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## Six Freshmen Receive ODK Leadership Awards

Edwin B. Smith

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## Six Freshmen Receive ODK Leadership Awards

Prestigious honor recognizes outstanding skills and community involvement

MAY 5, 2020 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



Jilkiah Bryant

OXFORD, Miss. – Six **University of Mississippi** students are recipients of the annual **Omicron Delta Kappa** Freshman Leadership Awards.

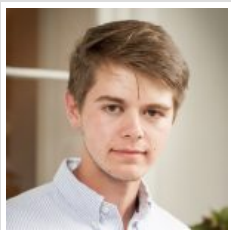
The honors were created in 2010 to identify and recognize outstanding freshman leaders and community servants. Although the society was unable to present this year's awards in person, each recipient was personally congratulated and featured on the organization's social media accounts.

This year's award recipients are Jilkiah Bryant, of Macon; Amy Jones-Burdick, of Huntington, West Virginia; Matthew Knerr, of Paducah, Kentucky; John Rhys Plumlee, of Hattiesburg; Maggie Walker, of Suwanee, Georgia; and Sydney Wheeler, of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

"We are fortunate to have such engaged students at the university," said Ryan Upshaw, assistant dean for student services in the School of Engineering and ODK faculty adviser.

"Our society is excited to be able to recognize their outstanding contributions during their first year on campus. We also look forward to their potential membership in our society later in their college career."

Previous recipients have gone on to serve in roles such as Associated Student Body president, Black Student Union president and Student Activities Association director. Several have been inducted into the university's student Hall of Fame.



Matthew Knerr

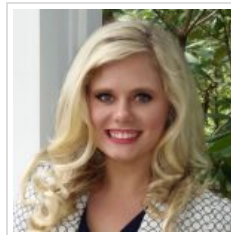
"Receiving the award as a freshman was an immense honor," said Ariel Williams, of Waynesboro, a senior public policy leadership major in the **Trent Lott Leadership Institute** and incoming ODK president. "I want to congratulate the award recipients and ensure we recognize the amazing effort they put both in and out of the classroom."

"I encourage them to continue making their mark in their own unique ways and hope that one day they will join our circle."

Bryant is a chemistry major in the **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College**. She is participating in undergraduate research in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and is a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta health professions society. Bryant is also a Catalyzing Economic and Entrepreneurial Development Innovation Scholar with the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement. She also serves as an Honors College ambassador and volunteers with Memory Makers.

A member of the Honors College and Trent Lott Leadership Institute, **Jones-Burdick** is studying public policy leadership and psychology. She is a member of the Honors College Senate and the Associated Student Body Senate. A recipient of the Doris Raymond Honors College scholarship, she participated in the 2020 Parade of Beauties and volunteers with the Ole Miss Food Bank. She recently was selected for membership in Lambda Sigma National Honor Society.

**Knerr** is a Stamps Scholarship recipient and a biochemistry and psychology major. He is a member of the Honors College and Chancellor's Leadership Class and works in Joshua Bloomekatz's research lab in the Department of Biology. He is vice president of the Ole Miss Chess Club, president of Hill Country Roots and a peer mentor for ASB. He was selected to represent the university at the Naval Academy Science



Amy Jones-Burdick



John Rhys Plumlee

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## Campus Briefs

### Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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## Thank You To Our Donors

### Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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## Ole Miss In the News

### Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

and Engineering Conference in Annapolis, Maryland. He recently was selected for membership in Lambda Sigma.



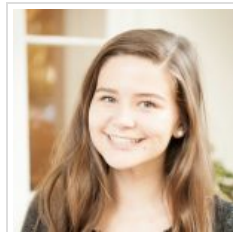
**Maggie Walker**

A member of the Ole Miss Rebels football and baseball teams, **Plumlee** is a general engineering major. In football, he started in nine games last season, with eight at the quarterback position. Listed on the Chancellor's Honor Roll, he was a finalist for the 2020 C Spire Conerly Trophy and has been named SEC Freshman of the Week multiple times. Plumlee also was recognized as the men's "Most Valuable Rebel" during the 2020 Rebels Choice Awards.

**Walker** is studying public policy leadership and integrated marketing communications as part of the Honors College and the Lott Leadership Institute. She is a Stamps Scholar, member of the Chancellor's

Leadership Class and participated in the MPOWER Leadership program. She was selected to serve as an orientation leader and is a legislative aide for the ASB Senate. Walker will serve as president of Lambda Sigma.

A 2019 Goldwater Scholar, **Wheeler** is a biology major in the Honors College and a Stamps Scholar who volunteers with Oxford Memory Makers. She is associate editor of the UM Undergraduate Research Journal and is a research assistant in Nicole Ashpole's laboratory in the School of Pharmacy's Department of BioMolecular Sciences. She is a member of the Chancellor's Leadership Class, ASB Freshman Forum and Lambda Sigma.



**Sydney Wheeler**

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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