

OAKWOOD COLLEGE BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT—NOT JUST ACADEMICS

A *Washington Post* article on Saturday, December 26, 1998, featured the bold headline: “African-American Students Bring Christmas to a Village in Sudan.” Next to the headline was a picture of Oakwood College (Huntsville, Alabama) students playing Christmas tunes to villagers whom they had volunteered to help in lieu of a Christmas vacation of food, fun, and football back in the United States.

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Why were Adventist students spending their vacation in a dusty village in Sudan, an area plagued by repeated famine and civil war? One of the group answered, “This is the best Christmas I’ve ever had because I’m giving of myself—and that’s what Christmas is all about.” The students handed out bowls of corn meal and peanut butter to dozens of children, performed religious skits, and sang Christian hymns. They also conducted an evangelistic crusade in Pamlit, Sudan, which produced hundreds of baptisms.

A NAPS volunteer feeds children in South Sudan.

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This Sudanese outreach is no isolated event. The Oakwood College biology department, headed by Anthony Paul, combines rigorous scholarship with an unflinching commitment to service. Students and faculty formed the National Association for the Prevention of Starvation (NAPS), an organization that not only has relieved starvation, but has also provided for critical medical and housing needs of developing countries such as Haiti, where they’ve spent hundreds of hours in medical-dental screening, home repair, and other citizen-assisted projects—often donating money from their own pockets.

A NAPS volunteer visits a nursing home in Tennessee.

Nor is the biology department’s min-

strong emphasis on advanced study and scholarship. Indeed, the science program at Oakwood College ranks within the top seven across the United States in preparing the most African-American students for entry into medical and professional schools.

Paul and his students have done considerable research into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). They presented their research at an international symposium on brain-stem physiology in Washington, D.C., alongside renowned scientists from Germany, England, Japan, Russia, and France. This resulted in a recently published article in a scholarly research monograph series entitled *Ventral Brain-stem Mechanisms and Control of Respiration and Blood Pressure* published by Marcel Decker, Inc. of New York, Basel, and Hong Kong. Also as a result, one of the Oakwood students spent a summer in Germany working with scientists who had been impressed with the research reported at the congress. Their article was the only one in this advanced research report co-authored by undergraduate students.

The largest department at Oakwood and the recipient of research grants of nearly half a million dollars, the biology department has well-equipped laborato-

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A NAPS volunteer participates in a baptism in Sudan.

istry limited to overseas efforts. Dr. Paul and his students recently helped build a church and school in Hurtsboro, Alabama. They also helped an elderly couple in rural Mississippi (ages 107 and 102 respectively!) to find suitable housing to replace the tumble-down house where they had resided for the past 70 years. NAPS volunteers have worked in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and wherever the need calls.

On Sabbaths, biology students go to small rural areas around the college, where they help establish churches and aid communities ravaged by poverty and spiritual decline.

Service—No Substitute for Scholarship

The biology department's activist role in service programs does not replace a

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A NAPS volunteer crew at a tornado relief operation in Birmingham, Alabama.

ries with sophisticated equipment, such as an electron microscope. Oakwood is one of the few undergraduate institutions using human cadavers for anatomical analyses. On the bulletin board in the hall

is a list of more than 20 students from the Class of 1998 who have been accepted into medical and professional schools.

The many accomplishments of the biology department at Oakwood under-

score the fact that the fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom. At Oakwood, science, scholarship, and service meet in a wonderful example of Christian higher education at its best. ✍

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NAPS volunteers visit Mrs. Barnette, a Mississippi centenarian.

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The Oakwood College SIDS researchers. Front row, from left: Nicola Thomas, Alecia McLean, and Beverly Turner. Back row, from left: Owen Gardner, Lloyd Henry, Dr. Anthony D. Paul, David Lofters, and Conwin Vanterpool.

A NAPS volunteer packs supplies for hurricane victims in Honduras.