In 2013, officials from Home Depot present Oakwood University with winning grant.

Oakwood University has been announced as a finalist in The Home Depot's 2014 RETOOL YOUR SCHOOL Campus Improvement Grant Program. One $50,000 Tier I major grant, 13 Tier II $10,000 grants, and three $25,000 campus pride grants for the schools that receive the most online votes and social media activity, as assessed by The Home Depot®, will be awarded. The Home Depot® will announce the winners on or around May 2.

In 2013 Oakwood won the Tier 1 grant, which allowed the University to construct an outdoor pavilion. Because of last year’s victory, Oakwood is not eligible to win in the Tier 1 category. However, Oakwood is eligible to win in the campus pride category, which will allow the University to re-seed the softball and soccer fields as well as install sprinkler systems.

From February 17 to April 14, supporters can visit www.retoolyourschool.com to vote for Oakwood University's campus improvement project. "We need everyone's support to help Oakwood win this grant," said Kisha Norris, executive director for advancement and development for Oakwood. Oakwood is only Seventh-day Adventist university in the competition.

The winning school of the Campus Pride Grant will be selected by a combination of the applicant's social media activity and voting score. The three applicants with the highest votes and most social media activity, as determined by the sponsor during the voting period, will be awarded with the Campus Pride Grants.

Oakwood University had the most votes last year! Let's do it again. Go to www.retoolyourschool.com and vote as often as possible - and from all of your personal computers and devices. You can also Tweet about the competition using #OakwoodTHDRYS

And be sure to tell your family and friends to do the same.
OU Students Win Honda Trials

This past Sunday, February 16, Oakwood University students competed in and won the trials for the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge in St. Louis, Mo. This automatically qualifies OU for the National Championship Tournament to be held in Calif. in April. Oakwood was a semi-finalist in 2013 and is a two-time national champion.

Honda Campus All-Star Challenge is a knowledge game of quick recall for America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Now in its 25th year, more than $7 million dollars in grants have been awarded by Honda to participating HBCUs and nearly 100,000 students in 22 states have participated.

Members of OU's Honda All-Star Challenge team are Kenesha Bennett, Parris Boles, Greg Edouard, Jennifer Miller, and Antoine Southern. Coach Rennae Elliott, Ph.D., chairperson of the communication department, said "The students represented God and Oakwood well, and they played well." Those that helped the team practice include Sanna-Gay Hird, Sesly Huerfano, and Jhanel Tam.

More than $300,000 is at stake this year, with the champion HBCU earning a $50,000 grant. Oakwood will be one of 48 teams competing for the top prize.

OU Student Wins Essay Contest

By Zawadi Nicholas, student writer

Oakwood senior, Murray Evans Joiner III, won an essay competition that commemorated Martin Luther King Jr.'s service to the American people. Joiner was honored for his essay on January 22 at the Sparkman Center in Huntsville. The event was sponsored by Team Redstone and the Huntsville Center and hosted by the Army Materiel Command.

The competition material was to focus on the work of Dr. King. Joiner's essay was originally for his Business Law class. His professor instructed the class to write about Martin Luther King Jr., and then told them that she would be submitting the essays to the competition. Joiner wrote about Dr. King's role in the continued struggle for emancipation from institutionalized racism.

In his essay, Joiner described Dr. King's work as one that helped ensure that all races could achieve the same level of education. Joiner aspires to become an orthopedic spine surgeon.
American Airlines Magazine Features Oakwood Student
By Zawadi Nicholas, student writer

Oakwood University student Jefferson Lindor is currently being featured in the Black History issue of American Way, a publication by American Airlines. Lindor is a junior management information systems major and he hopes to achieve a successful career in corporate America. "I've always dreamed of being a top leader in a Fortune 500 company, who is very inspiring to my employees. People will respect me because of my integrity, my determination and my work ethic."

It is no surprise that Lindor loves attending Oakwood. "What I like about Oakwood is the spiritual atmosphere and the support of the faculty and staff to the students. I enjoy being at a school that is centered on Christ. It is very important to me, because having a successful career and being wealthy is vain if God is not the main focus in my life."

Click here to read the article in which Lindor tells about how a United Negro College Fund scholarship helped him to continue his academic journey at Oakwood.

Oakwood to Host "Paying for College" Events

Oakwood University is providing useful information for people planning to attend or attending college - sponsoring two days of events to celebrate Financial Aid Awareness Weekend.

On Saturday, February 22, at 6:30 p.m., Oakwood will host its first Scholarship/Funding Summit - "Paying for College" - in the McKee Business & Technology Complex. The target audience for this event includes high school juniors and seniors. However, all Huntsville area students and families, currently enrolled college students and persons interested in attending college are welcomed.

Presenters include representatives from the United Negro College Fund, Oakwood University, and other scholarship granting entities. These organizations will provide current and future students with information and best practices to help families locate, apply for, and receive valuable college scholarships, as well as maximize financial aid and tuition discounts.

On Sunday, February 23, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the McKee Business & Technology Complex, the Oakwood University Office of Financial Aid will host a community outreach program called "College Goal Sunday." On this day, the University is offering free onsite assistance with completion of income taxes and the FAFSA application. Financial aid counselors will also be
available to answer questions about financing college in general, as well as directing students to various financial aid resources.

For more information, contact (256) 726-7210.

Faculty and Staff News

**Kimberly Pearson, '05**, associate chaplain in the Office of Spiritual Life, wrote a story in the January/February 2014 edition of *Message Magazine* titled Scattered Seeds. Her story focuses on how as a child, she was impressed with her mother's gardening skills and she likened this learning experience to the parable of the sower and the seeds. Pearson said "And now I have a deeper respect for gardens, and God the sower, who scatters seeds and patiently waits for the results in our lives."

Last week, **Patti Conwell, '85**, an assistant professor in the communication department, was featured in the online edition of the *Huntsville Times*. Conwell's book topic, that deals with being a single Christian female, was showcased in the column "Spiritual Journeys." To read the entire article, visit here.

Alumni Notes

One could not miss the spunk of **Porsche Vanderhorst, '04**, in the recent *MSEA Dispatch*, the official publication of the Maryland State Education Association. In the article, Vanderhorst, a reading/writing focus teacher and seventh grade English teacher at Benjamin Banneker Middle School in Burtonsville, Md., spoke about her "must-haves" in the classroom. "I value my Anna Knight Hall experience as it truly made a difference in my educational outlook," said Vanderhorst.

Note: If you are an OU alum and would like to share news about yourself, please send them to us.

Pollard's Places

This past Tuesday, I attended a breakfast meeting with other leaders of the Huntsville/Madison County territory. The guest speaker of the breakfast was U.S.
Senator Jeff Sessions. His keynote address focused on key issues facing the Huntsville/Madison County community.
- Dr. Leslie N. Pollard

**OU Picture of the Week**

Oakwood's own, Monica Spencer (right), placed third in the National Miss UNCF competition this past Saturday. Spencer believes in community service and she recently raised awareness on homelessness and hunger by collecting food items for the Downtown Rescue Mission of Huntsville. She is pictured here with the 2014 Miss UNCF. *Photo by Kisha Norris.*

**About Oakwood**

Oakwood University, a historically black, Seventh-day Adventist institution in Huntsville, Alabama, has as its mission to transform students through biblically-based education for service to God and humanity.

*insideOakwood is published by the Office of Integrated Marketing and Public*
American and UNCF help students reach full potential.

Investing in Education

It’s the start of the second semester of my junior year at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala., and truthfully, there was a time I wasn’t sure my education would progress this far. I say this not because I doubted my determination to excel academically, but because of the uncertainty of financial assistance. Thanks to the generosity of companies such as American Airlines, I am one year closer to graduating and fulfilling my dream of becoming a computer network engineer.

In the fall of my sophomore year, while taking 16 credit hours and still maintaining a high GPA, I had many restless nights and skipped numerous social activities so that I could remain focused on what would be a tough road ahead. I was happy with my academic results, but I was worried whether I would be able to continue beyond that school year. I often thought, I wish there was financial support that recognized my academic capabilities and understood the barriers that are keeping me from reaching my full potential.

A few months before I left school for the summer break, I applied for several United Negro College Fund (UNCF) scholarships. To my pleasant surprise, I received a scholarship that would pay the full tuition for my junior year. What a relief! Knowing that I could continue to strive for educational excellence without the worries of finances, I became more determined than ever. I could not disappoint UNCF and its partners for investing in my education and future.

UNCF’s scholarship program, which relies on contributions from companies and individuals, has been a tremendous help in my road to success. Without it, I would have never fully believed that there are organizations which genuinely care about the accomplishments of students — especially minorities — and might not be here to share my story. Furthermore, the scholarship has allowed me to stay on track toward a degree in management information systems, a field that has interested me since my junior year in high school. With a successful career in technology, I hope to one day be able to give back to UNCF so that other students faced with my situation can also receive financial assistance.

You can support UNCF’s scholarship programs, too, through American’s 35-year partnership. I encourage everyone to purchase an American Airlines UNCF co-branded virtual gift card, through which $5 of every $50 spent is donated to help more than 60,000 students like me. And throughout February, in recognition of Black History Month, American is hosting a special AAdvantage® offer benefitting UNCF. With a minimum donation of $25 to UNCF, American will reward your generosity with 10 AAdvantage miles per dollar. American’s employees are also very involved with UNCF through volunteerism, leadership council positions and direct payroll contributions.

For decades, UNCF’s slogan has been, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” Because of these partnerships, students can challenge their minds and contribute to our world, and make it a better place through education.

Visit aa.com/joinus to learn more about how American Airlines helps support UNCF.

Jefferson Lindor is a junior studying management information systems at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala. Originally from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, he hopes to graduate in May 2015 and begin a career in technology, ultimately working his way up to an IT director position.
Oakwood University professor Patti Conwell shares path to contentment (Spiritual Journey)

Oakwood University professor Patti Conwell has re-issued the book she wrote as a 30-something single woman, "Nobody Ever Told Me I Might Not Get Married." For Conwell, reaching adulthood without being married became a test of faith. (Courtesy / Patti Conwell)

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama – How can single people be a Valentine for them? Oakwood University communications professor Patti Conwell, who is now married, remembers the jolt she had, at 30, when she realized her life script had not followed her expectations: She was single.

Her first book, “Nobody Ever Told Me I Might Not Get Married,” chronicles how holding onto her faith – even in a role her church’s expectations hadn’t prepared her for – was a way she developed her life, both personal and spiritual, into something richer.

Here are some notes from the spiritual journey of Patti Conwell, a member of the Oakwood University Seventh-day Adventist Church.

What was one of your toughest times? When I turned 30, I assessed my life as it was and realized that as an older single, my “happily ever after,” aka, a husband, had not arrived -- and I wasn’t sure if he would ever come. I chronicled my thoughts and feelings about being 30 and a Christian single in a book, “Nobody Ever Told Me I Might Not Get Married.” The book reflects how my spiritual upbringing and my “God connection” gave me the courage and the confidence to accept the possibility that I might remain single forever.

You wrote that book, but didn’t release it widely, 22 years ago. Why release it now? Last year, I received two separate phone calls from two single women, one in her mid-30s, one her in her late 20s, asking, “Whatever happened to that book you wrote?” I felt that God was saying it was time to share my story with other “older” Christian single women, particularly, and all singles who could relate to my journey.

In response, I have published my manuscript as an eBook. Census and health statistics all point to the reality that more single households exist than ever before and many are not single by choice. Most of these households are headed by women.

To offer other resources for Christian singles, I am also producing “Simply Single,” a video program featuring a diverse cast of single Christian women to talk about issues they face. We release “Simply Single” on You Tube, and the reception has been very good.

(The book is available for download at NobodyEverToldMe.net).

How does your faith play a part in your day-to-day activities? Being in a relationship with God means He is automatically interwoven into my daily life. From intentionally spending a few minutes every morning and evening in worship, to making comments to Him or asking questions throughout the day, to how I behave in my interactions with others â everything comes from a place of relationship with Him.

Who have been your spiritual role models? My role models have been and are my parents. They not only have shared their spiritual beliefs through the structure of our home while I was growing up, but also through the example of their day-to-day living. They have not been afraid to show the evolution of their spirituality, or to share it with others.

Chaplain and counselor Dr. Renee Mobley, Mindy Dunn and author Patti Conwell join Kenny Anderson, at right, director of Huntsville's Office of Multicultural Affairs, for the Feb. 9, 2014, broadcast, via You Tube, of "Impact." The women discussed challenges to single women and successful relationships. (Youtube.com)
What do you tell people who are discouraged about their spiritual lives? Talking with people you trust, who you know are spiritual, can give you guidance on how to reconnect and jump start where you are. Isolation gives one too much time to focus on the problems, whereas sharing takes you outside of yourself and opens you up to other experiences and ideas.

What is one of your favorite Bible verses? “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:11b-13 NIV.

Follow this link to an episode of "Impact with Kenny Anderson" broadcast on Sunday, Feb. 9, 2014, that featured Patti Conwell with other women who are experts in love relationships.

Spiritual Journeys are a conversation with people in North Alabama about how they are answering the Big Questions. Nominate someone for this feature by contacting Kay Campbell at KCampbell@AL.com or 256-532-4320.