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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita offers after-school, community steel band program to Peake Elementary School students

By Tiffany Lee

November 27, 2018

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



ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University has begun offering an after-school, community steel band program for fourth and fifth graders from Peake Elementary School in Arkadelphia. The steel band, called Pan Harmony, meets every Monday on Ouachita's campus from 3 to 5 p.m.

The community steel band program began at the start of the 2018 fall semester with nine Peake Elementary students and student volunteers from Goza Middle School, Arkadelphia High School and Ouachita. The program is geared toward fourth and fifth graders specifically because they are not yet old enough to play school sports or join the school band. The students will have the opportunity to show the skills they have learned this semester during Ouachita's fall and spring steel band concerts.

“To have young students excited about music, and excited about learning music from a different culture other than our own, is very exciting,” said Dr. Ryan Lewis, director of the steel band program and associate professor of music at Ouachita.

Something unique to the program is its goal not only to teach music but also respect. At the beginning of each rehearsal, Lewis leads the students in a chant about respecting the people around them. This emphasis on respect inspired the band’s name: Pan Harmony.

The students start each Monday afternoon with their school homework and a snack before beginning their music lessons. After each practice, while they wait to be picked up, students also have free reign to play the instruments and put their new knowledge to the test.

As they have watched the elementary students learn more about steel drums, Ouachita’s student volunteers have been reminded of their own love for music and are hoping to see the program grow. Hannah Terry, a sophomore Christian studies/missions major from Texarkana, Ark., is both a Pan Harmony volunteer and a member of the Ouachita Steel Band.

“This experience has humbled me in a way nothing else in my life has,” Terry said. “I played steel pans for four years in high school and, so far, two at OBU. These kids have shown me that even though I have been playing for six years, there is still a lot I can learn.”

Other Pan Harmony student volunteers include Maggie Foreman, a senior music major from Sherwood, Ark., and Karlee Sanders, a freshman music education major from Caraway, Ark.

For more information, contact Dr. Ryan Lewis at (870) 245-5421 or lewisr@obu.edu.

