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### Ann (Owen) Chami '83 (Caring builds connection)

Felley Lawson

Office of Communications & Marketing

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For immediate release

**Ann (Owen) Chami '83 (Caring builds connection)**

*By Felley Lawson*

April 24, 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.

It's often been said that you can't kid a kidder. Ann Chami '83 would say that you can't kid a *kid*.

"Children have the unique ability to discern how adults feel about them," said Chami, a veteran educator who serves as head of lower school at Little Rock Christian Academy. "If they know you genuinely care for them and love them, they will do anything for you."

Chami earned a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in early childhood education from Ouachita in 1983 and spent the next 20 years teaching first, second or third grade before becoming an administrator. Growing up in Pine Bluff, Ark., she had always loved school. She wanted her students to love it, too – especially her first graders. Nurturing them and laying a strong foundation for them to become lifelong enthusiastic learners began with caring for them.

Quoting Dr. Wess Stafford – president emeritus of Compassion International and an advocate for children living in poverty – Chami said, "I do believe that every moment spent with a child is a divine appointment, an opportunity to learn from the Lord or to be used of the Lord."

For teachers who can infuse caring into classroom relationship- and community-building, valuable opportunities to engage with students occur more naturally.

"When students believe they play a vital role – that they are all on the same team and need each other – connection happens," Chami said. "Connection builds trust. Without trust, learning will not happen." Chami knew early on that she'd someday be a teacher like her mom, Martha Ann Owen.

“The Lord gave me a love for children that only comes from Him,” she said. “Spending time with a child? Well, there’s nothing better. Every day is a new day with them, and their love for life is contagious.”

Advice Chami received as a young educator made a lasting impression. Because children are relentless observers, and the adults in their life shape their image of God, “I teach more about God through my actions than what I say. These words stay with me daily.”

Chami also grew up knowing that, like her dad, Bobby Owen '48, she would someday enroll at Ouachita.

“A Christ-focused education is about the growth of the whole student, intellectually and spiritually,” she said. “Ouachita prepared me not only to teach, but also to know the joy of walking in the ways of the Lord. He directed my paths, as He does for each of us. For me, teaching matters because it is a personal answer to what God asked me to do.”

Chami met her husband, Jack, at church; a short time later, they found themselves the only unattached guests at a couples dinner party. They married in 2001. The next year, Chami moved from the classroom to serving in administration at Little Rock Christian – first as early childhood principal and now as head of lower school, where she leads a team of more than 80 faculty and staff.

“I have had the joy of hiring Ouachita grads as teachers,” she remarked. “They arrived prepared and ready to teach students. Ouachita has done a tremendous job equipping them.”

Educators face stiff challenges in a changing field. But Chami believes the rewards have eternal significance.

“Through the power of the Holy Spirit in you, the impact you could have on a student lasts forever,” she said. “There’s no greater privilege than having a place in the life of a child.”



*By Felley (Nall) Lawson '88, editorial coordinator*