

ODYSSEY ORACLE

CLASS SNAPSHOTS



In this Oracle . . .

Class Snapshots	1
(including photos by Milli Lau '14)	
Starting to Think Metaphorically	3
Pay it Forward	6
Celebrating Ourselves	9
Song of the Odyssey Class of 2015	13
Grand Opening.....	14



STARTING TO THINK METAPHORICALLY

I am a wave crashing against our ocean shore, rapidly running from all that is behind me, crashing into what's next. I am full of life, but you can smell the strong essence of death my long lost loved ones have left. I'm great to look at, and the peace I generate will put you at ease. But catch me on a bad day, and I'll scare you and destroy everything in my way. I'm a great benefit and my resources are endless, yet I carry a threat that warns you to use caution when you come near me. **(Jessi Hodges)**



I am a bird with a broken wing waiting to be healed. I once flew over mountains and floated over the most beautiful oceans there are. Then a fallen tree landed on my wing on my attempt to fly out of a jungle that I was just passing through. Now I walk around. I walk in any direction I think I see light, dragging my wing through the dirt trying to avoid being someone's dinner. With each small step I take, I feel my wing refinding its strength. . . . I often spend my nights wondering if GOD sees me or hears me, being that I'm as small as chopped rocks in a big jungle. Though he doesn't speak to me, every day I wake up, even with hungry lions around who could use me as a toothpick. I know one day I'll be able to fly again, so instead of self-pity I pity more the animals in the jungle who have no intentions of ever leaving. . . . I see beauty in some people's brokenness and, more importantly, I see beauty in my heart. I will find my way back. This time, though, I won't forget where I came from. **(Shaneika Sanders)**



I am a lion hunting its prey. You see, the lion isn't there for just the prize or the outcome of the meal. The lion loves the process and, like myself, it is not only the prize that I so adore but it's the process—the process of the hunt, the process of what needs to be done to accomplish a certain goal. I am a lion that loves the process of everything I engage myself in because no matter what, whatever I do, I have to put my full effort into it. You see, when you fall in love with the process, it is at that time that you really get fulfillment out of the prize or goal at hand. **(Christopher Villalpando)**



I am a fine, sweet, smooth-tasting wine.
 Sweet smelling like roses on a cool breezy night.
 Every bottle you drink is filled with my life stories.
 Like wine, I took the time to age gracefully,
 Taking time to mature and live life
 Until I reach perfection,
 I will continue to learn life lessons.
(Brandi Whitlock)



I am champagne,
 fizzy and bubbly,
 the human perception of sweet.
 You find me in a fragile glass,
 allowing the bubbles a rapid rise.
 I am champagne,
 as unique as the taste.
(Veronica Tinajero)

I am an eagle,
 soaring high without a care in the world
 strong, resilient, a fierce predator
 swiftly swooping down and devouring my prey
 piece by piece, yet I still soar gracefully.
 You may not understand why God created
 such a beautiful yet vicious creature, but he did,
 so either soar with me, or get out of my way
 because I'm eating anything that tries
 to block me in any way. **(DeAngelo Hood)**

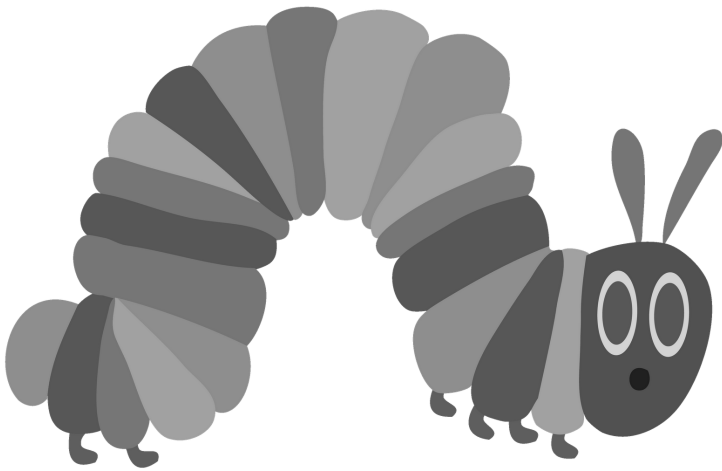
I am a lion, strong in my faith,
 roaring for Jesus,
 walking through life on a mission for Christ,
 living at peace in God's grace. **(Derek Dodd)**



I am a butterfly,
 A seemingly delicate and fragile butterfly,
 but strong as steel.
 I am prepared to soar.
 I will confront my fears,
 and I will overcome them.
 It's time to fly through the skies
 and reach the top of the mountain. **(Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes)**

I am a bull
 extreme, strong-willed, and hard-headed at times.
 I symbolize the strong investment trend by my
 style of attack.
 I swing my horns upward in a mighty push,
 hence the comparison to an intense upward
 movement on Wall Street.
(Dorothy Katana)





I am a very hungry caterpillar
Waiting to transform
No one knows what journey I'm on
or which way I will go.
I went from smooth layers to rugged ridges.
Now I'm getting somewhere, my skin is thicker,
My feet are small and I'm taking baby steps
because you know what they say
You must crawl before you walk
I know I will fly someday.
I was a very hungry caterpillar
Waiting to transform.
Today is the day my wings have formed.
(**Michelle Conley**)

I am a rock when it's time to get up.
I am a leaf when I'm trying to get
through the day.
I am a diary when I get home and tell my
family about my day.
(**Brenda Juarez Cruz**)

I am a living test who walks by faith, not
by sight. I have been dealt challenging
obstacles that you never know how you
are going to get through. When they are
dealt to you, you don't know whether
you are going to pass or fail. When you

are faced with different tests, sometimes you
might know the answers, but when the anxiety
comes you always seem to freeze. . . . Tests are
meant to make you strong. . . . After every test,
there's always a reward. (**Mikiea Price**)

I am a mosaic, made from broken pieces, and
formed into his piece of art.
I once was a masterpiece created and designed
through his hands.
Through the years I slowly broke apart.
He picked up the pieces as they began to fall.
He never gave up on me, even when I gave up on
life itself.
In the midst of my brokenness, I began to see
he was always standing behind me.
Now his light shines through and guides me.
Now his light shines through and guides me.
I am now his mosaic made of different
shapes and colors, bringing my heart and soul
to this work of beauty. (**Nissa Uriostegui**)



PAYING IT FORWARD



I took an at-risk child [my niece] out for a couple of days. The first thing I did was purchase her a make-up kit. We sat at my house, and I did her make-up and took selfies. LOL. The joy of being a pre-

teen is that these are the little things that matter to young women sometimes, and it was kind of like we were having a girls' day in. Then we decided that we would bake a couple batches of chocolate chip oatmeal cookies, which were \$2 a pouch at Dollar General, and share them with friends and family. To top that off, I had purchased her some pajamas

and some fuzzy slipper socks, and we sat around and watched movies the rest of the day. . . . She gave me the biggest hug ever and told me how much she appreciated me. When I

walked away, I was very proud of myself that I could make her day.

While we were cooking in the kitchen, she cried. She told me they were tears of joy and that she promised to pay me back one day. All I could tell her was that she owed me nothing but just to stay humble, love herself, and give back to others when she can. . . . When I told her she had been accepted to the Odyssey Junior Program, her eyes lit up like a Christmas tree. She

said, "Thank you for the opportunity. I'm so excited!" She told me she wanted to be like me when she got older, and I replied, "Hard work and doing unto others as they do you." Thank you to those who make the Odyssey Program possible. Paying it forward has been the best part of winter break. **(Michelle Conley)**



I got a call from a close friend. I asked what's wrong, and she told me that her auntie had passed away and she had no way to get to Indiana because she had no money. She is the only one of her family in

Madison, and no one could pay for her to get there. I told her I would pay for her to get a bus to Indiana. Since I'm familiar with the buses and the cost, I bought her a cheap ticket to get there and back since she had school to attend. She was so happy and glad that I was a great friend. I told her we are like family, and we stick together. **(Joseph Lentz)**





I chose to pay it forward to my brother and his family. I wanted to give them a stress-free night of fun. I know things have been rough for them this year, so why not help brighten up what's next? It is already my brother's

annual ritual to take the entire family to US Bank Eve. This year I decided to purchase their tickets and take it a step further. I rented them a family suite at an associated hotel and provided spending money, snacks, and shuttle service to and from the night's events. Sean deserved a break, and I knew the kids would get lost in the swimming and New Year's festivities. In my eyes, they really deserved it. Here's a little history on why:

My brother, Sean, has had it rough from day one and has never hesitated to get through it one day at a time. He's the only man in my entire family, the baby. After my sister was murdered and I was sent to prison, he was left with just my mom. He got employed as a mover at age 17 and has been a working man ever since. . . . His house became a second home to my daughter while I was in prison. . . . His kids . . . have always been his priority and main focus. He has invested in education and extra curriculars. Last year, while his two youngest were traveling back from Milwaukee with their mother, they were in a rollover car accident on highway 45. My sister-in-law and niece were tossed from the vehicle, and my nephew was trapped in the back seat. . . . Both kids were blessed to sustain minor injuries, but the mom was not so lucky. She was hospitalized for months and still suffers brain damage today. So what motivated me? It was their struggle, their pain, and their success as a team. They made it! Why not help them celebrate it! **(Jessi Hodges)**



I work with special education kids during the day. I've been doing this for about three years now. I love working with special needs kids. They keep me humble.

There was one kid that didn't dress well. He would come to school dirty, his clothes too small. I felt bad for him! Not only that, but he was in high school, where kids can be really cruel to one another. His family didn't have the money.

My husband was donating his clothes to Goodwill (jeans, shirts, shoes), so I told him that I knew someone who could use his clothes. When I got to school the next day, I told the kid I had some clothes for him. He was really happy! ☺ I told him that he can change into them at school and leave them there. The reason why I said that was because he didn't have a good family home, and I wasn't sure how they would act. He was so grateful, and his whole attitude changed. I don't do anything for recognition but out of the kindness of my heart. I'm glad that I made him happy! **(Brandi Whitlock)**





For me, nothing brings me more joy than to help someone when they are in need, whether it's a shoulder to cry on or a plate of food. I can't help it. I can't have someone tell me that they are

hungry because I HAVE to make sure they eat. People come to my house and leave with bags of food. If I'm cooking and my family sits to eat, so will they.

I've been here in Madison a little over a year, and the things I've seen are unbelievable. I saw a homeless man asking for change so that he could get something to eat, and people just walked past him like he was nothing. I couldn't believe how they just could not care less. Has the world gone so bad that everyone's heart has turned so cold to what's happening right in front of them? I don't have much and struggle every day to provide for me and mine, but I still can't see someone hungry. I've had so many bad things happen to me through the years. I've had someone break into my home and steal everything, down to the food in my fridge, leaving my kids with nothing, and I still cannot walk past someone and not give them a plate of food. It doesn't cost anything to feed your heart with good or to carry true feelings towards another human being!!!! Well, in my case it was \$7.89 so that he could eat a warm meal. The gentleman did not know what to do because no one had ever done anything like that before. The look in his eyes was PRICELESS! Who knows when the last time was when he had eaten a warm meal?

. . . People, please be kind to those that are less fortunate than you are. You really don't know their story, their struggle. (**Melissa Dominguez**)



This year I watched a TV show called "Why Did I Get Married?" The main character, Angela, and her friends went to get mammograms, and Angela had a mass in her breast. Shortly after that

episode aired, a childhood friend passed away a week before Christmas due to breast cancer. Mary Peterson was like a second mother to me. Whenever my mom kicked me out of the house, Mary took me in, and she always treated me like one of her own. The TV show helped me realize that even though we may feel fine, most of the time we aren't.

. . . I wear pink to show support for breast cancer and to show the awareness. My daughter has learned a few lessons about paying it forward, so Christmas day we went to visit people in the hospital who were suffering from breast cancer. I had no idea that even after having your breasts removed, there's still a chance that cancer can come back and be even more aggressive. My daughter didn't understand the meaning at first, but then she became more cautious of the things she said.

At first she said, "Mommy, she's bald" and "Mommy, if she's a girl, how she doesn't have those (pointing to my chest)?" I had to explain it to her. She got sad and gave out hugs to all the patients there.

(**Myisha Ellis**)



CELEBRATING OURSELVES



In the last couple of months I got into the CNA program! Believe me, it wasn't easy! I had to get health screening, immunizations, a TB test, and a background check. It was no easy task, but I was determined. I started class

Monday, Feb. 2, and I love it! I am so proud of myself and can't wait to get my certificate. This is a stepping stone into becoming a Registered Nurse. I am excited to see what's next! **(Janina White)**



I am proud of getting back into school. At 35 years old, I honestly was starting to let go of my educational goals. I didn't believe I had any chance at another opportunity. Then I was accepted back into the Odyssey Program. My need for knowledge came back, and I started to research what's next. I applied to Madison College last November. After many obstacles and with Odyssey's help, I'm now attacking classes and on the fast track to UW-Madison. **(Jessi Hodges)**



One thing that I'm proud about is getting published in the paper last year and winning first place in the "Why Vote?" essay contest. That recognition and confirmation helped me understand that I am capable of doing a lot and writing great things if I apply myself.

(DeAngelo Hood)



I gave away a living room set to someone in need, and I did not charge them anything. As a matter of fact, I cooked them dinner and then paid them to paint my front room. **(Lenora Rodin)**



I have had to accept the fact that the mother of my sons passed away and come to terms that I'm the only parent they have. I must be strong for both of my sons. **(Derek Dodd)**



The past few months I juggled school, work, and a headache of a boss. I worked from 9-5 Monday through Friday and could never make it to Saturday study groups. But I managed to connect with classmates and create our own study group. So every week religiously we meet up, go through our homework, and even have debates about a subject or two!! We are afloat on this odyssey and loving every bit of it! **(Michelle Conley)**



In November of last year, I applied to W.E.C.A. for a scholarship towards E.C.E. classes. I got approved for my scholarship and am now taking my first class: Infant/Toddler Development. I am so proud of myself because I'm finally living out one of my dreams—becoming a five-star rated daycare provider. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



The biggest thing that I have accomplished is probation. I am no longer the property of Dane County. I am free to finally leave the country as I please and start life with no judicial restrictions of any kind. I know I may seem

calm, but I am ecstatic inside. I see my face in the mirror in the morning with hope. I see my future with a guiding light in the end of the tunnel—with me hand in hand with my Charlie, skipping to a place of hope and peace. **(Dorothy Katana)**



I feel good that I stopped drinking pop for two weeks. I know that this is not a big deal, but for me it is. I love pop—the strong feeling I get when it goes down my throat—, and I get the hiccups every time I drink it. I

love the burst of energy I think I get when I drink it, and it makes me tingle inside! I found something to take its place: water. ☺
(Brandi Whitlock)



I strive to accomplish things on a day-to-day basis. The most recent was to finally get my small group class started at the gym I'm at. It is a workshop that has an added fee to join, yet at the same time it makes training

affordable to those who can't pay for one-on-one training. One might think that running a class is easy, but even setting it up is time consuming and very demanding—from the pricing to the sequence of the class, the time the class will run, how many times a week, and so forth. At last it's finally here, and it starts Feb. 23 at 6:30 PM. **(Christopher Villalpando)**

I am very proud of myself. Lately I have been making progress in my life and getting things



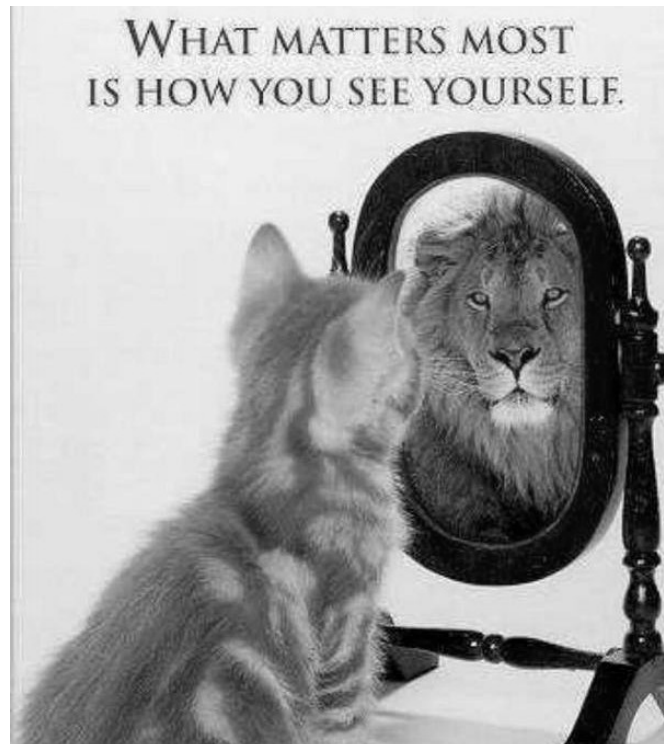
accomplished. One of my most pleasing accomplishments was when I got a call around Christmas saying that I had been nominated for an award from the YWCA. I was so ecstatic [to win the award] that Christmas

seemed as small as a mouse compared to the good news. I must say it feels good to be noticed for doing things you are already accustomed to doing. Therefore, I am honored that on Feb. 26, 2015, I will be holding a plaque for bravery. **(Nitia Johnson)**



Last semester I took two classes at Madison College and one here in Odyssey, and I got an A in all of them. At the beginning of the semester, I received a letter from Madison College stating that I am on the Dean's List. This is a great

accomplishment for me. I am so proud of myself. **(Veronica Tinajero)**





Something that I've accomplished in the last month is my relationship with my sister. We don't really get along and aren't close. Sometimes instead of talking, we yell and argue. So for the last month, I decided to get closer to her and listen to her so she knows she can count on me. Lately we have normal conversations and spend more time with each other. I think it's working so far. I am very proud that I made that change, and we now both feel better. (**Brenda Juarez Cruz**)



beginning was pure, but eventually it turned to hate and spiteful behavior on both ends. . . . I couldn't continue to be broken down to pieces by his words or his hands. . . . I feel empty and insecure, but I know that I have to move forward to seek a better life for my daughter. . . . I built my life around our marriage, and to



I am so proud of myself because in the last few months I've been able to read books in English completely from page one to the end of them. It makes me proud because I'm showing myself that everything is possible, and I can achieve anything I want. (**Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes**)

see it all go down the way it did felt like 9/11 all over again but in my personal life. I'm most proud that I broke the cycle of abuse. . . . I'm proud that I've given my best and that I've accepted that it didn't work out for us. (**Myisha Ellis**)



I would say I'm most proud of getting my divorce. I thought the past three years that I spent in my marriage were going to be filled with lots of laughter and tears and joy, but I was sadly mistaken when things took one bad turn after another. We found ourselves in a cycle of abuse and tragedy that followed the violence in our home. Don't get me wrong. We had amazing times together, and the love in the



One accomplishment that I'm proud of is getting myself back into school last year after losing my financial aid a couple years prior. I was facing the obstacle of paying for six credits out of pocket. At the time, paying for school was out of my budget, but I knew there had to be help somewhere. I went through two programs at the Urban League and earned 11 MATC credits. I pushed myself through both while being pregnant with my daughter. I was happy to find out I was eligible to apply for financial aid again. I learned my lesson the first time, and I'll never lose my financial aid again! (**Lakoyé Buford**)



go to all my appointments, and I ask for help. I never used to ask for help. Now I'm not ashamed of my past and consider it a stepping stone in my life. I'm going to school with the Odyssey Project, something I'm grateful for, and I'm proud of my scholastic accomplishments. **(Patricia McKnight)**



I have started to talk more with my brothers and to be a bigger part of their life. It makes me proud because I know my mom is proud of me, smiling down, knowing that I'm trying to keep the family together. I am the only daughter and have four brothers.

(Margarita Cid Luna)



I am very happy to say that when I read more complex texts I am able to recognize words and their roots and persuasive writing techniques. I'm feeling smarter when I read works that mention pieces of literature that we read in class. My mind feels

sharp and alert, and I want to learn more, read more, see more. It's as though when I read, I enter into another dimension, and I've been given access to a map that interlinks literary works. I know where they come from, and I know where I am going.

. . . I have also enrolled my son Dorian in a library program called "1000 Books before Kindergarten." I'm reading so much more for me and for Dorian. That makes me really proud. I hope reading is the one thing that sticks with him from me. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**



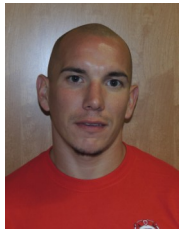
I'm proud of me still going to school and working and taking care of my kids, even though I'm pregnant. I'm still determined, still focused. I'm proud of the mother that I've become and of the independent person that I've become. I'm proud of the

young lady I've now turned into. I'm motivated, more humble, and more patient. I see more opportunity and feel I can do it now. I can be a better person.

(Mikiea Price)

I've built a stronger more trusting relationship between my kids. I've changed my lifestyle. I don't hang around negative people. I





SONG OF THE ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2015

à la Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

We celebrate ourselves and sing ourselves.



Our families have come from Ohio, Florida, Alabama, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Jamaica, Germany, England, Ireland, Holland, Belize, Kenya, Poland, Mexico, and Spain, speaking English, Spanish, Laotian, Thai, Kiswahili, French, Belizian, Arabic, and Italian.



We have made our homes in Madison, Wisconsin; Jackson, Mississippi; Gary, Indiana; Galveston, Texas; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Denver, Colorado; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; East Saint Louis, Missouri; Oakland, California; Nairobi, Kenya; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Cairo, Egypt; and Puebla, Mexico.



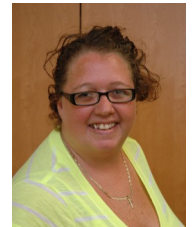
We have worked as a waitress, phone operator, tutor, forklift driver, machine operator, truck loader, security guard, picker packer, janitor, caregiver to the elderly, bus owner, Shopko cashier, hostess, trophy assembly worker, dishwasher, maid, dancer, florist, hair braider, CNA, cook, bread baker, sundae maker, housekeeper, fitness trainer, special education aide, and hustler.



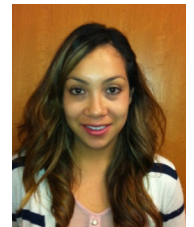
We call ourselves Christian, Buddhist, AME Apostolic/Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Catholic, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, atheist, agnostic, and pagan.



We see ourselves as passionate, determined, loving, selfless, faithful, loving, ambitious, strong, wonderful, beautiful, different, unpredictable, busy, creative, multicultural, pretty, funny, loyal, giving, short, tall, skinny, shy, friendly, objective, rational, kind, restless, go-getting, vivacious, diligent, sarcastic, and weird.



We are the Odyssey Class of 2015.



GRAND OPENING

On February 12, UW Chancellor Rebecca Blank and other leaders celebrated the new South Madison Partnership Space, our new home.

