

## University social media recognized

By ANANDA BOARDMAN  
News/Features Co-Editor

As Ouachita celebrates 125 years of history, it is also gaining national recognition for its ability to keep up with the future.

Last week, the university was listed on StudentAdvisor's "Top 100 Social Media Colleges" for the use of Facebook, Twitter and the online *Signal* website, which is the web-version of *The Signal*, Ouachita's student newspaper.

Ranked at 92 of the 100, Ouachita is rubbing shoulders with universities such as Harvard (no. 1), Yale University (no. 24), Abilene Christian University (no. 91) and many other prestigious schools across the nation.

The StudentAdvisor list says *The Signal's* online presence is great, with quality videos and slideshows of student events.

Dean Tsouvalas, editor-in-chief of StudentAdvisor.com, said that this rich content, from the videos and podcasts

to the articles from the print edition, are a big part of Ouachita making it on the list.

"I thought the [online] *Signal* was really great," Tsouvalas said. "It is a good example of how a school can have great elements [such as podcasts and slideshows]," working together on a site.

Tiffany Eurich, instructor of mass communications, became the online *Signal* faculty sponsor last fall and has pushed her students to be innovative in both the type of stories covered and the multimedia used to cover them.

"I think that this recognition helps the students see that when they think outside the box and look for untold stories and creative ways to cover them, their hard work and skills will be noticed," Eurich said. "The online *Signal* staff is good at what they do. They put their best foot forward every day, and I'm not at all surprised that they were honored with such other prestigious award winners."

Being listed on the inaugural Top 100 list is surprising for the online *Signal* team, as the website, launched in

2008, is not even to its third birthday.

"It was an amazing experience for the site to win a Pacemaker award in 2009, a year after [obusignal.com](http://obusignal.com) was launched," said Mitch Bettis, former assistant professor of mass communications and original faculty sponsor of the online *Signal*. "To be acknowledged as a social media leader by StudentAdvisor is another feather in the cap of OBU students."

Bettis, who currently serves as general manager of Lake Media, also said "anytime Ouachita can be listed alongside universities like Harvard, Georgetown, Marquette, Duke and others, students should feel confident about the type of education they are receiving."

When the website was created, the goal was to provide an environment for students to learn how to be "multi-media storytellers and create a site [to] serve as an information source" for the Ouachita community, including

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CALLIE STEPHENS/TheSignal

NATE PEACE, Reuben Cash, Tyler Hawkins and Ryan James inflate a kiddie pool in preparation for Tiger Traks. Traks, an event sponsored by the Ouachita Student Foundation, will take place tomorrow and Saturday.

## Alumnus uses MS experience, raises \$250,000 National MS Society funds

By WHITNEY CREWS  
Signal Writer

For the Strickland family of Arkadelphia, Ark., opening the mail each day in February through April can be an exciting event. Since 1999, they have been receiving checks to help raise funds for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and this year marks a milestone of over \$250,000.

In 1990, at the age of 28, Russell Strickland was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, "a debilitating disease in which the body's immune system eats away at the protective sheath that covers the nerves," according to the Mayo Clinic website for diseases and conditions.

There is no cure for the disease and the process is irreversible, possibly deteriorating the nerves themselves and causing communication interference between the brain and the rest of the body.

It was a slow progression. Russell needed only his wife's arm for support at first, then a cane. Next were the walkers, first without wheels and then a wheeled one and finally a wheelchair. Now a quadriplegic, Strickland, 49, depends on his family and caregivers for all activities of daily living.

MS has always been a family disease for the Stricklands. Leanne, Russell's wife of 24 years, and Kelly and Emily, their two daughters, have fought through treatments, other auto-immune disorders and most recently come together for the celebration of reaching the \$250,000 mark.

"Something I never thought I'd hit when I first started would be a quarter-of-a-million dollars," Strickland said. "It just sounds like a huge number. And it's not over, I plan to continue to raise money, but it's kind of like a milestone."

But in the beginning, working with the MS Society and fundraising was far from the Stricklands' to-do list.

"We really just didn't want to be around people in wheelchairs and didn't want to see what could happen," Leanne said. "We just couldn't accept it. It was definitely the denial period of our lives and neither one of us want-

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## Teams make "Traks"

By ERICA PORTER  
Signal Writer

Ouachita Student Foundation (OSF) is hosting Tiger Traks, a two-day event in which teams compete in games and relays for cash prizes. Like Tiger Tunes, also hosted by OSF, all of the proceeds earned at Tiger Traks go toward student scholarships.

Each team of participants consists of eight people with a limit of four males per team. Students, faculty and staff are invited to participate. All of the teams will earn points at each

activity, and there is a cash prize for each member of the teams with the most points (\$100 for first place, \$75 for second place and \$50 for third place).

"[Most] people want to win, and teams recruit people based on their level of athleticism and intellect," said senior English major and Tiger Traks participant Jessica Schleiff. "However, we were thinking about which team would have the most fun."

Schleiff's team, "Things Fall Apart," consists of English majors and professors. This team decided

to participate in Tiger Traks because they thought it would be a good way to create a bond between the younger and older English majors, as well as to make "lasting memories, experience community and have a healthy spirit of competitiveness," according to Schleiff.

OSF aims to create games that anyone can play so the teams will have a fun, friendly and diverse environment in which to compete. Tomorrow's events include an egg toss, ice

## "Birdie" arrives, spring musical takes flight

By JORDAN CAMPBELL  
Signal Writer

The sound of music is in the air and not just because of chirping birds. The theater department has been preparing for its spring musical, "Bye Bye Birdie."

"'Bye Bye Birdie' is one of the most captivating musical shows of our time," said Justin Ratliff, a sophomore musical theater major. "It tells the story of a rock 'n' roll singer who is about to be inducted into the army."

The musical is a parody based on American society in the 1950s and 60s. The lead roles are Justin Ratliff who will play Conrad Birdie, Jacob Watson who will play Albert Peterson, Courtnee DeVore who will play Rose Alvarez, Elisabeth Hipp who will play Kim Macafee, Lynley Vire who will play Mrs. Doris Macafee, Timothy

Drennan who will play Mr. Harry Macafee, Cody Myers who will play Hugo Peabody, Heather White who will play Ursula Merkle and Bethany Swiontek who will play Mrs. Peterson/Mamma. In all, there are 44 cast members, and some students play multiple roles.

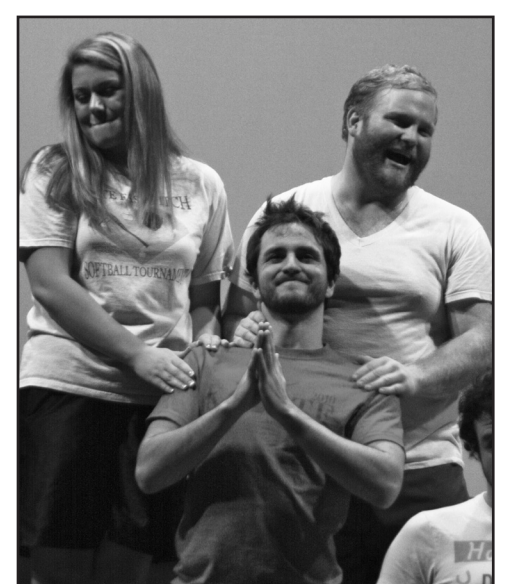
According to Elisabeth Hipp, a senior vocal performance major, the plot focuses on the lives of Conrad's agent, Albert Peterson. His secretary and love interest Rose Alvarez are main characters as well along with a teenage girl, Kim Macafee, her family and friends. All of their lives revolve around the Elvis-like character, Conrad Birdie.

The use of video projection is an entirely new aspect added to the rehearsal process this year. Video projection will allow the background for the stage to be more life-like.

"The rehearsal process is always a lot of work and is usually very time consuming, and this year is no exception," Hipp said. "It is always extremely necessary to have such a rehearsal process in order to have a successful show. What is hard work now will hopefully look effortless to the audience later."

According to Mary Handiboe, associate professor of theatre arts who serves as the show's stage director, the rehearsal process has been particularly difficult due to the large cast and short amount of rehearsal time. However, she said the work always pays off in the end.

"One of my enjoyable times as a director is when I watch an actor finally click with his role — when the actor connects to it in such a way that the soul of the charac-



JESSICA BOWLING/TheSignal

CORTNEE DEVORE, Justin Ratliff and Jacob Watson rehearse for "Bye, Bye, Birdie."

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## In the Bubble:

- Students can reserve their fall schedule of textbooks in the Ouachita Bookstore and receive a 10 percent discount on their books. For more information, e-mail bookstore@obu.edu.

- The applications for America Reads and America Counts work study positions are due tomorrow. Students can pick up applications in the Student Financial Services office in Cone Bottoms room 130. For more information, visit [www.obu.edu/elrod/public-schools.asp](http://www.obu.edu/elrod/public-schools.asp).

- Students interested in living in residence halls during May, summer one and summer two terms can fill out an application in the Student Services office by April 15.

- The Ouachita Relay for Life team is holding a "Celebrity" Karaoke Challenge fundraiser at Dino's Main Street Cafe on Saturday, April 9, at 6 p.m. after Tiger Traks. The contestants include Jane Adams, Michael Barnes, Lori Hilburn, Casey Motl, David Smith, Greg Stubblefield, and Jason Warren.

- Housing applications are due to the Student Services office by Wednesday, April 13. Each student will apply to live in a group of four, and then the four students' completed hours will be averaged and ranked from highest to lowest. This will determine the order that students sign up for housing locations.

- Students interested in running for one of the executive senate positions can sign up on the posters located outside of Chick-fil-A. There will be a mandatory meeting Wednesday, April 13, at 12:30 p.m. on the Evans Student Center Bridge for all candidates.

- The Arkadelphia Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration are inviting citizens to bring their expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs to the Arkadelphia Parks and Recreation Center at Feaster Park on Saturday, April 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for disposal. The service is free and anonymous.

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### SLIDESHOWS

- 125th Year of OBU Chapel
- Business Competition
- Miss OBU 2011 Preview
- Quidditch in February

### VIDEO

- POTSI: Why do BETAS make the best dates?
- POTSI: Do you believe in Leprechauns?
- How Tigers celebrate Pi Day
- The Ring tells all

Sources: [obu.edu](http://obu.edu), Compiled by Ananda Boardman and Leah Garavelli

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alumni, donors and parents, Bettis said. The site has undergone several redesigns, from the original version created by alumni Chloe O'Conner, Holland Powell and Emma Smith, to the current design built by December 2010 graduate Devin Waters. As new editors with new ideas and methods take the reins, the site will continue to expand and improve.

Aspen Grams, co-senior editor of the online *Signal*, said they are headed in a great direction, and are planning to expand their social media presence, beginning with their Twitter account, but that running the site is a challenge.

"There are so many aspects to take into consideration," Grams, a senior mass communications and speech communication major, said. "It's not just articles; it's videos, slideshows and things of that nature, too."

She was surprised to learn of their ranking on the list, as she "tends to get into a grind and focus on the day-to-day work; it was great to see that someone saw the big picture and acknowledged that we're doing something right."

StudentAdvisor looked at more than 6,000 colleges and universities when compiling the Top 100 list, and the universities on the list comprise the top 5 percent of colleges in the nation.

"One of the things that is so exciting [about the list] is you see how so many different colleges around the country have leveraged social media," Tsouvalas said. "The truth is that social media is the way we communicate today."

To be considered for the list, a university needed to have an official Facebook fan page with more than 500 fans, at least one Twitter account and a verifiable enrollment number. Schools which met these criteria were put into a program which

equalized them for enrollment and looked at the effectiveness of the three criteria. The data was compiled and analyzed using HubSpot and TwitterGrader.com to arrive at the final list. Twitter Grader is a free program that ranks the power of a Twitter account against other accounts on a scale of 100. Ouachita's Twitter grade is a 97.4.

Ouachita's Facebook fan page has almost 3,700 fans, and the Twitter page has more than 1,100 followers.

Even accounting for some overlap between the two, the total is more than three times the school's current enrollment of 1,500 students.

"We are extremely pleased that Ouachita has been recognized as one of the top social media schools in the nation," said Trennis Henderson, vice president of communications. "Whether it's Twitter, Facebook, the online *Signal* or other options, social media has become a key tool for connecting quickly and effectively with prospective students, current students and alumni."

The StudentAdvisor list will be updated monthly, and the online *Signal* staff plans to stay on the list.

Eurich said the staff is considering another redesign to make the site more user-friendly and other improvements are pending.

"I think we're doing a great job, but with everything, there's always room for improvement," Eurich said. "We already have some great new ideas we've been developing, and this recognition gives us encouragement to continue moving forward and working hard. I would love to see us steadily move up that list."

To view the complete Top 100 list, visit: [www.studentadvisor.com/top-100-social-media-colleges](http://www.studentadvisor.com/top-100-social-media-colleges). ■



STUDENTADVISOR.COM/Courtesy

# Top 5

## Fictional characters not to share a dorm room with

By The Signal Staff  
SIGNAL WRITERS

- 1 The Eye of Sauron. It's big, evil and always watching you. And it never sleeps.
- 2 Sherlock Holmes. He's always deducing who "borrowed" his food.
- 3 Angelica from "Rugrats." She's small, conniving and out to get you.
- 4 Poison Ivy. She'll steal your TWIRP date and kill him with a kiss.
- 5 Draco Malfoy. He's such a little snitch.

Want to help write the Top 5 each week? Submit your ideas on our Facebook page, **OBU Signal**.

# Art show endorses local artists

By ALLISON CORNELL  
Signal Writer

Students can satisfy their craving for culture this weekend by heading to a community-wide art show in downtown Arkadelphia.

"Art Off Main" is a fundraiser for the Arkadelphia Sunrise Rotary Club and will allow attendees to appreciate local artists' work.

"We find that people from the community enjoy the social aspect of the art event as well as viewing art from area artists," said Linda Schuck, president of the Rotary Club. "The event starts at 4:30 p.m. so people can come directly from work and meet their friends for a relaxing time to visit and enjoy the art."

The event exists to promote community artists, help raise funds for local Rotary projects and benefit the artists financially.

"This is not a juried event," said Farrell Ford, chairperson of the event and featured artist. "We expect all art to be tasteful and professional. There is always a variety of art represented because we have so many

artists in this area and their art is very diverse."

Attendees can help the community by participating in the silent auction and buying local artists' work.

"All of the pieces will be for sale," Ford said. "Silent auction art pieces are donated by the artist. Each silent auction art piece will have a bid sheet. Customers will bid on pieces until time is called and the person with the highest bid gets the purchase. The Rotary Club keeps 40 percent of each purchase, other than the donated piece. All proceeds go to a Rotary fund that benefits our local community's needs."

The event takes place every other year, and this year it will be held at the Dawson Co-Operative Center on Clinton Street.

"This year we have a new location, but people can be assured that we will have great art to view as well as hors d'oeuvres to enjoy while browsing and visiting with friends," Schuck said.

"Art Off Main" will be held on Friday, April 8, from 4:30-7:30 p.m.

For more information about "Art Off Main," contact Ford at [farrellv33@gmail.com](mailto:farrellv33@gmail.com). ■

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fishing, a game center, basketball relay and Tiger Trek, a scavenger hunt on campus. Then on Saturday, Traks participants can look forward to a mega-relay, raft races, mud volleyball and tug-of-war.

"The mud pit always seems to be the biggest hit; Traks is always guaranteed to get you dirty," said Callie Stephens, OSF co-president.

In addition to the cash prizes, there will be sportsmanship, spirit and creative costume awards. These awards are another way OSF tries to create a fun environment for the participants. Teams are encouraged to come up with creative names, matching costumes and chants to cheer at the event.

"You don't have to be an athlete to win Traks; you just have to have fun and get dirty," Stephens said. "And students should also remember that all of the proceeds, just like Tiger Tunes, go toward OSF, which means they are given back to students at Ouachita in the form of scholarships."

Tiger Traks will take place on Ouachita's campus tomorrow and Saturday, and 32 teams are competing. For more information, e-mail OSF at [osf@obu.edu](mailto:osf@obu.edu) or follow them on their Twitter account, OSF Official. ■



CALLIE STEPHENS/TheSignal  
GABBY COLEMAN hits a volleyball as part of a game at Tiger Traks last year.

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ter comes alive on stage," Handiboe said. "I also love it when the work brings about clever moments in the movement, pictures and supporting technical elements seen on stage. But the best part is watching the students shine when they finally get the show in front of a live audience."

The music for "Bye Bye Birdie" features "light-hearted" and "upbeat" major, according to MaryLacey Thompson, a freshman musical theater major. The musical is one of the first performed, therefore labeled a classic from its plot to its music and dance moves.

"My favorite part of this entire process would most definitely be the performance aspect of it," Thompson said. "Once we are able to combine

scenery, costumes, props, lights, sound and just be able to perform, that is when the real magic happens. Everything up to that point has a tendency to become stressful and worrisome. But once we get to show week, the end product is always worth it."

"Bye Bye Birdie" performances will be held in Jones Performing Arts Center at April 14-16 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 17, at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased by visiting or calling the Jones Performing Arts Center box office weekdays from 1-5 p.m. or may be purchased online at [www.obu.edu/finearts](http://www.obu.edu/finearts). OBU students can receive one free ticket with their student ID. ■

# Japan earthquakes impact students

Five Japanese exchange students, one study abroad student describe global reaction

By TANNER WARD  
News/Features Co-Editor

For most Ouachita students, the earthquake in Japan was probably just an unfortunate natural disaster in a place far from campus. "Sure this is a terrible situation," they may think, "but it probably will never really affect me."

But for five Ouachita students, the earthquake was real, happening in their own backyards and destroying their home country.

Ouachita is currently hosting five study-abroad students from Fukuoka, Japan, a city located about 600 miles from the epicenter of the quake. The city is on a different island that was not struck directly by the earthquake, and therefore was not affected at all.

"My family and many friends in Fukuoka are [perfectly fine]," said Ryosuke Shimizu, a freshman political science major. "But some of my friends who live in Tokyo got cracks in their houses and couldn't go back to their houses because all of the traffic was stopped."

Tomohiro Mitome, a freshman psychology major, said his family's alcohol shop in Fukuoka has been affected by the quake, but not because of any damage done to the building.

"They could not get into contact with one of their brewers kind of close to the affected area," he said. "So their biggest personal concern so far has been that."

Naoya Shite, a freshman business major, said since Japan has so many earthquakes regularly, he did not think anything of it when he heard from a friend, "but when I watched the news, I was surprised," he said.

The students were able to communicate with their families via e-mail, telephone, Facebook and Skype.

Miki Yokota, a freshman sociology major, said she was "so shocked" after watching the news coverage of the earthquake.

"When I watched the news, I cried," she said. "I was just so sad."

Mitome said he was also surprised when he turned on his TV.

"I was shocked so bad that I was about to cry," he said. "The TV showed me a black wave like a monster in a Hollywood movie just literally swallowing the city."

Daniela Novotna, is a sophomore vocal performance major who is currently studying abroad at Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka. She said she did not feel the quake and was able to communicate with her family and friends immediately.

"I did not have any problem connecting with my family," she said. "Actually, I talked to them on Skype right after the earthquake and told them I was alright. Their



GUNNERY SGT. LEO SALINAS/Courtesy

U.S. Navy Lt. Boyce Gire, a medical planner with the humanitarian assistance survey team, III Marine Expeditionary Force, hands candy to Japanese children during a survey of the Tagajo City Cultural Center March 21.

news still did not know anything about it. So they were like, 'Oh, okay.' The next day we Skyped and they really realized what was going on in Japan."

The 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck just off the coast of eastern Japan at 2:46 p.m. JST on Friday, March 11. The quake, said to be one of the five most powerful in modern history and the most powerful to ever strike Japan, triggered tsunami waves up to 124 feet tall that devastated the shoreline of the island nation.

The tsunami and its aftermath caused explosions at three nuclear power plants. The plants automatically shut down following the earthquake, forcing emergency generators to power the cooling process. When the waves reached the plants, the seawater destroyed the generators, stopping the necessary cooling process.

Officials have since been searching for ways to stop the series of small nuclear meltdowns at the plants. Seawater was pumped into the reactors, but this week, officials noticed the tap water in the regions surrounding the plants has been contaminated.

According to the Japanese National Police Agency,

nearly 3,000 were injured, more than 12,000 people were killed and more than 15,000 are missing, because of the earthquake and tsunami.

Nations from around the world have offered help to Japan. The United States mobilized 20,000 troops to help the affected areas.

"A huge wave of compassion to Japan from all around the world started," Novotna said. "I found it incredible that every country tried to help as much as they can. I personally know many Americans from the U.S. Navy that are helping to clean up the damage caused by the tsunami. In every store you can find a box for you to donate money. Everyone is trying to help."

Mitome said any help for Japan is appreciated.

"If you are strong, come to help the Japanese people," he said. "If you are smart, help with fixing the nuclear reactor. If you can afford, donate a dollar or even a penny. If you can sing very well, come to sing and cheer them up. If you can't find anything you can do, just try knowing about what is going on there. That means so much to us." ■

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ed to be involved at all."

But after a co-worker in Alaska walked in the Alaska MS Walk in honor of Strickland in 1998, his attitude changed from denial to slow acceptance.

This year will mark 12 years of participating in MS Walks for Strickland, first in Alaska where the family lived for 15 years, and now in Arkansas at the Little Rock MS Walk, this year being held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 9, at the River Market.

"I think the biggest part of it all is once you accept you have it, then you want to do something about it," he said. "It just took us years to accept saying we have MS because it is a family disease. It affects your children, your spouse's parents, your parents. Everyone has to come together."

And come together they have.

Each year Russell averages donations of around \$20,000. Checks pour in from relatives and friends from all over the country after receiving the family letter with a personalized note and picture. The Stricklands' \$20,000 fundraising goal for 2011 has already been surpassed within four months.

"I just felt this is the way I can help," Strickland said. "I have a large family and a huge network of friends that I have made working for 18 years. Leanne has a pretty big family as well and a lot of friends, so together we've come up with a list of about 200 people that we send out letters to each year requesting that they make a donation. So with that large network of friends we are able to raise that much money."

After each walk, the Stricklands send out another letter and picture. This is a final thank you to all those supporting Strickland and others in the fight against MS with a

picture of Team Arkadelphia.

Team Arkadelphia is the team that walks alongside Strickland at the MS Walk. Every year it is made up of family, friends, fellow alumni from Ouachita Baptist University where Strickland graduated in 1984, college students from their church, members of the Ouachita social club Rho Sigma of which Strickland is an alum, and others who are familiar with the Stricklands, their fight against MS and the positive attitude they exude.

"The National MS Society is honored to have Russell & Leanne Strickland as volunteers, advocates and fundraisers," noted Lisa Finkbeiner Brown, development manager for the National MS Society. "Over the past 13 years, Russell has raised over \$250,000 to help create a world free of MS. The funds raised have been instrumental in helping develop new MS drug therapies and to help those diagnosed with MS get the information and support they need."

"We are so proud of Russ and his amazing fundraising milestone," Brown added. "He is truly our MS champion."

"We never really lived our faith before this diagnosis because we didn't have to," Strickland reflected. "But then we began to need our faith moment by moment. When people you don't even know ask you, 'How do you do it?', it provides us an opportunity to share our faith. There would be no way we could do this without God. I hate MS, but I love the things I have learned through it."

For more information about the National Multiple Sclerosis Society or Russell Strickland, please visit [www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org) or [www.nationalmssociety.org/goto/russell-strickland](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/goto/russell-strickland). ■

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