



Tuesday, January 28, 2003

Bush invites OU student to State of the Union

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

In recognition of his volunteer work for **AmeriCorps**, Oakland University senior education major Lenwood (Lenny) Compton sat with First Lady Laura Bush during President Bush's State of the Union address on Jan. 28 in Washington, D.C. Compton also attended a pre-reception dinner at the White House before going to the Capitol for the address.

The White House invited Compton to attend the State of the Union address as the president's guest and arranged for him to be flown to Washington. He and 25 other people sat as **guests in the First Lady's box** during the address. A seat also was left open in memory of the people who died during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

"I'm really excited about the chance to represent AmeriCorps and Oakland University at the State of the Union address," Compton said from his hotel room in Washington, D.C., before "Hopefully this will boost everything that AmeriCorps stands for and the hard work that all the members put in."

Compton learned of his invitation to attend the State of the Union address last Saturday morning.

"I received a phone call from a White House representative who informed me that the Freedom Corps selected me to attend the address," Compton said. "I understand that all the political heavyweights will be at the pre-reception and that I might have a chance to interact with them. I'm just living in the moment right now. The opportunity to be invited by the president to the White House is a real honor."

In his two years of service to AmeriCorps, Compton has devoted 15 hours each week to tutoring children in first through third grade in reading, writing and math at the Great Lakes Academy in his native Pontiac. He also put in full-time volunteer hours last summer developing lesson plans and curricula for day camps through the Pontiac Area Transitional Housing (PATH) program. Compton's AmeriCorps peers named him Mr. AmeriCorps 2002 for the second consecutive year. He will complete 1,800 hours of service before finishing the program.

"We have many outstanding AmeriCorps members who have put in two years of their time who are definitely deserving of this honor," said Carol Anne Ketelsen, director of AmeriCorps Oakland. "One of the things that stands out about Lenny is that he provides a positive male role model for the community. With the children we work with and with his peers at OU, Lenny always looks at how we can turn things around. His outlook is very positive and contagious. He's very thoughtful and well-spoken and we're thrilled that he's representing us."

Compton's volunteer efforts were recognized last October when he was selected to be an official Freedom Corps greeter at the Oakland County International Airport when President Bush arrived for a Republican rally. In his speech, Bush praised Compton's efforts to help youth on top of his 16-credit course load.

"I just knew Lenny would meet the president again – he's just that kind of person," said OU junior education major Crystal Wilkerson, who was named OU's Ms. AmeriCorps for two consecutive years. "One of the main reasons he joined AmeriCorps is that we do so much work in Pontiac. There are many good people who come out of Pontiac, and Lenny is one of them. He's gracious about what he's received in life and he wants to give back to his community. He's the kind of person people look up to. I'm very happy he's received this opportunity. It may open doors for him in his personal and professional life."

AmeriCorps is the national domestic Peace Corps and provides community service needs and mentoring for children. AmeriCorps volunteers dedicate a year of service in exchange for a living allowance and, after completing 900 hours of service, they receive an education award of \$2,362.50 to pay for college or student loans.

Michigan AmeriCorps chapters have grown from nine to 26 since its inception in 1994. Since then, nearly 78,000 men and women of all ages and backgrounds from those chapters have helped solve problems and strengthen communities through 132 service projects across the state. Serving through local non-profit organizations, schools, religious organizations and other groups, these citizens tutor and mentor children, coordinate after-school programs, build homes, organize neighborhood watch groups, clean parks, recruit volunteers and accomplish other things to improve communities.

An in-depth story on Compton will appear in the Winter 2003 issue of **OU Magazine**. For more information on national and local community service opportunities, visit the **Michigan AmeriCorps** Web site. For more information on the State of the Union address, visit the **White House** Web site.

SUMMARY

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