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### Ouachita faculty team selected for national disability inclusion grant

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OUACHITA  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

**Ouachita faculty team selected for national disability inclusion grant**



*By Rachel Gaddis*

July 16, 2020

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5206

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.— A team of Ouachita Baptist University faculty members has been selected as a recipient of the Accelerating Disability Inclusion Community-Based Micro-Grant by the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability's (NCHPAD) Inclusion: Community Micro-Grant Program. Ouachita is one of seven community-based organizations from around the country to be awarded the micro-grant.

According to the NCHPAD website, recipients of the program's Accelerating Disability Inclusion Community-Based Micro-Grant are charged with creating or advancing disability inclusion efforts – in programs, policy, systems or environments – through an innovative, community-based project.

Ouachita's faculty team plans to use the NCHPAD Community Health Inclusion Index assessment tool to identify accessible walking areas in Arkadelphia neighborhoods;

develop an app that maps these neighborhoods, streets and other routes in the community; and create a video to train Arkadelphia residents about accessibility and inclusion. Group Living, Inc. and Pediatrics Plus of Arkadelphia also will aid the team in identifying target neighborhoods based on residence of persons with disabilities, community connectivity and safety of active transport.

“The purpose of this is increase overall inclusion of persons with disabilities in community events and neighborhood engagement and improve the ability of persons with disabilities to be physically active in their own communities,” said Dr. Amber Chelette, assistant professor of kinesiology & leisure studies. “We will build bridges to alleviate attitudinal barriers as well as point out physical barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities and educate those in attendance on how they can personally contribute to the goal of removing barriers to inclusion for persons with disabilities.”

The team of Ouachita faculty members includes Chelette; Hallie Clark, instructor of kinesiology & leisure studies; and Dr. Allyson Phillips, assistant professor of psychology. All three have a special interest and expertise in the field of disability and health.

Chelette teaches an Adapted Kinesiology Course at Ouachita, which instructs students how to lead recreation, exercise and sport activities for persons with disabilities and chronic health conditions, and she leads a group exercise program at Group Living, an organization that serves adults with developmental disabilities in Arkadelphia. Phillips conducts research within the disability community regarding Down syndrome and is an advocate for Ouachita students who have autism spectrum disorders. Clark, a new member to the Ouachita faculty this fall, recently earned her Master of Science degree in exercise science from the University of Arkansas with an emphasis in adapted physical activity.

“There is a lot of stigma and misunderstanding regarding disabilities, and we want to help break down those barriers,” Phillips said. “Our long-term hopes for Arkadelphia are to see individuals with disabilities involved in all aspects of community life, developing relationships with their neighbors and having opportunities for work and recreational activities. We hope to see true inclusion in Arkadelphia!”

The team will be assisted by Jeff Coventry, Ouachita's systems support specialist, to create the app that communicates accessible pathways in Arkadelphia. Also working with the team are Tyrese Allen, a senior biology and psychology double major from Savannah, Ga., and Geoff Hartley, a 2019 communications & media/film studies graduate from Rockwall, Texas.

“It is meaningful when faculty members from different departments combine efforts to address a problem in the world around us,” said Dr. Jeff Root, dean of Ouachita’s Huckabee School of Education as well as its School of Humanities. “Dr. Chelette is highly regarded as an expert in physical activity and health, as well as a strong proponent of disability inclusion. Paired with Dr. Phillips, also an expert in this field, the two have put together an outstanding team. I am excited about how they will involve

students in an important effort to have a positive and lasting impact on individuals and families in Arkadelphia.”

Founded in 1999, NCHPAD is a national resource and practice center that empowers communities, organizations and individuals to create livable places, healthy people and sustainable inclusion. The organization’s Inclusion: Community Micro-Grant Program recognizes and aims to support and grow existing community efforts that promote inclusive health for people with disabilities, specifically to improve physical activity, nutrition or healthy weight management.

“I was inspired to apply for the NCHPAD grant after making some personal observations while trick-or-treating last fall,” Chelette said. “I was pushing a stroller with my toddler around a popular trick-or-treating neighborhood in Arkadelphia with a group of friends. To say it was challenging is an understatement.”

Chelette noted incomplete sidewalks, no curb cuts, several obstructed pathways with misplaced mailboxes and landscaping, as well as homes with multiple steps leading from the street to the front door.

“Myself and my toddler waited on the street while his sister and other kids participated in the event,” she continued. “I thought: If I feel left out when I could realistically dump the stroller, how do kids or parents who use wheelchairs feel this time of year? This prompted some meaningful conversations with my colleagues, and we ultimately decided to pursue funding to increase awareness and accessibility in our community.”

For more information, contact Dr. Amber Chelette at [chelettea@obu.edu](mailto:chelettea@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5116, or visit [nchpad.org](http://nchpad.org).