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OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

Eleven Ouachita students published in *Assayers* 28

By *Ashly Stracener*

September 3, 2019

For more information, contact OBU's new bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Eleven Ouachita student essays were chosen by Ouachita Baptist University's Department of Language and Literature for publication in *Assayers*, the department's annual publication. *Assayers 28* is the 2019-2020 edition of the essay collection journal.

To be considered for publication, students may submit their essays to the Department of Language and Literature for a panel of faculty judges to assess the submissions. *Assayers* primarily is used as a teaching tool for the Composition 101 classes at Ouachita, but it also provides all students with the opportunity to be published and share their work with the campus.

"We've been doing this for 28 years, and it's nice to see a longstanding tradition," said Dr. Doug Sonheim, chair of Ouachita's Department of Language and Literature and holder of the Clarence and Bennie Sue Anthony Chair of Bible and the Humanities. "One of the benefits is that students see other students' writing. It isn't some famous, professional writer, but someone who is just a year ahead of them who has worked and revised to create this work that is significant.

"It's a way to learn about the world, learn about God and about ourselves: writing is a big part of that," Sonheim added. "On the one hand, it's a very practical, pedagogical tool, but on the other hand, I would call it a deeper theological way to connect with other people through writing."

The journal is divided into two sections, personal essays and research essays. There is also a small cash prize awarded to the top three placements in each category.

Barrett Pfeiffer, a senior communications and media major from Benton, Ark., placed first in the personal essays category. Haddon Smead, a sophomore pre-medicine major from Glenwood, Ark., was awarded second, and Franco Zuniga, a sophomore biology major from Hot Springs, Ark., won third. Madison Burch, a junior Christian studies major from Benton, La., and Bonnie Gentry, a senior musical theatre major from Arlington, Texas, both received honorable mentions.

Gentry was published in *Assayers* 26 as a freshman, yet still was excited to find she had been published yet again her senior year. She used her personal essay, "What Was Invisible Visible," to create awareness about living with unseen diseases, specifically endometriosis. Spreading awareness about this often taboo or unheard-of disease was extremely close to Gentry's heart.

"It's a vulnerable essay," Gentry said. "When I typically put my story of my diagnosis out there, it's mostly if people want to read it, like on Facebook or Instagram. It was surprising to find out that it was going to be published. ... I was really excited when I found out because there isn't a lot of material for college girls, or anyone, to read about endometriosis.

"When it's right there in front of them and they have to read it [for class], they might learn about something they had no idea existed," she said. "It comes down to raising awareness. To talk about it openly was a huge step for me. Everyone has a different story and that's important to know."

Haydn Jeffers, a 2019 English and mass communications graduate, was awarded first place in the research essays section. Shae Parker, a junior secondary education major from Wylie, Texas, placed second, and Emily Koonce, a junior English and secondary education double major from Wylie, Texas, placed third. Stephanie McCann, a senior psychology major from Camden, Ark.; Ashly Stracener, a senior English and communications & media double major from Cabot, Ark.; and Stephanie Weatherford, a junior social justice studies major from Dallas, Texas, each received honorable mentions.

For Koonce, creating awareness was also an issue broached in her research essay. She highlighted how finding identity can be a struggle through her analysis and research essay, "The Necessity of a Hyphen: Mexican-American Identity in Turmoil."

"Whenever I read 'I'm not your Perfect Mexican Daughter' by Erika Sanchez, obviously I'm not a Mexican-American girl, but there's a lot there in terms of the main character finding herself and who she is," Koonce said. "I think that search for identity is so relatable, especially for young adults and students in college.

"I was able to talk about young Mexican-American girls who are the children of immigrants and how they feel a pull to both sides of themselves," she noted. "But, because of that, they have a lot of mental health issues related to their identity or their lack of it."

For more information, contact Dr. Doug Sonheim at sonheimd@obu.edu or (870) 245-5554.

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