



Reco Anderson and Lani Hayselden before game-time. Photo / Max Miller

# To Hayselden, it's more than a game

By Tiffany Benson  
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Lani Hayselden, financial aid counselor in Student Financial Services, relaxes at her desk and gazes at a picture of several student athletes with the smile of a proud parent. While she doesn't have any biological children, Hayselden says she considers the players on the men's basketball team like sons to her. Hayselden says she is supportive whether the team wins or loses. She sees the human side of each player and considers it her gift to be a fan.

Hayselden credits this bonding with the team to her act of sharing her diagnoses and treatments for the terminal illness Invasive Carcinoma during the winter of 2010. She says she didn't expect any of players to care or show any emotion when she delivered the news of her breast and lymph node cancers, but to her surprise, the young men welcomed her with open arms and showed respect for her as a person. Since that day, there have been quite a few players who have joined Hayselden on trips to church, whose parents have stayed in Hayselden's home, and most of them expect her to watch home games from her reserved seat in the Breckon Sports Center.

"I just love those boys," says Hayselden. "The conversations we have and the relationships that I have developed with them are unique unto themselves and there is a lot of unconditional acceptance among us."

Through most of Hayselden's life, she says, she has been exposed to the game of basketball. At a young age, Hayselden's love for the game originated when she and her father moved from Hawaii to Emporia, Kan.

Her dad played for a police and fireman's association team, served as a referee, and often held season tickets for the Kansas City Kings, an NBA franchise from 1976 to 1984. Hayselden says she loves the rules of the game, the dedication of each team member on the court, and the entertainment the game and

players provide. In high school, Hayselden says she tried out the sport for herself, but found volleyball and soccer to be her strong suits.

In addition to her love for the basketball team, Hayselden says she loves her position in the financial aid department. This position gives her a lot of opportunities to meet new students and be a stabilizing force in academic careers, Hayselden says. She says she has come to know and appreciate every student who comes through her office and is also a fan of many other sports teams at Park. She has served as an administrator since 2007 and as NAIA Champion of Character Representative since 2009. Her plans include obtaining a master's degree and continuing her career at Park.

Hayselden encourages students who live on or off campus to get involved with a sport Park participates in, and enjoy the camaraderie shared by all the players. She says she believes the student body at Park University is unique and there is a connection made across each team. Often she has seen players from one sport show up at their fellow classmates' games during off season. Hayselden encourages students to take advantage of their time spent at Park and to find a way to make an impression on someone's life.

"When you leave here [Park], you won't forget all the interesting things you have learned, but the most profound thing that you will remember is the people you have met," she says. "Also remember that life is about choices. The choices you make will determine the path you take."

Has she considered coaching a basketball team? Hayselden offered a winning smile and simply answered, "No."

Hayselden says she aspires to be all the support the team needs from the sideline and in the relationships they have off the court. She says she is aware of her strengths and finds that her most important role for the basketball team, or for any team she enjoys, is to be a dedicated fan.