



Congratulations Class of 2024



Front Row (L-R)—Fenet Gameda, Sirikan Auttarat, Fenet Merdassa, Herme-la Anduallem, Kylie Rogers, Mahala Hall, Destiny Shepherd

Back Row (L-R)—Kayyo Negisho, Shiloh Tive, Canaan Tyree, Kenechukwu Obiora, Alazar Silla, Alex Gritton, Savannah Young

The Class of 2024 graduation exercises took place May 18, 2024. The class included four local day students and 10 dormitory residents—two from the U.S. states of Georgia and Washington and eight international students from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Thailand and United Arab Emirates.

Senior Spotlights



Savannah

Savannah experienced struggles in her family life from an early age because of her parents' substance abuse. At age five, she went to live with relatives in Maryland but was not adequately supervised or nurtured. "It wasn't a good situation," she said.

She was in middle school when her aunt and uncle in Georgia intervened and brought Savannah to live with them and their two young children. The fresh start was just what she needed both at

(Savannah continued p. 2)

Support the Father's Day Offering

Baptist churches across Kentucky support OBI by giving to the annual Father's Day Offering, one of four annual missions offerings sanctioned by the Kentucky Baptist Convention. We are grateful to our many friends and partners.

While we celebrate the milestone reached by the Class of 2024, we are already making plans for the 2024-2025 school year. The work of providing an *Education for Time and Eternity* continues and is more important than ever. The following are ways anyone can support OBI at this time:

- **Pray** for God's continued provision for OBI.
- **Give** as you are led.
- **Ask** your pastor to invite Mr. Gritton to speak about the OBI ministry in your church.



Celebrating 125 years of Education for Time and Eternity



"Every school deals with the mind of man but there are few schools which, like Oneida, deal with the soul as well. If ever there was a need for educated people and for strong Christian character, today is the day."

—Dr. Barkley Moore
OBI President, 1972-1994

(Savannah continued)

home and at school. "Just when I thought things were getting normal, COVID hit," she recalled. Online classes at home took a toll on her emotional health and strained her family relationships. She explained, "I had been in survival mode for so long, I didn't know how to adjust to a family. I had a hard time trusting."

Her family discussed the idea of boarding school which would allow Savannah independence while preparing her for adult life. They looked online for affordable Christian schools and found OBI. She noted, "OBI had Christian values, and my aunt felt comfortable sending me here. As soon as we drove onto campus, I thought, 'This place is nice!'" She enrolled for her junior year.

In the dorm, Savannah found a tight-knit group of about 20 girls. "I loved dorm life. I could go next door and talk to someone whenever I wanted. When they say we're like a family at OBI, they mean it," she stated.

Daily chapel services provided biblical answers to her spiritual questions. She explained, "Chapel was an introduction to God for me. It gave me a foundation to build my life on."

In her two years at OBI, Savannah made a big impact on campus as a sports manager, office aid, vice president of the Student Council, president of the National Honor Society, editor of the yearbook and a member of the choir. She reflected, "I've had a lot of opportunities at OBI, and I've gained more confidence." Voted by faculty the Most Outstanding Junior Girl, Savannah received OBI's second highest graduation honor, the John Michael Davis Citizenship Award.

Savannah has been accepted to the Honors Program at Georgia Southern, where she plans to study journalism and photography. □

Mahala



It was the end of Mahala's junior year at home in Somerset, Kentucky, when her parents, **Tony and Renita Hall**, announced they would be joining the OBI staff. She had the option to stay in Somerset with her older brother and grandparents and graduate from her old school but Mahala decided, "It was my senior year and I wanted to stay with my parents until college."

Mahala is the youngest of three siblings. The Halls are originally from Somerset which is where Tony was called to become a pastor in the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Mahala's dad knew OBI well having given his heart to Jesus at a summer camp on our campus. He stayed connected with OBI in

his role with the KBC Agencies and Institutions Committee and served for several years as a member of OBI's Board of Trustees.

At OBI, Mahala continued her work in dual credit classes earning 24 credits this year with all A's. She plans to complete her bachelor's degree with a double major in Criminal Justice and English Education at Mississippi College. She benefited socially at OBI by attending evening activities like home basketball games and by joining the yearbook staff. She said, "Yearbook was a fun way to meet more people, plus I liked the creative aspect."

Finishing high school at a Christian school strengthened her faith and provided the support she needed during a rigorous academic year. She stated, "Being a student at OBI helped me grow in my faith due to attending chapel and having friends with similar views."

The class Salutatorian, Mahala also received the 2023 WYMT Mountain Classic scholarship. Looking forward to her next chapter, Mahala concluded, "I feel like being at OBI has helped prepare me for college because just like moving here, college will be a big change." □

Alazar



Originally from Ethiopia, Alazar attended a private school in Dubai for four years before coming to the U.S. to finish high school. Friends who had attended OBI recommended it to his parents. Alazar recalled, "They said it was a good, Christian school." He enrolled as a sophomore in 2021.

Gaining independence and life experience at a boarding school appealed to Alazar. "I wanted to see what living in a dorm was like before college and to learn what being on my own feels like," he explained. He found it easy to get to know other students here. "I got to meet people from all over the world and get to know their culture.

You had someone to talk to every day. It was a good experience," he said.

Alazar's senior year and third season on the OBI soccer team, he was happy to be a part of the first team to play on OBI's new artificial turf soccer field. This year's winning season included exciting games like an overtime win in the Class A sectional that sent the team to state. He was named the Best Defender by his soccer coach.

Alazar plans to attend the University of Kentucky to major in business. □

Would you like to contact us?

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Alex



Alex's parents, **Larry** ('93) and **Angie** ('91) **Gritton**, both OBI alumni, returned to OBI after they finished college to serve as teachers and coaches for seven years before moving to another Christian school in Florida. Alex was just seven years old in 2013 when his family moved back to Oneida after his father became the OBI president. Alex's brother, Trey, graduated in 2020, and his sister, Madison, in 2022.

Alex's OBI sports career began in the sixth grade with cross country. In the spring, he competed in track and field. When he joined basketball that year, he followed a family legacy that started with his grandfather, Larry Gritton, Sr., a long-time OBI head

coach who coached Alex's dad. School closures his freshman year interrupted his progress in basketball but nudged him to try outdoor sports like tennis and soccer. He became a top-seeded singles and doubles player in tennis and was named the 2023 Most Consistent Player. The soccer team captain, Alex earned the 2022 Most Goals Scored award, was named to the 2023 All A Regional Tournament Team and was awarded the team's 2023 Mountaineer Award. He earned the Academic All State First Team awards in both tennis and soccer. He returned to basketball in the 10th and 11th grades and received his varsity athletic letter jacket as a senior.

Alex received the Highest GPA and Most Outstanding awards in grades 9-11 and was a four-year member of the National Honor Society. The Class of 2024 Valedictorian, Alex received the WYMT Mountain Classic scholarship and was voted Mr. Oneida, OBI's award for the most outstanding senior boy. At graduation, he was the recipient of OBI's highest graduation honor, the William A. Evans award. Alex plans to attend Asbury University this fall, his first step toward his future career in law. □

Nadia



Nadia from Thailand came to the U.S. as a junior in order to learn English and to experience independence in preparation for college. She was nervous to leave home but excited to do something out of her comfort zone. At a friend's recommendation, Nadia and her family explored the OBI website. "I saw that this school is a Christian school and is not a very big school which allows the teachers to take care of the students," Nadia stated. She added, "OBI has been accepting international students for a long time which gave my family confidence that they would take good care of me."

Nadia, who spoke very little English at the time, recalled, "In the beginning I was very homesick, but the students all understood that I was new and tried to get to know me and help me." She enrolled in English as a Second Language class and gained fluency as she practiced. Joining activities like basketball, tennis and choir left little time for homesickness.

Nadia was named "Miss Oneida," the senior award honoring outstanding Christian character and academics. Nadia reflected on her time at OBI saying, "I think I have grown closer to God because I have been away from home, and when problems arise I have to fix things. What makes me less anxious is when I pray because I leave my worries with God and trust that He will be the one to arrange my future well." Nadia plans to attend the University of the Cumberland to study business administration. □

Destiny



A day student from nearby Manchester, Destiny enrolled at OBI in the seventh grade. Having completed elementary school, her family wanted her to attend OBI for middle and high school where there would be smaller classes and fewer negative influences. "I chose to attend, because I wanted a better education. I liked that OBI was very diverse and all the grades are together on the same campus," she said.

Destiny enjoyed the format of chapel services which include guest speakers and testimonies from teachers and other students. "I grew to love chapel. It helped me grow in my faith, because I heard about God daily and I heard about Christianity from multiple perspectives," she explained.

At OBI, Destiny participated in drama, choir, yearbook and student council. These confidence-boosting experiences along with dual credit classes helped to prepare her for college. She plans to begin classes this fall at Somerset Community College and later transfer to the University of the Cumberland where she will complete a nursing degree. Reflecting on her years at OBI, Destiny said, "I most appreciate the friends and memories I made along the way." □

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Spring Highlights



On May 3rd, OBI hosted its first track and field meet in a generation! Three other teams and their fans joined us for a great evening of competition in our new facility!



The K-5 musical on May 9th featured Bible songs and skits.



The Class of 2024 posed for a photo together at the Junior-Senior Banquet held May 4th, 2024

Bits & Tidbits

Time to enroll for 2024-25!

If you know of a young person who may like to come to OBI, share this contact information with their family.

Email: admissions@oneidaschool.org
Telephone: 606-847-4111 ext. 233

OBI Homecoming October 19, 2024

Make plans to attend!
Share the date with your OBI friends!

Alumni & Former Students

Stay connected! Fill out a short survey by scanning the QR code. You can also email: alumni@oneidaschool.org



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