



# **P.A.R.K. NEWS**

## **DONALD W. REYNOLDS FACILITY**

Spring 2004

## **THE GRADUATION ISSUE**



### **9th Annual P.A.R.K. Graduation Ceremony Well Attended**

P.A.R.K.'s 9th annual graduation and recognition ceremony was held at the Donald W. Reynolds facility on May 20. The graduation was well attended by numerous alumni, donors, parents and staff. They watched as 27 young men and women received rings at the ceremony. The ladies were also presented with a single red rose.

The Class of 2004 is the largest class to complete the five-year program in P.A.R.K.'s history. These 27 students include nine who received 3.0 grade recognition, one who graduated a year early from high school, 19 who will attend college, three who will go to technical school, two who will join the military, and three who will enter the workforce. All have definite plans to become productive citizens!

Those in attendance were

treated to an address by Jim Lindsey, CEO of Lindsey Companies and former Razorback football player. Lindsey told of the life lessons he had learned playing sports and encouraged the students to live their lives knowing that "attitude more than aptitude will determine altitude." He stressed for them to be fair, give others a break, take advantage of their opportunities and to not stab others in the back.

Several distinguished awards were given at the ceremony. They included "Volunteer of the Year," Delta Sigma Theta alumni club; "Educator of the Year," Lajuana Green of Mills High School; "Overall Performer of the Year" to the student who most embodies P.A.R.K.'s goals and who also participates, 4.0 student Jose Holloway; and "Student of the Year," Tameka Heard. P.A.R.K. founder Keith Jackson presented two Presi-

dential Awards. The first was given to Gloria Williams, mother of Rachel, Jennifer and Joshua. As a single mother, Ms. Williams has had 3 children who have been a vital part of the P.A.R.K. program. The second Presidential Award was given to Jackson's own mother, single parent Gladys Barnett, who volunteers at P.A.R.K. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and, according to Jackson, "is always encouraging and challenging students to do more."

The football-themed ceremony was closed with the presentation of the Rachel Williams Donor Recognition Awards. Silver, bronze, and leather footballs named after P.A.R.K.'s first college graduate were presented to the program's top donors by Jackson and Williams to thank the donors for their contribution to P.A.R.K.'s success.

## OBU Graduate is First for P.A.R.K.

May 8, 2004, was an exciting day for the P.A.R.K. family. At a ceremony with a busload of P.A.R.K. students, staff, and supporters in attendance, Rachel Williams became the first P.A.R.K. graduate to obtain a college degree. In four years of hard work, Rachel obtained a degree in Mass Communications from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia.

Rachel's success fulfilled the

dream of P.A.R.K.'s founder Keith Jackson to help at-risk youth in Central Arkansas to turn their lives around and to become productive citizens. While Jackson delivered the commencement address and received an honorary doctorate degree from OBU, Rachel's graduation was the highlight of the day for all who believe in the P.A.R.K. mission statement: *Within a positive atmosphere built on love, nurturing, and discipline, P.A.R.K.*

*strives to enrich the lives of central Arkansas's at risk youth. Specifically P.A.R.K. exists to build the confidence, self-esteem and spiritual awareness in its members, to ensure academic achievement, to expand their horizons, and to instill in them the importance of helping others.*

Rachel Williams is living proof that P.A.R.K. is making a difference! Way to go, Rachel!



Photo by: Arkansas Democrat -Gazette/BARRY ARTHUR

A jubilant Gloria Williams, with proud daughter Rachel and a friend at the Ouachita Baptist University graduation!

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# Rachel Williams OBU Graduate



Photo by: Arkansas Democrat -Gazette/BARRY ARTHUR

I first met Rachel Williams in the Spring semester of 2002 when she enrolled in a Small Group Communication class I was teaching. The course was designed to give students a working knowledge of communication theory and practical experience through group projects. From the start, Rachel stood out in the class. She was willing to speak up during class discussions, to stay after class to talk about subjects of particular interest and to do the work required to successfully complete the course.

One of the major projects required during the semester included groups of 4-5 students working together to coordinate a community service project. It was a pleasure to observe Rachel working in the group setting. She was a leader in her group, and their project brought joy to the lives of some Arkadelphia youngsters. Rachel's group put together a Valentine's Day party for Ouachita students who participated in the Big Brother/Big Sister program. The students had the chance to bring their "little brothers and sisters" for an afternoon filled with activities all planned and prepared by Rachel and members of her group. The day was a big success. The kids had a great time, and the group members demonstrated their ability to work together and to understand their communication dynamics.

After the semester ended, I would run into Rachel on campus from time to time and we would catch up. During one of our chance meetings a few weeks ago, Rachel and I talked about the work that she would have to do to complete the semester. Her stress level was very high. She was worried about finalizing projects and taking exams. She'd been working non-stop and felt overwhelmed by what lay ahead for the rest of the semester. I felt sorry for her because I knew she would have a couple of difficult weeks ahead of her. But, I was also very proud of her because I could see the level of commitment she had toward finishing her college education. She was fully willing to do the work, and she was looking forward to finishing college and beginning the next phase of her life.

On Saturday, May 8, Rachel celebrated commencement with about 234 other Ouachita students. The Sturgis Physical Education Center Arena was filled with more than 3,500 well wishers. When Rachel's name was called, many people stood to honor her for her accomplishments. Among them were family, friends and members of Rachel's P.A.R.K. family. It was my pleasure to stand with that group and to recognize Rachel. She's a talented young lady, and I'm thankful that I've had the chance to get to know her during her time at Ouachita.

Best wishes to you, Rachel and thanks to everyone at P.A.R.K. for the work you do each day to make a difference in the lives of students.

Rebecca Jones

Ouachita Baptist University

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## Keith's Corner There's No Place Like Home



Twenty years ago I made a decision to leave the state of Arkansas. I don't regret my decision. I had four wonderful years at the University of Oklahoma. I went to Oklahoma to play football and we had, in my time there, a record of 42-5-1. I forged friendships that will last a lifetime. My relationship with a Crossett, Arkansas bootlegger boy is well known. Coach Barry Switzer never treated me like another player. He always treated me like a son. I can remember him sneaking up behind me

and grabbing me and saying "Who loves ya big boy?" I always believed our relationship was different and I always credit it to the commonality of being from Arkansas.

Arkansas is a great state. Sometimes one has to travel to realize there is no place like home. Arkansas is a giving and caring state that defends the poor and takes care of the down-and-out. It is a state that doesn't make as much per capita, but gives more. There are states that have totally abandoned the old African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." We may not have it down totally, but we as Arkansans are trying.

It's good to be home, a place where one can have a vision to help others. I thank God for the vision, but more for the Arkansans who help me

bring it to fruition. Because of your help we have a graduating class of twenty-seven. There are fifteen students who have the luxury of a college scholarship. Because of this states' generosity, we celebrate our first graduate from college. Rachel Williams graduated from Ouachita Baptist University (O.B.U.) in four years. I heard a donor say the thing she liked about P.A.R.K. is that its outcome base. Twenty-five students started in 1995, with less than a 2.0 G.P.A., eight graduated and five went to college. Rachel is the first of the four college seniors to graduate. Together we can make a difference "One Child At A Time."

I enjoyed my accomplishment as a Sooner, but I'm proud to be called an Arkansan. There's no Place like home.

### P.A.R.K. STAFF

#### Full-Time

Reginald Davis  
Blenda Downs  
Cynthia Hall  
Elvin Jackson  
Melanie Jackson  
Jacinda Jones  
William Matheny  
Kareem Moody  
Gayle Orr  
Monique Palmer  
Tamra Patterson  
Melody Sims-Stanley  
Michael Woods

#### Part-Time

Keith Alexander  
Lauren Baker  
Charnley Conway  
Te'Kima Cole  
Sydne Harris  
Kristin Hayes  
Kimberly Lang  
Yadira Maglione  
Tamika McGill  
Genese Obiaga  
Brooke Teeter  
Talisha West  
Nnanta Uwadineke

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## P.A.R.K. reaps benefits from Bank of the Ozark "Run for Their Lives Race"

"Run for Their Lives" sponsored by Bank of the Ozarks recently named P.A.R.K. as a beneficiary from their 5K race. The race was founded seven years ago by Larry and Sonya Mendelsohn as a project for Fellowship Bible Church Community Group. Other founders included Arthur and Melanie Boutiette, Greg and Bobbi Patterson, Scott and Kathy Archer, and Kris and Lisa Fisher. The race which supports inner city ministries has raised \$875,000 over the past seven years. They started the program with car washes, plays for kids, and faith. This year lead sponsors included George and Linda Gleason, Ortho Biotech, Mountaire Corp., Little Rock Hematology/Oncology. A special thanks to Phyllis Edwards for her efforts! We are blessed to have such wonderful support!

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## Where They Go From Here.....

Tameka Heard—University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Christopher Worsham—Pulaski Technical College

Kenneth Williams—Workforce

Jazmyne Hughes—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Robert Enlow—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Ashley Turner—Philander Smith College

Ernest Ussery—Workforce

Adrian Harris—Philander Smith College

Shanta Batchelor—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Raymond Rochelle—U.S. Navy

Brian Sims—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Amber Turner—Philander Smith College

Jessica Dirden—University of Central Arkansas

Bobby Dukes—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Jerry Dukes—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Anthony Rowe—Pulaski Technical College

Brittany Kelly—Pulaski Technical College

Ronald Parks—U.S. Army

Latoya Bess—Undecided

Gregory Smith—University of Central Arkansas

Ashley Gilbert—Undecided

Marcus Bolden—University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff

Eric Mayfield—City Year National Service Organization

Donald Lemons—University of Arkansas, Little Rock

Glenn Miller—University of Arkansas, Little Rock

Justin Johnson—University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Ashley Young—Ouachita Baptist University



Photo by: Arkansas Democrat -Gazette/BARRY ARTHUR

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HABAKKUK 2:2“...Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.”  
Thanks for making God’s vision a reality.



Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids

6915 Geyer Springs Rd.

Little Rock, AR 72209

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501-562-5223 (Phone)

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