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For immediate release

Elrod Family Foundation board meeting examines community impact in Arkadelphia

By Anna Hurst

February 10, 2016

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Staff members and student volunteers of Ouachita Baptist University's Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community gathered to highlight the campuswide and community service impact at the 16th annual Elrod Family Foundation board meeting held Thursday, Feb. 4.

Ouachita Chancellor Ben Elrod, who served as Ouachita's 13th president from 1988-98, established the foundation with his family as a way to encourage service within the community of Arkadelphia by helping fund the work of the Elrod Center. The center began providing service to the community under Elrod's presidency in 1997.

"We thank You for purposes in life outside ourselves and we are grateful that You have given us the world to challenge us and to challenge our commitment to You," said Elrod, president of the board, in his opening prayer. "We are thankful for this center and for the young people who come through here and learn that there is life outside themselves by the service to Christ."

The board meeting provided an opportunity for attendees to be reminded of the original intent of the center through reading the purpose statement of the Elrod Family Foundation.

"This is truly a beautiful expression of the heart of Ben M. Elrod," said Dr. Charles Wright, secretary of board and Ouachita's interim president, as he read the statement.

Ian Cosh, vice president for community and international engagement, reiterated the value of the theological, educational, institutional and preparing nature and ideologies that serve as the foundation of the Elrod Center.

"We are committed to preparing future leaders, and, in particular, servant leaders," explained Cosh, "a particular type of self-sacrificing leader. Because the character of the modern American college student has got to be imprinted by us, I think that we are helping students to discover the joy of service, to understand that the giving of yourself and the sacrifice of your time and your energies bring back a blessing that is sometimes difficult to describe."

Among those who shared highlights and service experiences through the Elrod Center were:

Madison Foster, a senior Christian studies/Christian missions major from Sherwood, Ark., said she experienced "God's love and grace more abundantly" by serving in Backyard Bible Club, a program that seeks to reach children in Arkadelphia with the love of Christ by instilling basic biblical truths. "I used to think I was involved in Backyard Bible Club because I loved the kids ... but I keep going back week after week because I serve a God who loves me more than anything," Foster said. "When I focus on loving God, it is easy for me to love these kids in the overflow."

Morgan Allen, a senior sociology major from Little Rock, Ark., is a member of Ouachita's women's soccer team who saw an opportunity for spiritual growth in the lives of her teammates. The team was the recipient of a Kluck Service Enrichment Grant, which help fund entrepreneurial and student leadership projects. The team used the grant to purchase books for a team Bible study. "It has been such an awesome time of fellowship to be able to get together off the field and really grow together beyond

teammates,” Allen said. “We are continuing the study this year, so I am really excited to see how the Lord is going to use it in the lives of the team.”

Sydney Allen, a junior psychology and sociology double major from Pine Bluff, Ark., has watched God work in the lives of foster children throughout her time serving in the Monticello Children’s Home ministry. “I think about the different times in the Bible where it talks about how God is a father to the fatherless and how He provides for the fatherless,” she explained. “This is an amazing opportunity for us to witness that.”

Jamie Flowers, a sophomore Christian studies/Christian ministry major from Hoover, Ala., encourages struggling students and celebrates educational milestones through her work study for America Reads/America Counts. “It is really rewarding because you get to see things click,” she explained. “You get to see them start to understand something that they have not before and you get to be happy for them and encourage them.”

Rachel Dilatush, a sophomore biology and psychology double major from Fayetteville, Ark., said she combines her “passion for kids and love for serving the community” by tutoring elementary students through the Peake Partnership. “It is more than teaching them how to do math or read, it is about building relationships,” she noted.

Will Peevy, a senior Christian studies/Biblical studies major from Rogers, Ark., and **Elizabeth Peevy**, a senior Christian studies/Christian missions major from Bryant, Ark., got to grow as a couple and build new relationships by attending a conference for married and engaged couples during Ouachita’s Healthy Relationships Week. The couple emphasized that the conference “is a great chance for couples to be inspired and encouraged to grow in their relationships with each other, their relationships with other couples, and most importantly, their relationship with God so that their relationship together might better glorify and serve Him.”

David Willhite, a senior Christian studies/Biblical studies major from Rowlett, Texas, said he has watched as countless needs in the community have been met through the service of students during his three years on the Tiger Serve Day Leadership Team. “It is not just about raking leaves,” Willhite said. “It is about ministering to those in the community and students at Ouachita.”

Other Elrod Center programs highlighted during the meeting included Elrod Fellows, volunteer clearinghouse and TranServe, the Big Brother/Big Sister program, Thanksgiving baskets, applied research and the newly established TaxServe program, an initiative that assists low-income families in Arkadelphia with tax return preparation.

In response to the staff and volunteer testimonials, Cosh noted that service is the “the gift that keeps on giving.”

“I can say with full assurance that the Elrod Center has served the greater good at Ouachita,” he continued. “We have been a good neighbor, not only in thought, but also in action. We have broken down walls, built a lot of goodwill and I think we have made Ouachita a much stronger institution. So whatever investment the institution has made in the center, I think it has received a great return on that investment.”

“I cannot think of a better investment in the world than in these kids,” Dr. Elrod concluded. “I am just amazed at the quality of these young people and their willingness to go out and do things for other people. I am so grateful, always, for Ouachita and for the place it holds in the kingdom of God.”

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.