

To the Rick Dye, conference officers, and board members.

On our personal journey, we all seek understanding, meaning, wisdom and knowledge. We want to know why we're here. We crave purpose. For many of us, we navigate life trying to make sense of who we are by distributing our time across things like obligations, work, family and our passions. We're trying to find ourselves and what we can do to make a difference.

We all try to strive to understand what our purpose is here on earth and how we can make a difference in the people that we come in contact with for ourselves and the ones that we love. This a lot of times becomes part of our dreams and how we try to live our lives. If we're going to act on something, we want to know *why* we should and how it is going to benefit others as well as ourselves.

Are we acting in our own self-interest or are we living to make a difference in the lives of others and our future through them? Are we doing things for others? What really matters is What would Jesus do?

I feel God has given each one of us a real purpose and that is to make Ozark Adventist Academy a true mission project. To me this is one of the most noble projects that any person can be a part of in life. I feel this should be a quest that is at the top of our list. We are destined not to just talk about it, but to act on it through action.

In fact, with concentrated effort and focus, and the right methods of identification and objectives, we can make Ozark the mission it was set out to be and a beacon of light for many to come both young and old. The rewards are innumerable. The attainment of dreams and goals for both our young people and ourselves. The young people that we help today will be the young people of the future that will inspire us care for us and provide a strong future for us.

Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude and respect for Rick Dye, each conference officer and board members for their strong support and dedication as well as financial assistance in making a real difference in the lives of so many young people at Ozark Adventist Academy. You are all my heroes. You are all my Angels that God has sent to me to help take care of my children.

In closing, here are some short sentences from many of the students at Ozark Adventist Academy expressing their thought to you about what they think of their school.

When I began to think about composing a Christmas letter, I was planning to tell you about Ozark Adventist Academy and all the wonderful things that have happened this year. I was going to tell you how badly Ozark needs your help to keep this great institution operating. I was going to tell you that donations are down this year compared to years past. But I decided to let my students tell you the story in their own words.

Here is what our young people say about Ozark. Each paragraph below is from a different student:

When I first came to Ozark, I was not very close to God and just after two short years my relationship with God has grown so much. Ozark has saved my relationship with God. I have been working in campus ministries and just a short time back I was baptized.

I was so scared to leave home three years ago to attend Ozark where I have learned so much about brotherhood, family, and God. I could not have learned that anywhere else.

The friends that I have made here are so different. They treat me with; love and respect, they help me to be the best person that I can be. It has been a sacrifice for my parents to send me here and not be around to see my growing up and trusting others to be like parents to me. I would not want to be any place else.

There is no place I would rather be than Ozark where I have the opportunity to share my faith with my friends and do not have to worry about being judged. I have seen myself grow in this environment and would not change it for anything in this world.

There is just no place like being at Ozark where students care about others and their future. This encourages me to be a better person and to care about other people as well.

When I first came to Ozark, I could not believe how everyone welcomes other students with open arms the way Christ would do. The spiritual atmosphere is great, and you can feel God in a new way every day. This place really changes people into the person God made them to be.

The staff are so willing to give up their time helping the school and all the students. I love Ozark and hope anyone new or old can appreciate Ozark as much as I do.

I really appreciate that before class we have biblical devotions, I never realized how much a daily devotion can open your eyes to certain aspects of life.

When my sister went to Ozark, she came back a different person. She used to stay in her room all the time and is now actively conveying her change for Christ in her life. I also came and have never been so blessed.

Yes, Ozark has an amazing experience to discover for anyone who is willing to look around and enjoy and feel the strong connection with those around you.

The people at Ozark are amazing. They are always here for you. If you need a shoulder to cry on you can go to just about anyone and they are willing to help you through hard times. If you need help with homework there are plenty of students that are willing to help you. The culture here is amazing! We can learn so much from each other's different cultures and the way they practice their beliefs. We can learn other ways of praising God.

I love the ways the teachers prepare us for college and how they bring us closer to God. Most of all I really like the way Ozark has helped me come out of my shell. Ozark has also increased my knowledge of Christ and my walk with Him. I feel more confident and ready to move on in life to the next step.

There are staff at Ozark that care about me as if I was their child and that is really nice. Also, being able to come on campus and all of us can praise God and worship together as a family is so amazing. I love everything about Ozark because it is full of loving and caring people that want you to succeed.

I can feel the love of Jesus through all the students and the faculty and I am so grateful for each and every one of them. It really does not matter what your background is. Everyone can find place for themselves here and grow not only academically, but spiritually as well.

Ozark has taught me to be the best version of myself spiritually, to see my peers and everyone I come into contact with as God's children and encourages me not to succumb to the fear of failure. I also like the strong connection that you feel with God at Ozark.

Ozark is a home away from home that allows me to prepare for college.

Just being at Ozark makes you feel good about yourself and makes you feel like you really belong.

Many people do not get the chance to go to Christian school such as Ozark. I am grateful and happy to be here. The people are different from those at the public school. They are respectful and caring about other students

Coming to Ozark was an exciting and yet nervous experience. I have found that Ozark is a very welcoming place where every person is treated like family.

When you go to class you really feel like you are learning something. The teachers are always there to help you learn.

I like the fact that we talk about God in all our classes and that everyone knows each other and that students actually open the doors for each other.

I love to be at a school where everyone is loved and cherished. The teachers are here to listen to you and help you past difficult problems in life.

It is so great being able to share your belief and pray with your friends at the table without being discriminated, it is wonderful.

When I came here, I was looking for a place to grow, to really find out who I was with God and Ozark has provided the perfect atmosphere.

I am truly blessed to be able to attend Ozark where I have met amazing staff that not only help us to do well in school but with our walk with God and an amazing principal who is ready to do anything to protect us like his own children and makes this place a safe haven for all us students. Without our amazing staff, principal, and friend that are now our brothers and sisters, and a campus that feels like home. I would not be the man that I am today and my relationship with God wouldn't be at the level it is right now. Ozark is definitely going to be one of the most memorable moments in my life.

Ozark needs you desperately this time of the season. It has been all of you that have given every time a letter has gone out asking for your support and donations for our young people. I understand that there have been comments made just recently at the NAD that boarding Academies are a thing of the past. Are they also saying our young people that attend our boarding academies are a thing of the past too?

“Never regard study as a duty but as an enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later works belong.”—Albert Einstein

Mike Dale-