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Photo 1 Photo by Alex Blankenship

For immediate release

Ouachita's Dr. Johnny Wink to be honored for 50 years of service

By Addie Woods

September 15, 2023

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — The Department of Language & Literature at Ouachita Baptist University will honor Dr. Johnny Wink, Betty Burton Peck Professor of English, during a campus reception Tuesday, Sept. 19, from 6:30-8 p.m. in McClellan Hall's Green-Blevins Rotunda. Open to the public, the party will begin with a brief ceremony to be followed by an informal gathering celebrating Wink's 50 years on the Ouachita faculty.

Memorabilia dating back to 1973 covers the walls of Wink's office in Lile Hall. Each note, picture and letter tells a story – one never more important than the others. Over the years, Wink has provided unconventional ways of getting students to participate in class discussions including stories, jokes, daily words and nicknames.

“Johnny Wink is an institutional treasure. It has been an absolute honor and pleasure to teach and learn alongside him for the past eleven years. He has to be one of the most well-read people I know, if not *the* most. He seemingly devours entire books – of all genres! – in a day,” said Jennifer Burkett Pittman, instructor of English and chair of the Department of Language & Literature. “He plays Wordle in nine languages daily, and his email list of former students, textbook writers, authors and Pulitzer Prize-winners is the most impressive and extensive I've ever seen.”

She added, "The joke is that Johnny Wink is a 'disgustingly nice guy,' but that's the absolute truth. You'll never meet a more honest, caring and humble person. To have been in the classroom or office with Johnny is to have been blessed."

Assistant Professor of English Sarah Smith, a Ouachita alumna, knows Wink as both his colleague and former student. Wink is "a remarkable wordsmith and storyteller whose delight in language and literature is contagious," Smith said. "He has not only memorized more poems than I can count, including all 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets, he is also a gifted poet in his own right and has served as a great encourager and keen-eyed critic for so many writers on our campus and in our wider community. He's the kind of reader, too, that all writers dream of – and I suspect that's part of why he has inspired me and so many others to dive into, and then to fall in love with, subjects and texts we might never otherwise have discovered."

"I can't express how grateful I've been to know Johnny first as my professor, and now as my colleague and friend," Smith added. "And I can't think of anyone who better models lifelong learning."

Whether as a professor, faculty member or friend, Wink continues to invest in his students and peers through various classes and his love for learning.

"When I think about 50 years at Ouachita, what comes to mind is how lucky I was to come here in 1973," Wink said, "being able to work alongside my dear wife, Susan, learning from excellent foreign language professors when I got interested in languages, and good students, who I am fond of and like working with."

For more information, contact Jennifer Burkett Pittman, chair of the Department of Language & Literature, at (870) 245-5553 or at pittmanj@obu.edu.