

The OSSM Alumni Association Newsletter

Edited by Melissa Nestor

Spring 2018

Volume 1 Issue 2

OSSMAA Update

Melissa Nestor

Happy Spring!

I'm pleased to report that your OSSMAA Board, while still very small, has been very busy making plans!

First of all, as part of our reorganizational effort, we want to hear from you. We want to know what you want to see in your high school alumni association. There are also many new staff members at OSSM that would like to hear about your experiences at OSSM in person – not just what is on the OSSM “brochure”. The Foundation too, has formed an Outreach Committee that would like to hear directly from alums. OSSMAA is working on planning townhall/coffees in Norman and Stillwater in the next couple of months. If you are not near one of these two cities and would like to host a “talk”, please let us know. We'd love to Skype in.

Additionally, we are seeking volunteers to be class representatives. A class representative would answer questions about life at OSSM during their two years of attendance, liaison with their classmates on their class only Facebook pages, contact members of their class that do not like social media, and provide networking support between their class and the OSSM Community. If you'd like to help but “class” representative doesn't feel like the right title for you, we are also seeking city representatives to hold events, and university representatives to welcome new alums each year.

Lastly, OSSMAA is working on building an OSSM Alumni Network. It might “shock” everyone to realize that we don't know where you are or what you are doing. If you know the power of networking, you know this is a huge opportunity that OSSM Alums are missing out on. Coming soon to our website, there will be a section to collect data on you. Where do you live? Where are you working? Have you started your own business? What research are you doing? Have you published? What NPOs are you involved in? Do you want to mentor a younger alum (but are not in OKC)? Do you know of an internship opportunity that would be great for an alum? Anything that you are willing to share with the OSSM Community, we want to know. Johanna Lee does contact you for your information every year. But, that is for the school only (so the teachers can keep in touch and see pictures of your kids!). This would be “mostly” professional networking.

If you'd like to help with any of the above, the newsletter, or the website, please contact president@ossmaa.com. Don't forget to check out the event section at the end of the newsletter!

Dr. Dell and Dr. Samadzadeh Announce Retirement

Melissa Nestor

Two of OSSM's long time faculty members have announced retirement. Dr. Dell (appointed in 1991) and Dr. Samadzadeh (appointed in 1994) will be departing OSSM.

Dr. Dell's retirement party will be held Saturday, May 26th from 1:00 to 4:00. It will be in conjunction with the almost summer All Class Reunion and the Welcoming of Co2018 into OSSMAA. A short presentation honoring Dr. Dell will be at 2 o'clock sharp. PAOSSM is co-sponsoring the day's activities and is providing a chocolate fountain. If OSSM runs out of parking, we have permission to use the Oklahoma Blood Institutes (OBI) parking lot. If you think you will probably attend, please RSVP on the OSSMAA Facebook Group Event or to president@ossmaa.com. We just need a rough head count for refreshments.

Dr. Samadzadeh's retirement party plans will be announced shortly.

Lastly, OSSMAA is putting together memory books for both outstanding professors. If you have quotes, stories, pictures, thank you notes, etc. you would like us to include in these books, please e-mail your president. If you would like to help put together these books, please also e-mail your president!

Spotlight on Alums: Whitley O'Conner

Whitley O'Conner

Growing up, I was always interested in business and entrepreneurial endeavors, but it wasn't until my time at OSSM that my passion for social issues developed while participating in a mentorship at the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits. Then, while touring Vanderbilt University to visit campus and enroll in classes ahead of my freshmen year, my two passions collided in one moment. Driving near Vanderbilt's campus, I encountered a man selling newspapers on the side of the road. Curious, I purchased a copy and once back at my hotel, began skimming it. I quickly learned that the paper I had purchased, The Contributor, was a street paper, a publication employing individuals experiencing homelessness. I learned that the vendors purchased the newspapers from The Contributor then sold them to the public at an increased rate, providing employment to men and women working to get back on their feet and creating a sustainable revenue stream for the nonprofit newspaper. I learned that this organization was a nonprofit known as a social enterprise – an organization that uses business practices to address social issues - and I found a way to combine my two interests.

Over the next two years at Vanderbilt, I got involved in a couple different startup social enterprises, but the impact The Contributor was having in Nashville continued to stick with me. Outside of employing men and women experiencing homelessness through the sale of their newspaper, they were shining a light on issues of poverty in their articles and building community through the interactions between vendors and customers. They were changing the conversation surrounding homelessness while providing a real solution, and I wanted to bring that to Oklahoma City.

Over the next year, I began researching street papers. I learned that The Contributor was one of over 115 similar publications around the world, making up the International Network of Street Papers. I began reaching out to other publications, borrowing from the models that seemed to work best, and building the plan for launching Oklahoma's first street paper, The Curbside Chronicle. Along the way, Mubeen Shakir (OSSM c/o 2010), introduced me to Ranya Forgotson who would become my partner in creating The Curbside Chronicle and my future wife. The summer before my senior year at Vanderbilt, Ranya and I launched The Curbside Chronicle on July 1, 2013.

After graduating from Vanderbilt in May 2014, I returned to Oklahoma City, married Ranya, and began working full-time while running Curbside in my free time. In April 2015, Ranya was hired as the first staff member for Curbside and the publication became an official program of the Homeless Alliance, a nonprofit in Oklahoma City. Over the past nearly five years, Curbside has grown exponentially. Initially running Curbside as volunteers, employing four vendors, and selling 800 magazines/month, Curbside has now grown to employ more than 50 vendors selling 10,000 magazines/month with two full-time staff members (we're currently in the process of hiring a third).

Along the way, Curbside has been recognized with the Oklahoma Innovation Prize, three international journalism awards, an Urban Land Institute award for Community Building, a Google Impact Challenge grant, and an Oklahoma Nonprofit Excellence award for Self-Sufficiency, among others. In 2017, Curbside helped house 39 vendors, ending more than 200 years of combined homelessness. Most importantly, through the thousands of interactions between magazine customers and vendors each month, Curbside has helped reshape the conversation surrounding homelessness in Oklahoma City, breaking down barriers and decreasing stigma.

OSSM has played a major role in my development, both personally and professionally. In fact, the biggest factor in my return to Oklahoma was OSSM and Dr. Manning's continual insistence that OSSM students "go anywhere in the world and get the best education you can, but return to Oklahoma and give back to the state that has given you a world class education," something I took to heart. Since graduation, I have worked in all three sectors – public, private, and nonprofit – including working for my mentor during my time at OSSM. Last year, I even had the opportunity to mentor an OSSM student, Bing Chen (OSSM c/o 2017), while working at the Oklahoma State Capitol. In March, I accepted a job as a Fund Development Specialist at the Homeless Alliance where I am able to give back to Oklahoma City while continuing to grow The Curbside Chronicle.

PAOSSM Corner

Catherine Armitage

I encourage Alumni to attend any of our upcoming events or meetings.

PARENTS:

PAOSSM membership is automatic but donations are at an all-time high of 85% of families participating.

Parents loved the Inaugural Governor's Scholar presentation ceremony in January.

HEALTHY STRESS RELIEF:

Yoga continues monthly & daily during exams.

GOAL:

Offer students an immersive language experience in each language offered at OSSM.

Chinese: Hefner Initiative is thriving – all expenses paid for 2 OSSM students (courtesy of Hefners). Beijing High School #4 (our sister school) had another successful 3 week visit in January.

French: Barbara Thompson, Elizabeth Farabee, and Catherine Armitage, alongside the OKC Alliance Francaise are working on establishing a partnership w/Marie Curie Institute of Technology outside Paris.

German: Prestigious GAPP (German program) - 9 students w/Prof McCargish journey to Stuttgart in June

Japanese: Board Member, Lloyd Hardin is the OKC Honorary Consul to Japan and their exchange program "Wings of Rotary" is successful and has hosted many OSSM students most recently Enrique Thompson.

Latin: Junior Classical League welcomes OSSM students to their summer conference.

Spanish: anecdotal evidence that students can easily practice this world language in OKC

LEADERSHIP:

2 OSSM Students are currently Club 29 Jr. Rotarians!

Discussions with the following about Teen Board Experiences for OSSM students: Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the Respect Diversity Institute

STUDENT EVENTS:

Students LOVED the 1/15 Thunder Game (thank you Meinders Family for support this outing annually)

All Students journeyed to the Armstrong on 1/16 for a Bela Fleck (world famous violinist) concert (tickets supplied by PAOSSM). Thank you to the school for providing transport.

Home High School Appreciation (3/2) – seniors invite the teacher that changed their life - great job Keli Neese and Liz Heigle for putting this together!

UPCOMING OSSM EVENTS SPONSORED BY PAOSSM:

4/17 General meeting – will include a lesson in aromatherapy for stress relief

4/21 PROM! Petroleum Club – Brickopolis for After Party

5/26th Graduation (10am) – Reception at school 1-4pm with Chocolate Fountain

Upcoming Events (aka Your Participation is Requested!!!)

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Friday, April 20th, 4:30pm: Volleyball Game

Last year's Volleyball Tournament was such a success, we're going to do it again! If you are interested in being on the team, e-mail your president.

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Tuesday, April 24th 4:30pm - 6:30pm: Legislative Picnic

It's Picnic time. You never know who might be coming for a visit. If you happen to be in the area, stop by the OSSM campus for an interesting time. For more information contact Liz Heigle (liz.heigle@ossm.edu).

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Thursday, May 3rd, afternoon: College Kick-Off (OSSM Signing Day)

In a first for OSSM, there will be a College Reveal Pep Rally! Come out and wish the new graduates luck! Additionally, College Counselor Cynthia Parish is seeking a few alums to speak about their college experiences for about five minutes each. These speeches could include what you wish you had known before you got to college, how your studies (and career) took a different path, or even just how OSSM helped you. Please contact Cynthia (cynthia.parish@ossm.edu) or your president if you are interested in speaking.

Lastly, soon there will be a list of schools posted on Facebook where co18 will be going. If you attended (or attending) one of those schools and wish to write the future attendees a letter, please contact us!

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Thursday, May 3rd: Art Auction

OSSM's Fine Arts Fundraiser will held in the Art Hall. For more information or to buy something, contact Kelly Chaves (kelly.chaves@ossm.edu)

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Saturday, May 26th 1:00 – 4:00pm: All-Class Reunion & Dr. Dell's Retirement Party

The presentation for Dr. Dell starts at 2 o'clock sharp. Hope to see everyone there. RSVP on Facebook or to president@ossm.com. (I need a rough head count for refreshments^_^)

Contact OSSMAA!

President: president@ossmaa.com

Events/Reunions: events@ossmaa.com

Facebook: OSSM Alumni Association

Newsletter: pubs@ossmaa.com

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