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NEWS

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Ouachita's annual Elrod Awards celebrate community service

By Anna Hurst

April 26, 2016

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's Elrod Center for Family and Community honored Rachel Wicker with the Cargill Leadership Fund Award at its annual University Community Service Awards banquet April 19. Many Ouachita students, faculty and staff were also commended for their service and community leadership during the past year.

"Tonight we celebrate lives of service," said Judy Duvall, assistant director of the Elrod Center, welcoming those in attendance. "You are here tonight because serving is an integral part of your life, and when we honor you tonight, we are also honoring God, since your service reflects His character."

"One of the mandates given to the Elrod Center 20 years ago was to recognize and celebrate service as a way to highlight its value to Ouachita and to society as a whole," noted Ian Cosh, vice president for community and international engagement and director of the Elrod Center. "The awards evening marks the culmination of a year of service and provides an opportunity for Ouachita to celebrate its students' service and to provide volunteers an opportunity to see the larger picture of service of which they are a part."

The Cargill Leadership Fund Award is an annual award presented to a student who has shown exceptional leadership and service during his or her time at Ouachita. Rachel Wicker, a senior Christian studies/Christian missions and mass communications double major from Benton, Ark., has served in a variety of ways while at OBU and has worked at the Elrod Center since her freshman year.

"Her work has been nothing short of excellent," said Duvall, who presented the award. "Rachel has carried out her duties with diligence, attention to detail, joy and compassion."

Duvall also commended Wicker on her four years as a Tiger Serve Day Leadership Team member, saying, "Much of the success of this day can be accredited to her behind-the-scenes work. Rachel has consistently carried out her duties on the team with humility and joy."

From the beginning of her time at Ouachita, Wicker also has been actively involved in Campus Ministries and the International Club. "Since the moment she was on our campus, Rachel cared about other students, particularly those who might struggle to adjust to life at Ouachita," explained Duvall. "She is an absolute joy to be around, full of love for the Lord and for others and full of wisdom. She's very deserving of this award, and we're proud to present it to her."

"The award was really special to me because, during my time at Ouachita, I have loved learning about serving others well," Wicker said. "Getting the chance to do some of that through the Elrod Center has been so rewarding."

Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president-elect, congratulated the students on "amazing service."

“Give yourself to serving God’s purpose in your generation. Some of those purposes will be the same as to some of us who are older. But some of those purposes will be particular to your time and to your community,” Sells said. “You have been doing that because you have been rooted in this community, and so wherever you go, give yourself to that community. That is the only community you can live in at a time. Give yourself to the Lord. You will do a lot of good. You will honor the Lord. You will point people to Jesus.”

“The Elrod Center for Family and Community is the last remaining vestige of my relationship with Ouachita and I am increasingly thankful that Betty Lou and I had the means 20 years ago to endow this center in its beginning,” said Ouachita Chancellor Dr. Ben Elrod in his closing remarks. “It has been a great honor to have the name of this center. It has exactly the right purpose, to help those unable to help themselves and to teach young people to adopt servanthood as their lifestyle after the example of Christ.”

Ouachita Baptist University established the Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community in 1997 to encourage, coordinate and facilitate public service, volunteerism and community engagement throughout the state and region. For more information about the programs of the Elrod Center, visit www.obu.edu/elrod or call (870) 245-5320.