turned exercise entrepreneur, STC will always be her number one choice, *no sweat*. After all, *it’s alright to be little bitty:*

“I really like that it’s a smaller campus, with smaller classes and a much smaller amount to pay.”

*Apologies to the following artists ;-)*

* *Lee Ann Womack, “I Hope You Dance”*
* *Kacey Musgraves, “Follow Your Arrow”*
* *Brooks and Dunn, “Hard Workin’ Man”*
* *Alan Jackson, “Little Bitty”*

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