



Newsletter

Fall 2023

**Helping low-income single parents
fulfill their dreams
of self-sufficiency through
post secondary education.**

Oklahoma Single Parent Scholarship Program (OSPSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 2016 on the principle of providing scholarship funding and support services to high potential, low-income single parents. With a bit of financial support and encouragement, eligible single parents - many of them working full-time, raising children alone, struggling to make ends meet and on the brink of dropping out of college - can earn life-changing degrees and escape poverty. Scholarships are offered twice a year for the Fall and Spring semesters. Potential recipients must complete an application demonstrating their need for assistance, potential for success, and proof of full-time enrollment. After the student is awarded, they are matched with a mentor to set goals and receive support.



President's Perspective

Lisa Edmonds, Board President

Fall weather is upon us and the wheels are always in motion at Oklahoma Single Parent Scholarship Program. More people in the community are learning about our amazing organization where we serve motivated, low income single parents who achieve their goal of earning a college degree and becoming financially independent. The demand is high and the need to serve our students continues to grow at a rapid pace. Our unrestricted scholarship of \$1200 per semester makes a huge difference for single parents navigating school, children and basic needs.

OSPSP has seen tremendous growth since it was established in 2016, growing from 5 scholarships granted to 50. I joined the board in 2019 and it was my first time to be involved in a relatively new organization, at the time what I would consider a grassroots non-profit. Board members were involved in every aspect, including the administrative tasks of running OSPSP. Most of the members had their own careers and this was a side commitment that generated passion. Part time administrative help was gradually added and thanks to our growth and generous donors we were able to hire a full time program director this spring. Julie Leclercq was introduced in our last newsletter and she took off running before we could say GO!

We closed September with our Reach for the Stars fundraiser, held at the ever generous venue of Dunlap Coddling in downtown OKC. What a great evening and we raised \$64,000! YOU made that happen and we are truly grateful.

Enjoy this edition of our newsletter where you'll learn more about our mentorship program, our newly established endowment at Oklahoma City Communities Foundation and newest board members.

Please share the good news of Oklahoma Single Parent Scholarship Program and know your financial contribution truly does make a difference with us. We are small, but we think BIG!

Lisa Edmonds

**Fall 2024 Scholarship
Application Open
June 1 - July 30, 2024
www.okspsp.org/apply**



Award Ceremony celebrates Student Recipients



Langston University

Kianna Antwine
Cleo Hamlet

OCCC

Maya Abdul- Aziz
Kelli Swaim
Breanna Walls

OCU

Kathrine Hughes

OSU

Nikki Anderson
Kelsey Bowen
Kristina Hibbert
Bree Mercer

OSU-OKC

Hannah Harris
Roger Stickler
Lateara Wooley

Rose State

Tyler Gentry
Valerie Gore
Lori Richardson

SNU

Sheneer Pickens

OU

Jessica Blackwell
Tyanne Brewer

UCO

Melanie Armstrong
Breionna Hayes
Iris Molina
Trelisha Prince
Karla Santos-Perez
Samantha Smith
Rosaura Teus

USAO

Maggie Barnett
Telle Lanum



Mary Anne Jones

Delisha Gardner

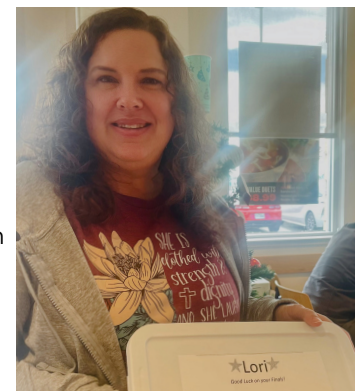
Spring 2023 Graduates

Tristen Baker Psychology Rose State
Lisa Ballard Nutrition and Dietetics UCO
Tyanne Brewer Sociology Rose State
Ariana Camerlin Deaf Education USAO
Jarrah East Physical Therapy OCCC
Delisha Gardner Health Information Management Rose State
Adrine Fouateng Wanchie Radiology Technology OSU-OKC
Tobie Golden Business Management UCO
Mary Anne Jones Nursing OCCC



MENTOR PERSPECTIVE

I served as a mentor the last two years to a dedicated single mom student who graduated this past Spring with her B.S. degree and is currently continuing her Master's Degree studies in Diet and Nutrition Sciences at UCO. She greatly appreciated OSPSP's financial and emotional support.



My current student, Lori R. is working diligently to receive her RN degree from Rose State. She is an older Mom, returning to school to ensure financial security. She has one grown daughter with a 7 year old living on their own. In her home, Lori has a 16 year old daughter, as well as her 18 year old daughter (studying to get her GED), and her 16 month old grandchild. Lori's academic goal is to graduate in May 2024 after she completes the required clinical rotations, and then to find a secure job as a registered nurse.

Lori described the daily pressure she feels as a single parent student, "I was really worried about financial aid last semester. It's been a struggle to pay rent and the OSPSP scholarship helped me cover it. I also like the support safety net that the mentors provide as listeners and resources for us".

As a mentor, my role is to be a good listener and encourager. Our students are already on a tight timeframe, so we often just text or call to stay in touch. Lori lets me know when she finishes a big exam week, and updates me on upcoming challenges and goals. During finals week, OSPSP provides care packages to all of our recipients. Hopefully it is reassuring that others are in their corner, cheering for their success. - **Marcy Price, OSPSP Mentor**

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

OUR BOARD HAS GROWN AND THRIVED OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, BRINGING TOGETHER A DIVERSE GROUP OF LEADERS FROM A VARIETY OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS.

WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME OUR FIVE MOST RECENT MEMBERS TO THE OSPSP BOARD.

Susan Carns Curtiss comes from a military family that values serving others and keeping communities safe. In her professional life as a trial lawyer, Susan advocates on behalf of the hurt and the vulnerable. She once did a TEDx talk describing the “imperfect path” that she followed to be able to do the work that she loves for her clients.

SUSAN CARNS CURTISS



Susan was a single-parent law student with three children ranging in age from 2 years – 8 years, yet she met this challenge with the help (both physically and financially) of a caring network of friends and family. As Susan noted in her board application, “I’ve always looked for ways to support others in that situation”. She remains grateful for the ability to complete her law degree and plans to serve as a mentor to our scholarship students pursuing a higher degree. Her empathy, expertise and personal experience will be an asset for our scholarship students and the board.



SARAH CORE

A former OSPSP scholarship recipient, Sarah says “I was completely honored to become a part of such a great group of people working together to make things happen for this organization. I have seen how much OSPSP has grown over the past few years and I am so excited to do whatever I can do to help it grow even further. I myself benefited from this program while I was going through Nursing school years ago, so to be able to give back specifically through serving OSPSP as a board member is something that is very near to my heart. I absolutely love being a part of an organization that really helps students succeed and feel supported.”



CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON

Chris joined the OSPSP board earlier this year and has added his voice and support to our work on behalf of single parents as both a board member and mentor to a male student. He heard about OSPSP through contacts in his workplace at Bank of Oklahoma. Before Chris attended college and met his wife, he served in the Air Force for seven years and was deployed overseas multiple times. “I feel like I am here for a purpose because so many didn’t come home or were maimed.” Now that Chris is happily married and has a young child of his own, he recognizes the many stresses and challenges of today’s students to complete their degrees. “I never had a grandfather and my own parents grew up in single parent homes and were young parents themselves. ...I am happy to do my part to help others now that I am in a position to do so.”

LuAnne Kuelzer, Ph.D. is an associate professor of English at OSU-OKC. Enrolling in college as a newly divorced mother of three, LuAnne experienced many of the hardships and barriers to success that OSPSP students face. In the fourteen years between marriages, LuAnne earned three university degrees, while also working full time. She has been an OSPSP mentor for three years.

LuAnne is perfectly situated to encourage and to empathize with her mentees to put one foot in front of the other to meet their academic goals despite all the challenges and stresses of being a single parent.

“I have complete empathy for single parents trying to complete their degrees, because I went back to school as a single parent with minimal financial support.”

LuAnne is now in a position to provide a sense of hope to first generation college students to “just keep putting one foot in front of the other” until they reach their academic and professional goals.

LUANNE KUEZLER



JESSICA SCHWAGER

Jessica Schwager is the Director of the Scholarship Programs at the OKC Community Foundation, which oversees \$3.4 million of distributions and awards 200+ scholarship funds of various types. Last Fall, Jessica attended our “Reach for the Stars” fundraiser with a former colleague and current OSPSP board member, Morgan Brammer. At the event, Jessica heard first hand about the impact and value of our scholarship and mentoring program.

Jessica noted that she is acutely aware of the financial needs of students. She spends her days helping applicants go through the paper process, but becoming a mentor would enable her to be a part of the people process as well. We look forward to adding Jessica’s expertise, interests and networking capacity to our board.

A FRESH FOCUS ON MENTORSHIP

Morgan Brammer, Committee Chair

This year we wanted to make mentorship more of a focus. In addition to the scholarship money recipients receive each semester, they are also paired with a mentor. For some of our scholarship recipients their mentor is a crucial, if not the only, support person during their journey to completing higher education.

This year, the OSPSP Mentorship Committee desired to provide more guidance to our volunteer mentors by educating them in additional resources available to the student recipients. The Oklahoma City Community Foundation held a zoom on additional scholarship opportunities our recipients should pursue. OU held an information session regarding Career Coaching advising our mentors how to speak to their mentee about not only getting a job, but finding one that makes them happy.

**Contact studenservices@okspsp.org
if you are interested in becoming a mentor!**

*Thank you,
Fall 2023 Mentors!*

Belinda Bruner
Susan Carns Curtiss
Nadine Davis
Nikki Edwards
Kate England
Mary Fitch
Pat Gilland
Brittany Hunt- Jassey
Ellen Ingram
Chris Johnston
Jamie Kalcich
LuAnne Kuelzer
Lori Lake
Amber Martin
Lisa McConnell
Suzii Parsons
Angela Pradia
Marcy Price
Stephanie Roberts
Kristin Russell
Christa Rylant
Alix Samara
Amy Smallwood
Chip and Lisa Taylor
Char Taylor
Jill Trauschke
Jennifer Watkins
Dorothy Weaver
Ashlie Wilhelm
Susie Wilson



2023 OSPSP Board of Directors

Lisa Edmonds, President
Halley Reeves, President Elect
Molly McBride, Treasurer
Jane Nelson, Secretary
**Jill C Trauschke, Past President

*Denotes new member
** Thank you to our outgoing members

Taylor Boyd
Morgan Brammer
Laura Burdette
Evelyn Cardona
**Steven Charles
Ellen Ingram
Sarah Core*
Susan Carns Curtiss*

Ellen Ingram
Christopher Johnston*
LuAnne Kuelzer*
Randal Lewis
Kelly Mirabile
Donna Mullins
Marcy Price
Jessica Schwager*
**Monica Weedn

OSPSP WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Leclercq was born and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana. After completing her undergraduate and law degrees at SMU in Dallas, she moved to Oklahoma City. Julie practiced insurance defense law for six years, but chose to move into the nonprofit sector after having triplets and subsequently a fourth child. Julie worked as Oklahoma's NICU Family Support Specialist for the March of Dimes for almost five years. She has stayed home with her children since 2015 and has served as a board member, committee member, and volunteer for several nonprofit organizations during that time.

In the NICU, Julie's primary job was to provide emotional support to parents in hopes of making their NICU stay a little less painful and a little more enjoyable. She views her OSPSP positions as a great opportunity to continue serving families in much the same way- supporting parents in need through a potentially difficult phase of parenthood. Julie brings leadership, fundraising, finance, and event planning experience as well. She is excited to assist OSPSP in a time of growth. Welcome Julie!



JULIE LECLERCQ

Sponsors

Doctorate Level

Chip + Lisa Taylor

Masters Level



Bentley + Lisa Edmonds

Bachelors Level

Sean + Jill Trauschke



REACH FOR THE STARS 2023

RAISES OVER \$64,000

SUPPORTERS, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS OF OSPSP GATHERED TOGETHER IN SEPTEMBER TO RAISE FUNDS, INCREASE AWARENESS AND GENERATE SUPPORT FOR THE ORGANIZATION THAT HAS HELPED APPROXIMATELY 60 SINGLE PARENTS GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE SINCE 2016. FUNDS RAISED AT THIS EVENT ARE THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND OPERATING DOLLARS.



Taylor Family Encourager Award Presented at Reach for the Stars

OSPSP was proud to introduce the “Taylor Family Encourager’s Award” at the recent Reach for the Stars event. The inaugural award was given to its namesake, the Lisa and Chip Taylor Family. Lisa and Chip accepted the award at the event on behalf of themselves and their mothers. According to OSPSP co-founder Ellen Ingram, “We named the new award in honor of Chip and Lisa Taylor because they have been such vital encouragers to OSPSP and our students. The couple serve as mentors to a current scholarship recipient and also their early support of OSPSP encouraged us to keep working to grow our young nonprofit.”

OSPSP intends to award the Taylor Family Encourager’s Award annually to promote the Taylor family’s legacy and to recognize others who encourage our program and students.

“We are honored to be recognized in this way and consider it a tribute to our mothers who were such role models. We will continue to be advocates for the program and do what we can to spread the word about all the great things going on with Oklahoma Single Parent Scholarship Program.”

Associates Level

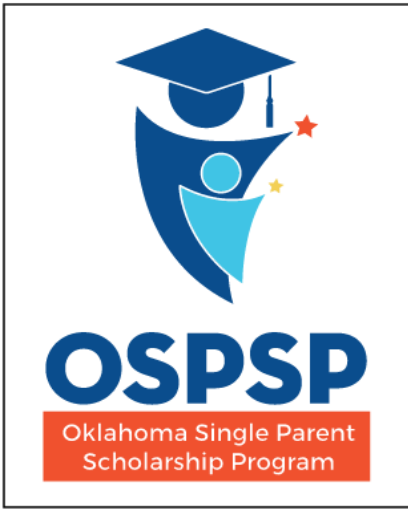
- Dan + Barbara Batchelor
- Barbara Bonner
- Susan Carns Curtiss
- Cynthia Defehr
- David + Jane Edmonds Annexie
- Kunzeman + Andrea Fraley
- Andrea Horsch
- Dale + Ellen Ingram
- Kelly Mirabile
- Manda Ruffin
- Dan + Jaime Reineke
- Pat + Kristin Russell
- Travis + Jennifer Watkins
- Nissa Willis



OSPSP Commits to Organization Longevity with Endowment

Oklahoma Single Parent Scholarship Program created an endowment with the Oklahoma City Community Foundation in 2023 with an initial gift of \$35,000 from one charitable donor. The generous support of the Kirkpatrick Family Foundation and several other donors in 2023 allowed the new endowment to grow to about \$53,000. The endowment began for the purpose of ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of OSPSP. Our goal for the endowment remains the same as it was at the inception of the endowment: Funds generated will be used to strengthen the organization's capacity to help low-income single parents increase their education levels and improve their ability to care for their families. We will use endowment-generated funds as a reliable source for future operational support. While donations to OSPSP is necessary for our current day to day operations and scholarship opportunities, donations to the endowment are just as important for our longevity. Please consider donating to the OSPSP Endowment and help us to continue to prosper and grow for the future.





Learn More at
www.okspsp.org

