

# **Ryan Zecha**

**“The Renaissance College Student ”**



**Outstanding Service Award**

A “Renaissance Man” is a term applied to someone who takes on many roles. Ryan has been just that during his time at Kansas State University. Over the last 3 years, new Goodnow Hall residents have likely first heard of Ryan merely as the one called ‘Zecha.’ Ryan has been a seemingly permanent fixture of Goodnow Hall these last three and a half years, serving in many capacities: Resident Assistant, HGB Advisor, student and friend to many. Prior to becoming a RA, Ryan served the K-State campus in a number of other roles. Ryan Zecha epitomizes leadership and service. He has integrity, humor, determination, good work ethic, and a pleasant personality that combine together uniquely to serve the residents of Goodnow Hall and others.

### ***Zecha: The Resident Assistant***

Ryan Zecha was hired onto Goodnow Hall’s RAMA staff at semester in spring of 2002. Coming in at semester is always difficult and Ryan had to leave his friends on 2nd floor, whom he had lived with for 3 semesters. But, Ryan Zecha stepped right in to being one of the two RA’s on Goodnow’s sixth floor and began making friends anew with its 90 residents. From the start, Ryan was a prolific programmer, and remained so all three and a half years that he was in Goodnow.

That first semester, he held a Counter-Strike LAN Party for residents of Goodnow. This program was so successful that Zecha continued to host the program every semester. In the Spring and Fall 2004, the program was still held but the game was changed to Halo and Halo 2.

Ryan Zecha has been involved in the Goodnow Hall Date Auction to raise money for the Manhattan Women’s Crisis Center every year. This program has been run for several years. The last 2 years, this program has been a part of “Matters of the Heart Week.” Zecha’s role has varied over the years of this program. In 2004, he was the MC and auctioned off all of the couples. He has helped plan the event and been auctioned off himself. This program has been one of the most successful at Goodnow Hall, raising more than \$2000 this year and \$1300 last year. This program was awarded the Program of the Year award last year.



Another all hall program that Zecha was involved in was a “Paintball.” This program was put on entirely by Ryan Zecha. He reserved the facilities at a local paintball facility, advertised, and arranged for residents to be provided with paintballs. Zecha put this program on in the Fall ’02 and Fall ’03. This program was very popular and was handed down to the HGB in 2004 so that Zecha could plan other events.

This spring, Ryan helped to plan the Goodnow Hall Winter Olympics along with Jonathan Tarman and Carolyn Wenzel. This event portrayed each floor of Goodnow Hall as a country such as Spain or France. Floors competed against each other in such events as limbo, “Human Bobsled,” and various other wacky relays. More than 100 hundred residents attended this event. This program was award “Social Program of the Month” for the month of January 2005.

On a smaller scale, Ryan Zecha has actively created programs for his floor. One such program was “Flower Pens,” where residents interacted socially while making decorative pens. This program was put on with the help of his co-RA Ashley Jamison (Fall ’02) and with Erica Mederos (Fall ’03). In the Spring of 2005, Zecha and Ashley Boldt made doorknob decorations with their residents and hosted a “Build a Shirt” party. After several instances of assault against women last year, Ryan had Officer Harrison, who was the Housing and Dining Officer at the time, to teach a class on personal safety and awareness for the women on his floor. Ryan has also taken it upon himself to take several UFM classes with residents and interact with them outside of the hall in addition to inside the hall. Ryan has also been an active participant in his floors intramurals playing basketball, flag football, and others.

Ryan’s programming runs the gamut of educational, social, and community service. His programming and personality have led to his immense popularity among his residents. Several residents have chosen to live on Ryan’s floor for their entire college career.

I'll always remember the "Your mom" jokes. They were classic. My favorite memory is of Zecha's "Your Mom Industries" presentation for ENGL 415 Written Communication For Engineers. Zecha dressed in cowboy boots, a suit, and a trucker hat for the presentation. –Lee Nordholm, G2 Resident



Movie nights. Zecha was always sharing his entertainment resources: projector, stereo, etc. One thing that I have learned from Zecha is "Don't rent, just borrow from Zecha." –Scott Fikan, G2 Resident

I always appreciated his openness and willingness to help. Zecha was always there to use his experience to answer my questions. –Zach Swim, G2 Resident

I was impressed by Zecha's ability to be judicious in resolving conflicts. In my opinion he was always as fair as possible. He was sensitive, too, and able to handle complicated situations. –Andrew King, G2 Resident

Zecha was always a competitor and a good sport as well. Even in defeat after one of Goodnow's hall-wide programs, Zecha and the other male RA's lined up and submitted for a pie-ing.



Another example of Zecha's impact on Goodnow Hall is reflected in the fact the Goodnow Hall HGB elected to change the name of the Stereo Room (which had no stereo) to the Zecha Room.

The fact that the residents of Goodnow Hall chose to name a room "The Zecha Room" in appreciation of his service during his time in the hall speaks to the impact that Zecha has had on Goodnow. With such a knowledge of how to be a successful RA, Zecha is respected by the residents and staff of Goodnow, and his laid back and fun-loving attitude create such an enjoyable experience for everyone who interact with him.  
—Amanda Mock, ARLC

Zecha and I were both hired at semester the same year in Goodnow. I was petrified about becoming part of a staff and a floor community in the middle of the year. My tension was quickly eased partly because of Zecha's humor and confidence. One of our first in-hall training activities was some brainstorming about what makes a team a team. Zecha started the discussion by joking, "Matching T-shirts." Everyone laughed and the conversation flowed easily from there.

Zecha always had the most creative ideas for bulletin boards and programs. He did a bulletin board on lofts and took pictures of all kinds of lofts that were in resident's rooms in the hall and displayed it on a big board in the lobby. His door was nearly always open, and his room was frequently occupied by a number of residents and/or staff members

watching a movie. He was always welcoming and very giving of his time and resources. Whenever I entered Zecha's room and I never felt like I was infringing upon his time or privacy.

Zecha is a servant leader and always willing to help with a program. When I did a doorstep program on my floor, he sawed doorstops for me with his saw and leftover lumber from his loft. When we did our group program, he made mocktails for hours and didn't leave until everything was cleaned up. He did everything whole-heartedly, whether it was wearing the most outrageous costume, or causing the most outrageous laughter. He was often the one the girls on staff went to to look at our cars when they weren't working properly, and he never turned down a request for help. –Emily Marvine, West Hall RA

When it comes to the RA job, Zecha takes a different approach than many. He has his own philosophies when it comes to interacting with residents and staff and also takes programming on in a different fashion. This different view has truly made him unique and successful as an RA. He has opened me up to the wonderful world of the words "your mom", projectors, tractors, Subs-N-Such, paintball, Counter Strike, and the right way to peel a banana. I am positive he is well-respected by his current residents, and the many residents he has served in the past. I am so glad to have worked with Zecha, I am proud to call him a good friend of mine. – Carolyn Denny, Goodnow Hall RA

Zecha has had a big impact on staff in Goodnow helping to train the next generation of Resident Assistants. He has made presentations at RAMA training for the past two Fall semesters. These presentations were conflict management and mediation. In these presentations, Zecha presented scenarios to other RAs. Then he would work the situation the "wrong way" and discuss it. Then work it the "right way." This was a great learning experience for new RA's.

Zecha has served Goodnow and the other residence halls by going on several RA Exchange Trips. In these trips, another university would send several of its RAs to KSU, and KSU would send several to that university. The purpose of these trips was to share knowledge and contrast styles. One of the main discussion points was on the subject of RA roommates. Zecha did KSU a great service by bringing back outside opinions on several evolving issues in residence hall life.

While an RA in Goodnow Hall, Zecha has been impactful in other less official ways. Zecha has been on the Open House Committee (2002-2004) and chaired that committee in both 2003 and 2004. Like Scott Fikan, one of Zecha's residents said earlier, Zecha was always generous with his belongings and loaned them for the hall to use. The hall used his quality car audio system to play music and the Tailgate BBQ, Hall Picnics (2002-2005), Welcome Back Luau (Fall 2004), and countless sand volleyball games. His home theater system was always available

and he watched many movies with residents (un-advertised of course) and loaned items from his personal DVD and CD collection to residents.

### ***Zecha: HGB Advisor***

Ryan Zecha was also the HGB Advisor for the 2003-2004 school year. Zecha became the adviser because the ARLC had left in September leaving the spot vacant. Normally, this vacancy might have been left open, but Zecha took on the responsibility to help RLC Mishelle Banas. The HGB Adviser attended all HGB meetings. His role was to keep the HGB on track. As advisor, his involvement is limited to advice and not active participation in debate. As advisor, he really helped the HGB to grow as a governing body; sometimes this meant letting the HGB make mistakes and learn from them. The breadth of his council included parliamentary advice, programming hints, and solid leadership. Whenever a situation arose that was outside the normal routine in HGB, the HGB turned to Zecha to identify the constitutional way to proceed. Zecha's knowledge of parliamentary procedure always served to expeditiously resolve problems, keeping the HGB focused on the current issue and not sidetracked on unrelated problems. He was a great resource for the HGB, acting as a liason between HGB and RAMA staff, and helped avoid scheduling conflicts.

I was a Floor President when Ryan Zecha was the HGB Advisor. I remember being impressed by his knowledge of parliamentary procedure. I always noted a difference in the flow of the meeting on rare occasions when Zecha was absent. He was a solid leader with a lot of wisdom, class, and integrity. –Grant Cochenour, G1 Floor President

### ***Zecha: Outside the Hall***

Ryan Zecha hasn't limited himself to activities within the residence halls. He is an active student outside as well, both before and after he became an RA.

Zecha, the athlete, rowed on the KSU men's crew team his freshman year.

Ryan has also been a musician, participating in not just a single musical ensemble, but four of them. Zecha was in the Symphonic Band from Fall '99-Spring '00. He was in the Concert Band in Fall '00 and the Orchestra in the 2001-2002 school year. Zecha then participated in the KSU Choral Singers in the Spring of 2002. In these activities Zecha served K-State students with cultured entertainment.

Zecha is active professionally as engineer. He has been a member of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers since Spring '01 and was elected President of the student branch in the 2003-2004 academic year. Zecha has also been on the design team for the 1/4 Tractor since 2001. Zecha was honored with the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Outstanding Senior this spring and is in good academic standing. One of the canons of engineering is that engineers serve the public. Their designs and work are supposed to improve mankind, always holding paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public. As Zecha leaves school, he will continue to serve people as an engineer.

### ***Zecha: Friend and Role Model to Many***



When I think of Zecha as a RA, I am reminded of his relaxed style. Zecha does not get easily upset or stressed from the unpleasant situations encountered as a staff member. Instead, he is able to calmly and jokingly approach situations.

As an incoming RA last year, Zecha was viewed as a role model to new RA's. I learned quite a bit about being a RA by observing his personal style and example. Zecha has always enjoyed entertaining residents and staff members in his technologically advanced room with his expansive movie collection. In my opinion, Zecha is better than the local movie theater or Blockbuster.

Zecha's extensive contributions to Goodnow Hall were recognized in renaming a basement room in his honor. This "old grandpa" on staff will

certainly be remembered long after he FINALLY graduates this May. –  
Aaryn Clark, Goodnow Hall RA

I also remember how FUN Zecha always was. We always gave him a hard time about hoarding the paper cutter, so he decided to keep it in his room and let the staff check it out when we wanted it. So I went up and kidnapped it and left a ransom note, promising to return it if he stood on his chair and sang at Kramer dining center during staff dinner. Just when I thought I had won, he stands on his chair, announced to all of Kramer that it is my birthday, and everyone in the room sang "Happy Birthday" along with him. I was so embarrassed. It was awesome. –Emily Marvine, West Hall RA

Zecha is the most laid back, fly by the seat of your mom person I know. He has was of relating with residents wither it be through endless games of cards and Counterstrike or through eBay bought letters for a "Design Your Own Shirt" night. He always has a smile and a great outlook on things even when the going gets tough. –Tiffany Happer, Goodnow Hall RA

What can I say about Ryan Zecha? He is just a good guy. I have had such a great time working on the Goodnow Hall Staff for the past two years and I know that much of that is due to Zecha's good nature and friendship. I think what I will miss most about him next year is all the great talks and laughs I have had with him. Many admire his down-to-earth personality, creativity, and humor. He is extremely appreciated by me, his supervisors, and staff around him. I think he brings a more well-rounded feel to the staff as he doesn't need to be involved in everything in housing to be successful, he is an RA and that is what he cares about. –Carolyn Denney, Goodnow Hall RA

There's another side to Ryan Zecha that some people just don't always see. He's a very dedicated individual who cares about what goes on. He will sit around and "cuss and discuss" things that went on every day in the hall. Sometimes it would be just to hang out. Other times it would be to let off some steam in frustration. The thing is, I don't live in the same building as Zecha anymore, but I still enjoy when I get the chance to relive the past every once and a while.

Yep, you are right. There aren't too many guys who have made an impact on my life like Mr. Zecha has. He is always there to make me laugh and always wants to just see what's going on. If I could only make my stupid laugh noise on paper that makes him laugh . . .I would. He is who he is . . .nothing less, but a lot more. Some people think CASE calendars are stupid. I think CASE calendars are unmatched . . .just like the farm kid from Larned, Kansas. —Craig Wankyn

## ***Zecha: Renaissance Man Reprise***

Zecha, the Renaissance Man, a jack of all trades has faithfully and selflessly served other students at K-State as a Resident Assistant, HGB advisor, friend, student, engineer, musician, and athlete. He has demonstrated admirable leadership, ingenuity, and a solid work ethic. His popularity is renowned. The one they call Zecha will always be a permanent fixture of Goodnow courtesy of the Zecha Room.

## **Outstanding Service Award Essay for Ryan Zecha**

Ryan Zecha is a prime example of the perfect recipient for the Outstanding Service Award. He is a man of merit, excitement, and takes a carefree approach toward stressful situations. As a resident assistant Ryan Zecha has put on a number of programs and activities that have benefited both his housing floor and resident hall. Not only do these activities benefit the resident hall he lived in, but also Kansas State as a whole.

Ryan's excellence is shown in his influence he has on many residents' lives. He participates in intramural sports activities with his residents to help connect and get to know them better. Whenever a resident is in need of someone to talk to he is there for them. Even if the conversation is something he does not care about he still listens intently. Active listening is something that allows Zecha to come across as a supportive person who cares about what people may need help with or if they just need someone to listen.

The energy and excitement that Ryan brings into every event he participates in is indescribable. This year he has helped coordinate the Goodnow Hall Olympics and the Goodnow Hall Date Auction. At both of these events he was in charge of informing the participants on what was going on. At the date auction he was one of the masters of ceremonies, announcing date packages and getting people excited about raising their bid to donate more money to the charity. Zecha has a way of motivating people that I have only seen in a select number of people. His optimistic view on life is one characteristic that allows him to be so persuasive.

If there was one reason that Ryan Zecha should be honored with the Outstanding Service Award, it is his ability to have a carefree outlook on life. The resident assistant position can be a highly stressful job. However, Ryan has made it visible how enjoyable this experience is and how much fun it can be. He has been a great role model for everyone. Ever since the Hall Governing Board named one of the rooms in the Goodnow Hall basement him, his commitment to Kansas State has not gone unnoticed.

Ryan Zecha should be honored with the Outstanding Service Award for his contributions and involvement while attending Kansas State University. Without Ryan Zecha Goodnow Hall and Kansas State may have never been the same.

April 24, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am very pleased and honored to write a letter of recommendation for Ryan Zecha in his candidacy for Outstanding Service award. Ryan is in his third year as a Resident Assistant in Goodnow Hall and truly has become someone residents, coworkers, and senior staff know and trust.

I first met Ryan in the summer of 2004. Ryan was in town and just stopped to say "hello" as I was new to Goodnow Hall and to Kansas and he wanted to check in with me and welcome me. That gesture was extremely helpful in easing some of my anxieties as a new coordinator. He has continued to be supportive throughout this, my first year.

One of the neatest things I've seen this year from Ryan is his excitement to give tours of Goodnow Hall. He isn't listed on our tour team roster, but many times large groups of prospective students and families will come through and extra help is needed. Ryan gladly drops what he is doing to come give a tour. He does this because he loves sharing his love of the residence halls with others and likes to show what great things can come from living in the halls.

I believe Ryan's greatest strength is his commitment to the residents on his floor. Ryan always has his door open and is inviting to have residents stop by and chat. He also allows residents to stop by when he is not there. Having been in Goodnow for several years has helped Ryan turn his room into a literal movie theater and he welcomes his residents in to watch movies or to hook up their gaming systems for the ultimate video game experience. The upper-class residents respect Ryan as a peer, while the younger residents see him as someone they wish to become in their time at K-State.

The respect Ryan receives goes beyond just his floor. The Goodnow Hall Governing Board proposed changing the name of the "Stereo Room" in Goodnow earlier this year as there was no stereo in the room and they thought a name change was in order. When the votes were tallied, the Hall Governing Board had decided to change the name to "The Zecha Room" in honor of Ryan's dedicated service to Goodnow Hall.

It has truly been my pleasure to work with Ryan Zecha this year. He has brought a lot of fun and consistency to our staff team and to the residents of Goodnow Hall. Many people will be sad to see him move on, but I know he has left a legacy in Goodnow Hall and for many years, the stories of the one they call "Zecha" will continue to echo the corridors of Goodnow Hall.

Sincerely,

Kipp Van Dyke  
Residence Life Coordinator  
Goodnow Hall



MINNESOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
MANKATO

April 11, 2005

Dear Outstanding Service Award committee,

I am here today to proudly endorse Ryan Zecha as Goodnow Hall supports a bid for him for the Outstanding Service Award at Kansas State University.

It is amazing that you can meet a person and have no idea how they might impact your life as you travel a road together. In January of 2002, when I was faced with a vacancy on the Resident Assistant staff in Goodnow Hall, I entered Ryan Zecha. He was a dedicated member of the G-2 floor community although I only knew of him vaguely. He was quiet, in some ways, and energetic in others. He was laid back yet showed a strong work ethic. So, I hired him – and I never once regretted that decision. For two and a half years, he gave his all to me, as his supervisor, to the Goodnow staff team, and to Goodnow Hall – his forever home.

Zecha, as everyone knows him, came into the RA position green with so much to learn, as most do. Learn he did – he learned about working with all types of personalities, he learned to adapt to a variety of supervisors, and he learned the true meaning of leadership. I bet if you asked Zecha, he would tell you that he did not start out to be a leader – and most days probably does not still consider himself one. However, he is one – to many around him. He is a leader to students who have moved on, to students who never said ‘thank you’ but will forever be grateful that their path crossed his. Little did he know but Zecha had leadership in his blood. I saw it – the first time and every time he questioned the system, he helped a student, or he challenged the staff team.

Over time, he began to show everyone who he really was, what he would and would not stand for, and what he had to offer in his time at K-State. It was more than a chuckle about the latest tractors on the market, and more than hints about video games or movies to watch on the projector. It was about how to carry yourself with integrity, how to make a difference in the time you have at college, and how to lead others the way that you were once led.

During my time as his supervisor, Zecha and I grew in our relationship – and I am proud to say that I learned so much from him. There were times when he challenged me – either directly or indirectly – and through that, I was driven to be a better supervisor for him. I was pushed to give him the credit he deserves, to see him for more than he could see himself, and to show him where he was needed – Goodnow Hall. He continued to be loyal to me, year after year, and pride for Goodnow Hall ran in his blood. He had tradition and spirit that no one could top, and due to that, he gave all he could each and every year.

Zecha has been a true leader, although most often in a silent way. He leads by his actions more than his words, and leads others by just being who he is. He shows people a real, genuine side that does not come with any airs. He has nothing to hide and so much to offer. Over time, Zecha has built his self confidence, extended a hand to help others grow, and has offered the team in Goodnow Hall some consistency.

It is with complete pride that I submit this letter on his behalf for this award. I am humbled and honored to be included in his bid, and in his life. I am lucky to know Zecha. Everything in life happens for a reason, and I am so glad that Zecha happened to K-State and Goodnow Hall. If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at 507-389-6893.

Sincerely,

Michelle Banas

McElroy Complex Director  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

(former Residence Life Coordinator – Goodnow Hall)

DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE

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