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### From the "Ouachitonian": Christa Neal

Hanna Williams

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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From the "Ouachitonian": Christa Neal



*By Hannah Williams*

October 17, 2022

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Christa Neal accepted the position of program advisor for community and family services in June 2021. This major trains and equips students to pursue careers in fields of community, family and social services, as well as graduate education for counseling, social work and more. This program needed someone with a variety of experiences in these fields, and Neal was the perfect fit.

Neal graduated from Ouachita in 2008 with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology. She then earned dual Master of Science degrees in community counseling and marriage & family therapy from John Brown University. She started her career working in school-based therapy as well as private practice. In 2013, she was hired to help start a nonprofit called the Percy & Donna Malone Child Safety Center, an organization that responds to child abuse. There she served as the director and provided counseling and forensic interviews, applied for grants, did fundraising in the community and much more. Her favorite aspect was educating others about child abuse.

Due to Neal's wide range of experience in this field, it was clear that she would be a perfect program advisor. Her drive and passion for educating others effortlessly carried over into her role at Ouachita. When asked about her desires and goals for this program, Neal emphasized the importance of combining

both the heart and passion for this field as well as the understanding and applying best practices and standards.

“I want to educate and empower competent, well-trained and passionate people to go into these fields,” Neal said. “I’m really passionate about this being an integrated program that allows students to be the hands and feet of Christ but also have the knowledge of how to best help people.”

Since starting her position here, Neal has also started teaching a new class called child and family advocacy. “This course is an entry overview of the human services field that introduces students to a broad variety of elements of child and family advocacy and an in-depth overview of trauma,” Neal said.

This course is for the student who knows they are called to help people but aren’t sure where to start. Here, they could learn about the many different opportunities there are to help with a focus on children and families.

Neal plans to build the program by continuing to develop courses for community and family services majors. She also still serves as a part-time therapist at the Child Safety Center in Arkadelphia. She is passionate about helping students develop a healthy integration of their faith and their practice.

“I want to help students realize that their faith goes hand in hand with the work they are called to do,” Neal said.

*Photo by Abigail Blankenship*