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### "Stepping Up" luncheon to honor Huckabee women in November

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Office of Communications & Marketing

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For immediate release

**“Stepping Up” luncheon to honor Huckabee women in November**

*By Anna Roussel*

June 21, 2023

For more information, contact Ouachita’s Office of Communications & Marketing at [comm-mark@obu.edu](mailto:comm-mark@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5206.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University’s Office of Development has announced its annual Stepping Up for Ouachita luncheon, presented by Simmons Bank, will be held Friday, Nov. 17, at Chenal Country Club in Little Rock, Ark. The event will recognize its first mother-and-daughter honorees, former Arkansas First Lady Janet Huckabee and Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Ticket and sponsorship information is available at [obu.edu/steppingup](http://obu.edu/steppingup).

Since its inaugural event in November 2010, Stepping Up for Ouachita has raised more than \$840,000 toward scholarships for women at Ouachita and is looking toward surpassing \$1 million in 2023. Every year the university honors outstanding Ouachita women who have shown grace, leadership, integrity and faith over the years.

“We started Stepping Up for Ouachita in 2010 as a way to raise scholarship funds and introduce people to Ouachita who weren’t Ouachita graduates,” said Terry Peebles, vice president for development. “This year, we have the opportunity to cross the threshold of 1 million cumulative dollars to help female students. Our committee is very pleased to be honoring the former First Lady Janet Huckabee and Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who are both Ouachitonians.”

“This is a monumental year for Stepping Up for Ouachita,” added Kristen Glover Belew, chair of the 2023 Stepping Up for Ouachita committee and a 2011 Ouachita graduate. “It only makes sense that we honor

perhaps our most well-known mother-daughter alumni duo. We are proud of their Christ-like character and heart of service, values we hold dear at Ouachita.”

**Janet (McCain) Huckabee '76** served as First Lady of Arkansas from 1996 to 2007 alongside her husband, former Gov. Mike Huckabee. The couple met in elementary school in Hope, Ark., and dated into their time in college at Ouachita. They were married on May 25, 1974, and now have three adult children: John Mark, David and Sarah, who became the 47<sup>th</sup> governor of Arkansas in 2023.

Early in their marriage, Huckabee was diagnosed with spinal cancer, which left her unable to return to Ouachita. Near the end of her husband’s time as governor, she completed her undergraduate degree through John Brown University. Huckabee was an active member and two-term president of the Texarkana Parent Teacher Association and has worked as a substitute teacher, a pharmacist’s assistant and as a manager for a construction company, among other roles. She was an active campaigner in her husband’s various political pursuits.

While her husband was governor, one of Huckabee’s priorities was helping to modernize the Arkansas Governor’s Mansion. The subsequent renovation included the addition of a grand hall, later named the Janet M. Huckabee Grand Hall. Huckabee was inducted into the Arkansas Outdoor Hall of Fame after helping to pass Amendment 75, a sales tax that benefited the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, the Department of Parks and Tourism and the Keep Arkansas Beautiful Commission.

Outside of politics, Huckabee became known for her work with the American Red Cross, Samaritan’s Purse and Habitat for Humanity, which she served for more than 10 years on the international board. She led an effort to immunize children in Arkansas and visited every state health department site to promote immunizations against childhood diseases. She also has been an active volunteer in church activities and enjoys gardening, raising chickens and looking after two dogs and seven grandchildren.

**Gov. Sarah (Huckabee) Sanders '04** is the youngest child of former Gov. Mike Huckabee and Janet Huckabee. The two made history as the first father and daughter to be governor of the same state. Sanders also is the youngest governor in the nation currently serving and Arkansas’ first woman governor.

A graduate of Little Rock Central High School, Sanders was a political science major at Ouachita. Named to the Homecoming Court and *Who’s Who Among American Colleges & Universities*, she served as president of the Ouachita Student Senate and was chosen Outstanding Senior Woman by faculty and staff.

Her involvement in presidential politics began in 2004 when she served as field coordinator in Ohio for Pres. George W. Bush’s re-election campaign. In 2008, she was national political director for her father’s presidential campaign and later served as his campaign manager during his 2016 run. She joined Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign as a senior adviser and transitioned to a role on the White House communications staff upon his election, eventually becoming the third woman, first mother and first Arkansan to serve as White House press secretary.

Sanders left the White House in 2019 and returned to Arkansas, where she announced her candidacy for governor in 2021. After her time in Washington D.C., she was a Fox News contributor and served on the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Sanders is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Speaking for Myself* and was recognized in *Fortune* and *TIME* magazines’ “40 under 40.”

Stepping Up for Ouachita helps raise money toward scholarships for women students at Ouachita. The university serves more than 1,700 students, more than half of whom are female; with more than 95% of Ouachita students qualifying for financial aid, the continued need for scholarships is great.

For information on sponsoring the 2023 luncheon, contact Carrie Roberson at [robersonc@obu.edu](mailto:robersonc@obu.edu) or (870) 245-4278.