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NEWS

For Immediate Release

Elrod Family Foundation board meeting celebrates community service in Arkadelphia

By McKenzie Cranford

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For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Testifying to the broad impact of Ouachita Baptist University's Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community, Elrod Center staff members and volunteers recently shared stories of service at the 15th annual Elrod Family Foundation board meeting.

Ouachita Chancellor Ben Elrod, who served as Ouachita's president in 1988-98, established the foundation with his family as a way to help fund the work of the Elrod Center, which began providing service to the Arkadelphia community in 1997 under his presidency.

Affirming the influence of the Elrod family over the years, Ouachita President Rex Horne said, "The Elrod Center that bears their name is so much of their legacy of service, family and faith, and that's the purpose for which we meet today."

"I have found the greatest satisfaction in life when I have followed Jesus' example of investing my life in the lives of others," Dr. Horne quoted from the purpose statement of the Elrod Family Foundation crafted by Dr. Elrod.

The board meeting also provided an opportunity for members of the board to tour the new Elrod Center [currently under construction](#) across the street from the current center. The new facility is a testament to the vision of Dr. Elrod over the years and his stated desire to help young people "understand their civic and corporate responsibility in their communities."

Ian Cosh, vice president for community and international engagement, expressed appreciation for Dr. Horne's leadership and support. "He has supported the work of the Elrod Center from the very first day he arrived as president up through this beautiful building that we are going to see here," Cosh said.

Also commending the Elrod Center volunteers for their faithful service during their time as students, Cosh said, "The people in this audience understand the value of doing something routinely and doing it extremely well."

Among those who shared highlights of their experiences through the Elrod Center were:

Lauren Snow, a junior mass communications major from Wiley, Texas, shared about relationships she has formed with the "young at heart" through the ElderServe program, which connects Ouachita students with senior adults in the community. "These are the memories that I'm going to take with me leaving Ouachita," Snow said.

Katelyn Smith, a senior art and education major from Roe, Ark., who serves as president of the OBU Art Club, is a recipient of a Kluck Service Enrichment Grant, which helps fund entrepreneurial and student leadership projects. She used the grant to organize the creation of a clay tile mural for the new location of

the Foster Grandparent Program. Citing her belief in the importance of “community art-making experiences,” Smith explained how the mural will be created by the grandparents and children.

Bonnie Magee, a junior accounting major from Conway, Ark., volunteers for America Reads/America Counts and tutors a 2nd grade boy at Central Primary School three days a week. “I’ve had the opportunity to watch him grow academically and in confidence and maturity,” Magee said.

Stephanie Westberg, a sophomore early childhood education major from Arkadelphia, Ark., is a co-leader for Backyard Bible Club. “We strive to teach the kids the gospel every week through not only words but with the time we have to play with them and get to know them,” she said. “It’s the biggest blessing of my entire school year.”

Sam Roybal, a sophomore political science major from Arkadelphia, Ark., is a co-leader for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, a program she was part of as a child growing up in Arkadelphia. “I want to say what a privilege it is to serve as leader because I know the impact the program and my Big Sister had on my life,” she said. “Thank you for letting me now, in turn, give back to the community.”

Bridget Bloxom, a senior Christian studies/Christian missions and Christian studies/Christian ministry double major from Benton, Ark. and **Jeremy Dixon**, a senior Christian studies/Christian ministry and mass communications double major from Benton, Ark., serve on the Tiger Serve Day leadership team. They shared that last semester more than 900 students were involved in Tiger Serve Day, a semi-annual, student-led program that bridges the gap between Ouachita and the Arkadelphia community.

Shelby Davis, a senior biology major from White Oak, Texas, spoke about opportunities she has had through the TranServe program, which notes a variety of service opportunities on volunteers’ transcripts. After receiving an email asking for someone to meet weekly with a senior community member who suffered a stroke, Davis began consistently meeting once a week with the individual, which she says has helped show her how “God moves past limitations.” She added, “This was the perfect opportunity for me, and I’m very thankful that I had the chance to take it.”

Other Elrod Center programs highlighted during the meeting included Elrod Fellows, Peake Partnership Program, applied research, Healthy Relationships Week, Thanksgiving baskets and Monticello Children’s Home.

Responding to the volunteer reports, Dr. Elrod noted both the “courage of the students for making themselves vulnerable through their service” and the “comprehensiveness of the impact” of the many Elrod Center initiatives.

“I’m thankful for the leadership of the center, a president of the university who cares about seeing kids be in service and leads them to do it and for Ouachita itself,” Dr. Elrod added. “The people in the receiving end are being blessed but not any more than those who are doing the service. We are all blessed, and it’s beautiful.”

For more information about the work of the Elrod Center for Family and Community, visit www.obu.edu/elrod or contact the center at (870) 245-5320.