Blecha starts photo biz

By Danielle Jurski ’12

Sarah Blecha, senior with dual majors in communication studies and sociology, isn’t letting the economy slow her down. In fact, she’s capturing memories for people and families who would not have them otherwise.

“I have always been interested in photography and athletics and truly enjoy sporting events,” Blecha said. “Today the majority of sports photographers are hired as freelance photographers, so I decided starting my own business would be the best way to start a career as a sports photographer.”

Blecha’s business, which she named Blecha Photography, is receiving good responses.

“I’m working on expanding the number and variety of events I’m shooting and getting the word out,” Blecha said. “I love sports photography, but I am also taking portrait photography, weddings, event photography, and even photography for marketing and advertising purposes.”

Kara Cunningham, assistant professor of communication, has watched Blecha develop since she enrolled at OU.

“I think it’s a great idea [that she’s started a business], it can only help her,” Cunningham said.

“When Sarah first came in, she just took sports action shots. She is now also a great feature photographer.”

See Blecha, page 4.

Poe prepares for fall graduation

By Megan Reed ’13

Linda Poe, senior from Norwich, first found out about Ottawa University by attending Braving Discipleship while in high school. She chose OU because of the small school setting, which gave her many opportunities to be involved.

Poe has been involved in many different clubs and organizations at OU, such as Surge Ministries, Braving Discipleship, and CFA. She also was a resident assistant, played ultimate frisbee, was editor of The Ottawan yearbook, and served as a section editor for The Campus newspaper.

Poe will receive dual majors in business administration and communication studies with a concentration in visual communication. She has maintained a high GPA and has been on the Dean’s List.

Ottawa University helped Poe pick her career in photography. It has also helped her explore who she is in her faith and what that means in the world.

Poe believes it is a good idea for students to attend a liberal arts college because they need to understand what they believe and why. She says you may not believe everything you hear, but at least you have the resources to know why you do not believe it.

Poe’s family is a huge part of her life and visit her often. Last year, her sister also chose to attend OU and Poe loves having her on campus.

After graduation, Poe is considering applying to a photography school to further her knowledge of photography.
It is an exciting year for the Division of Communication Studies at Ottawa University. We have completed our digital conversion and integration of our media; we have initiated new co-curricular activities; and we continue to welcome new community partnerships.

One of the unique program offerings in Communication Studies is our 1-hour, repeatable production labs. These courses stand alone as portfolio-building, experiential learning environments, and they offer laboratory supplements to our many journalism, speech, photography, advertising and broadcast classes.

This year, we have initiated a new lab class called digital media production which creates original web media content, produces the digital yearbook, and coordinates content for our online campus newspaper, radio, and advertising classes.

We also welcome a new member of the Radio’s advisory staff Bob Johnson, from area radio station, KOFO. Bob is our new Play-By-Play Advisor for KTJO, The Rage. The Sports staff is opening the door to call additional sports than we have in the past, offering video of selected games, and providing more varied formats for sports talk shows.

Digital integration has been a focus in our pedagogy, as well as our media. Almost all communication courses are taught with both a classroom “on the ground” portion and a virtual, online portion of the class. This variety of delivery formats enriches the flexibility and versatility of our alumni as they enter into the digital age workplace.

Additionally, we will continue to develop fully online courses as alternatives for students to provide even more flexibility to our current communication offerings.

Our co-curricular opportunities for students to apply their knowledge have grown as well. In addition to the Ottawa Associated Collegiate Press, the Public Relations Department is forming a disaster preparedness group called Ottawa Disaster Action Team (ODAT), an interdisciplinary club co-sponsored with the Biology Department.

Other spring additions include a full roll-out of the new streaming presence of the radio station, a small on-campus concert series (co-sponsored by forensics & radio), slam poetry performances, speech showcases, comedy improv, and a re-invigoration of Ottawa’s pre-law program.

Ottawa Communication Studies recognizes growing role of communication in every element of the home and workplace life. We continue to develop relevant and impactful experiences to prepare our students to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

Department Trips
American Advertising Federation Career Day, Kansas City, Mo. • Nov. 2

The Campus National College Media Convention Austin, Tx. • Oct. 28-Nov. 1


Speakers
Branding You
Jack Cassidy, CEO of RJH Public Relations Ltd. Oct. 22

Crisis Communication
Justin LaBerge Sr. Account Executive Sturges Word Comm. Nov. 23

Service-Learning
Principles of Advertising
-Paper Haven
-Brandywine Liquor
-Exploration Place
-Potter’s Wheel

Layout & Design:
-People Against Childhood Cancer
-Yellow Pages Contest

Senior Comps Showcase Learning

Summer Graduates:
Maria Miller
Conflict Resolution Workshop

Fall Graduates:
Latasha Berry
Advertising Plan
Linda Poe
Coffee Table Book
Tony Anderson
Advertising Campaign

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Ottawa Communication Studies recognizes growing role of communication in every element of the home and workplace life. We continue to develop relevant and impactful experiences to prepare our students to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

Each communication studies major at Ottawa University is required to do a senior comprehensive project to showcase skills.

The project is completed during a student’s final semester. Students select and work with a senior comp faculty board including Shannon Dyer, division chair, a second communication professor, and an at-large faculty member.

The project is broken into three areas – past, present and future. The past section includes an essay highlighting the student’s OU experience. The present section includes a résumé, as well as an in-depth portfolio of work completed by the student in classes and during internships. The future section includes a research paper about the student’s chosen career field.

In addition, each senior completes a breadth project related to their chosen career. Students have the freedom to design a project that will highlight their skills and prepare them for their chosen careers.
**Joel Wright, freshman from Kansas City, says he has learned a lot his first semester of college. He is majoring in communication with a concentration in journalism.**

Wright became involved in journalism his junior year at Piper High School. He was a state finalist in cartooning and won a regional honorable mention award for editorial writing. Wright also wrote sports columns for the Wyandotte West Weekly community newspaper.

At OU, Wright is a staff writer for The Campus newspaper and a member of the OU football team. In his spare time, he likes to “chill with friends, watch television or play Madden.”

**Laura Reed, junior from Basehor, describes herself as a “hard worker with big dreams.”**

She is majoring in communication with a concentration in public relations. Reed is currently learning new media skills through enrollment in the new digital media production class, which produces the website: www.OUcampus.org.

Reed believes the production courses are great and are worth taking. Reed says her involvement in these courses helped strengthen skills she’ll need in public relations.

Reed is on the women’s golf team and the community relation’s leader for the Ottawa Disaster Action Team, a new disaster-relief organization on campus. Last summer, she interned with the Wyandotte County Chapter of the American Red Cross completing public relations tasks.

**Ceviona Taylor, sophomore from St. Louis, is majoring in communication and considering a concentration in speech performance.**

Taylor has a strong interest in the speech field and is currently in forensics. Taylor has had the opportunity to compete in a few pageants, which required her to use a lot of her communication skills.

In the future, Taylor plans on attending law school, getting her master’s degree in communication, owning her own law firm, and also trying the modeling and acting industries.

When Taylor is not in class, she likes to hang out with friends, work out, and go shopping, to movies and the spa.

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Forensics & Debate Awards

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY
Ottawa, Kan. • Oct. 16-17

4th Debate Speaker
Michael Matos

8th Debate Speaker
Danielle Fulmer

Quarterfinalists, Debate
Michael Matos &
Aaprala Mills
Lee Nave, Jr. &
Melissa Bailey

7th Impromptu Speaking
Lee Nave, Jr

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI
Warrensburg, Mo. • Nov. 5-7

5th Poetry
Joanna Woolens

4th & 5th Oral Interpretation
Danielle Fulmer

4th Persuasive
Michael Matos

Forensics Host Pi Kappa Delta Tourney

By Marsette Harris ’12 and Danielle Fulmer ’11

Pi Kappa Delta is the oldest, and some argue the most prestigious, national forensics honorary in the country. Since being founded in 1913, Ottawa University’s Alpha Chapter for Pi Kappa Delta has grown into a huge success.

For the first time, the Alpha Chapter hosted a Pi Kappa Delta regional tournament, which was held Oct. 16-18 on the OU campus.

“Students from around the country competed,” Ryan Louis, director of forensics, said. “Ottawa’s forensics team had the unique opportunity to host and compete at the tournament.”

The tournament included students from 13 regional collegiate speech and debate teams. Students competed in several debate and forensics events including persuasive, informative, after-dinner speaking, communications analysis, impromptu, poetry, dramatic interpretation, prose, program of oral interpretation, and debate.

“There were three types of debates and 11 individual events offered, ranging from interpretations to memorized and limited preparation platform speeches,” Louis said.

The students that competed were in almost every public building on campus and shared space with OU students. The tournament concluded with an awards ceremony for the winning teams and individuals.

The events happened simultaneously, so each classroom and conference space saw action. The majority of the rooms had a judge and six competitors.

Lunch and breakfast was provided for all tournament goers. Louis and the OU forensics team made sure students from competing schools were comfortable and well provided for. The team also competed, with five team members receiving awards for their events.

The Alpha Chapter was honored to host the tournament and is excited to see the growth in the forensics program.

Blecha: continued from page 1

Blecha has done internships for the Kansas City T-bones, and The Ottawa Herald and has held a work-study position with OU’s Sports Information Department. She has also won awards from the Kansas Associated Collegiate Press, including 1st place awards for sports photography and 2nd place for feature photography.

“My work study position has allowed me to develop my skills and grow my portfolio in ways that I would have never thought to be possible,” Blecha said. “My internships also helped me determine what I was really interested in doing.”

Blecha’s work-study position with sports information has also led her into other job opportunities within the department.

“After working for sports information for the last three years as a student worker, this year I am very excited to be able to hire her as a professional photographer for the department,” Katie Tooley, director of sports information, said. “She does an excellent job of capturing student athletes in motion.”

When Blecha graduates in May, she hopes to land a position working for a professional sports team, preferably a National Football League team or for the Professional Bull Riders. She will have the support of OU behind her.

“She has grown more confident in her abilities and it shows in her photographs,” Tooley said. “She has the courage to follow her dream in photography, and I am going to enjoy watching her grow as a photographer.”

Tooley isn’t the only one that will be rooting for her on the other side.

“I think photography is such a big part of her life and will continue to be,” Cunningham said.

To view or order Blecha’s photography, visit the website: www.sblecha.photobiz.com/cart.
Yearbook Makes Switch to Digital Publication

By Cyrus Oliver ’10
Reprint from The Campus

Ottawa University’s annual student yearbook The Ottawan is one of many college yearbooks undergoing changes this year.

While the majority of college yearbooks in Kansas have gone out of print and into an exclusively digital realm, The Ottawan remained one of the state’s last yearbooks made available in print until this semester.

Shannon Dyer, chair of communication studies, cited several reasons for the switch from a print to digital yearbook, including the versatility digital media offers, the quick turnaround time in publishing digitally as opposed to print, and the fact that many print yearbooks never find a home.

“We’re moving toward digital media integration because digital media fits who we are as a nation,” Dyer said, adding that the student body population is more digital savvy than previous generations.

Dyer notes that the decision to make a transition from a print to a solely digital yearbook was not an easy one.

“We tried to do both, but it isn’t feasible,” Dyer said. “This was a tough call, and I’m sure all students — even those who never read the yearbook — will feel some sort of a loss.”

However, Dyer added that she is excited about the new direction The Ottawan is taking and feels it will better train students to be proficient in working with digital tools.

Along with the change in medium, The Ottawan will no longer feature mug shots of the entire student body and not every student will be represented in it unless they attend campus events. Much of the material used in the new yearbook will be compiled from The Campus, the upcoming KTJO The Rage, online material, and content that will be created exclusively for The Ottawan.

Students generally feel positive about the yearbook’s future.

Linda Poe, senior, has been heavily involved in recent publications of the yearbook but had no idea of the transition until classes started this fall.

“It isn’t like the department is getting rid of archiving the yearly campus activities altogether,” Poe said. “They are just changing the format in which it is going to be available.”

Clarence Anderson, junior, looks forward to the yearbook’s possibilities.

“It’s good that there’s always going to be change,” Anderson said. “Someday something will come to replace the digital stuff.”

Newspaper Awards

KANSAS ASSOCIATED COLLEGIATE PRESS
Hutchinson, Kan. • April 19-20

Sarah Blecha
1st Sports Photography
1st & 3rd Photo Essay
2nd Feature Photography

Jeremiah Allan
1st & 3rd Editorial Writing
HM Headline Writing
HM Review Writing

Ali Small
1st & 3rd Photo Essay
2nd Interior Page Design

Latasha Berry
2nd Infographic Design

Cyrus Oliver
2nd & 3rd Cartoons
HM Illustrations

Latasha Berry
3rd Single Ad Design

Danielle Jurski
3rd Interior Page Design

Linda Poe
3rd Photo Essay

Lynsie Keaton
HM Headline Writing

Crystal Snyder
HM Cartoons

Leah Frey
HM Sports Feature Writing

Emily Loughary
HM Interior Page Design
HM Series Writing
HM Feature Writing

Maria Miller
HM Series Writing

Willie Ramsdell
HM Sports Column Writing

Campus Staff
Silver Award
1st Series Writing
3rd Series Writing
Cunningham uses skills to make a difference

By Lisa Wellman '99
Reprint from Ottawa Spirit

Every mom is her own child’s advocate. It's more unusual to find a mom advocating for strangers who may not know they need it. Kara Cunningham is that mom.

Cunningham is in her fourth year as assistant professor of communication studies and business at OU. Her mastery of public relations, communication and journalism is evidenced in the numerous awards her students win and the unique, practical projects they complete. However, her ability to communicate clearly and passionately is never more obvious than in her advocacy for children cancer patients.

Cunningham’s advocacy work began with a regular medical exam for her son, Lane. Their family doctor noticed Lane’s stomach felt a bit tight. A softball size tumor was removed just two days later. He was not quite nine months old at the time of his diagnosis—stage 4 neuroblastoma. Lane’s extensive treatment spanned 16 months and included chemotherapy and three surgeries. In September of 2007, Lane’s physicians officially declared him in remission. He has tests every six months and fortunately remains cancer free.

Most people would thank God and try to forget the harrowing experience. For Cunningham, though, the need to spread the word about early detection trumps her desire to put her family’s nightmare to rest.

“I feel compelled to use my knowledge to better inform parents about childhood cancer,” says Cunningham. “Early detection saved Lane’s life and maybe our story will make a difference in the life of another child.”

As with everything in her life, Cunningham tackled childhood cancer awareness with fervor.

Her first attempt to share her story was a letter to the editor in September of 2007. Originally far too long for newspaper publication, Cunningham edited the letter and re-submitted it to seven publications; five printed it.

“Anyone can write a letter to the editor,” says Cunningham. “However, that small step informed countless readers about the danger of childhood cancer. I knew I could do more, so I found other ways to be involved.”

Her extensive promotion of Alex’s Lemonade Stand, a foundation that raises money to find a cure for childhood cancer, proved very successful in the greater Kansas City area. The local annual intake of donations went from $84,000 to $132,000 the first year Cunningham served as media and publicity coordinator. Cunningham also finds time to serve as Kansas Team Leader for Cure Search National Childhood Cancer Foundation. This position takes her to Washington, D.C., to lobby for funding and share Lane’s experience with lawmakers. Cunningham believes her testimony strikes a chord with Congress members because she doesn’t focus on statistics they already know.

“I tell them our story,” says Cunningham. “I explain how a diligent family doctor and early detection made all the difference for Lane. We’re not a statistic. We’re a real family they can remember when they vote on cancer funding.” Cunningham will make her sixth trip to lobby before Congress in January.

Back home in Kansas, Cunningham has a position on the Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics regional council board. She served has as event coordinator for the Pediatric Oncology Benefit Train Ride and Heroes and Halos National Childhood Cancer Awareness Day Celebration.

Cunningham puts her communication skills to work on a regular basis when she advocates for Lane and children like him. She has written

Continued next page.
### Spring 2010 Communication Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<td>Media Sales Workshop</td>
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<td>COM11023</td>
<td>Speech Prep &amp; Delivery</td>
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<td>Intercollegiate Forensics</td>
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<td>Oral Interpretation</td>
<td>Louis</td>
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<td>Voice &amp; Diction</td>
<td>Aguirre</td>
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<td>Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Cunningham</td>
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Columns and articles for publications such as The Kansas City Star and KC Parent Magazine, has done multiple media interviews and has designed collateral materials such as brochures and t-shirts.

This unstoppable mom also reads cancer-related stories to children and parents at area libraries and speaks to civic organizations to further her cause.

Cunningham is just as dedicated to her teaching position as she is to advocating for cancer patients. She didn’t miss a single day of work due to Lane’s cancer, but instead moved her classroom online while he was in the hospital. She credits OU’s family atmosphere as one of many blessings she counted on during her son’s battle.

OU is equally grateful for Cunningham’s contribution and dedication. “As Kara fought tooth and nail for her son’s life,” says Barb Dinneen, professor of English and director of liberal arts studies, “she also transformed our journalism track and reinvigorated the student newspaper, modeling grace and energy under duress.”

---

### Degree Concentrations:

- Advertising
- Business Communication
- Film Studies
- Journalism
- Public Relations
- Radio Broadcasting
- Speech
- Performance
- Visual Communication
2009

Will Allison works in Washington, D.C. as a deputy communications director for Congressman Tom Price of Georgia.

Allison Small works as an admissions representative for Corban College in Salem, Oregon.

Emily Loughary is pursuing her MBA at Kansas State University where she is also a graduate research assistant for the Technology Entrepreneurship program.

Maria (Miller) Hague is pursuing a master’s degree in conflict management and dispute resolution from Baker University. She married Brad Hague in August 2009.

Clay Fagan works as an admissions representative for The College at Ottawa University.

2008


Nicole Lemons is as a marketing coordinator for Gragg Advertising in Kansas City.

2007

Jennifer Diller will graduate in May 2010 with her master’s degree in speech pathology from Fort Hays State University. She was recently engaged to Caleb Svaty.

2006

Danae McCraken is a public relations executive for Shook, Hardy and Bacon LLP in Kansas City.

Communication Connection is the official newsletter for the Division of Communication Studies at the College. It is published by students bi-annually and distributed free of charge. If you have ideas or would like to be featured in an upcoming issue, e-mail Kara.Cunningham@ottawa.edu.

Designers
Danielle Jurski ‘12
Megan Reed ’13

Photographers
Sarah Blecha ’10
Erin Frey ’12

Writers
Megan Reed ’13
Danielle Jurski ’12
Marsette Harris ’12
Danielle Fulmer ’11
Cyrus Oliver ’10
Lisa Wellman ’99

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