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Spring Tiger Serve Day involves 800 volunteers completing 110 projects



By: OBU News Bureau

April 07, 2014

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Maintaining a tradition of community service dating back to 1997, a total of 800 Ouachita Baptist University students, faculty and staff gathered Saturday, April 5, for the university's semi-annual Tiger Serve Day.

The volunteers were organized into 100 teams, completing 110 projects for the benefit of senior adults, single parents and others throughout the Arkadelphia area. Projects ranged from raking leaves and mowing to washing windows and painting.

Tiger Serve Day, one of the largest community service efforts held throughout the state of Arkansas, is hosted each semester by Ouachita's Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community. It is planned and organized by a student-led Tiger Serve Day leadership team.



This semester's leadership chairs include Dawson Pritchard, projects chair; Jessica Stewart, publicity chair; Garet West, logistics chair; and Rachel Williams, teams chair. Other leadership team members include Bridget Bloxom, Titus Brooks, Jeremy Cooper, Jeremy Dixon, Drew Farris, Katie Hopmann, Jasper Jackson, Ben Lange-Smith, Coleson Lechner, Hayley Martin, Craig Martin, Reagan Parsons, Griffin Peeples, Buck Schroeder, Emily Speer, Treslyn Shipley, Anna Sikes, Rachel Wicker, David Willhite and David Winkler.

"I love the way the majority of our campus shows up each semester early on a Saturday morning to go out and care for our community," said Judy Duvall, assistant director of the Elrod Center. "There is so much energy, excitement and joy on this day. Our students, faculty and staff love to serve.

"Many of the people and non-profits that we help on Tiger Serve Day are not able to do the work themselves," Duvall explained. "It's a huge cost savings and help to these people and a beautiful way to act out our faith in very practical and relational ways."

"Tiger Serve Day is a great opportunity for students to go outside of their comfort zone and have an impact in the community," said Meg Hart, a senior accounting and Russian major from Little Rock. "We had the privilege of serving a retired OBU safety officer. While the physical labor might not have been our favorite activity, we thoroughly enjoyed the fact that we could help him with his yard.

"More than anything, though, we enjoyed getting to serve him spiritually," she added. "That's what Tiger Serve Day is all about to me. Anybody can rake leaves, but when we volunteer our time with a servant heart, God can use that for far greater purposes."



Hannah Osborne, a junior sociology major from Mineola, Texas, said, "I have had the opportunity to serve the same precious couple three times. Not only have I been able to meet physical needs such as cleaning their house and painting their deck, but they have been an encouragement to me.

"Seeing and hearing how much Tiger Serve Day means to those we serve makes me so thankful to go to a university that makes service a priority and gives ample opportunities for its students to make connections in the community," Osborne reflected. "To me, Tiger Serve Day is more than just about serving for a few hours one day. It's about making connections, engaging in relationships, bringing a smile to someone and making service a part of your everyday life."

Ragan Ledbetter, a sophomore mass communications major from Little Rock, described Tiger Serve Day as "one of the greatest days of the semester because God works through everybody all at one time. We all get to work together and help those who are in need.

"I love to do Tiger Serve Day because every semester I meet new people and can encourage them in new, creative ways," she said. "It warms my heart to know we put smiles on their faces!"

In addition to the work of the volunteers, behind-the-scenes support included Sodexo providing breakfast for the volunteers, Southern Bancorp providing lunch and the Elrod Family Foundation funding T-shirts and work supplies.

Tiger Serve Day began in the spring of 1997 following a devastating tornado that hit Arkadelphia. More than 900 volunteers were part of the first Tiger Serve Day. Since then, Ouachita students, faculty and staff have given more than 65,000 hours of community service on Tiger Serve Days.

For more information visit www.obu.edu/serve or call the Elrod Center at (870) 245-5320.