

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Students hold memorial dinner for Rebecca Mansfield

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Rebecca Mansfield wanted the Student Michigan Education Association (SMEA) at Oakland University to hold a formal dinner at the end of the academic year to celebrate the students. When she suggested the event, she had no idea it would be held in her honor. Mansfield passed away March 12 after a brief but courageous battle with leukemia. She was just months from completing her degree and getting married. To fulfill her desire for the event, the students of SMEA are hosting the Rebecca Mansfield Memorial Dinner on Friday, May 30 from 6-11 p.m. at Meadow Brook Hall with the proceeds benefiting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

As a student, Mansfield served on the SMEA executive board and gave a lot of her time and efforts to the organization. Mansfield recruited many members to the student organization and served as the group's treasurer.

"We felt that since she was such a big part of SMEA, we wanted to give back to her," said Lea Williams, SMEA-OU board member.

Williams said in addition to the memorial dinner, SMEA-OU also raised money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society by having a donation bucket at a book fair held earlier this semester.

"We were all quite shocked to learn of Rebecca's illness and her death. Through the memorial dinner and the fundraising, we are trying to make the best out of a bad situation," Williams said.

Mansfield's family, as well as her fiancé's family, plans to attend the memorial dinner.

"We were very surprised at the generosity and the honor that the students of Oakland University have shown to our daughter," said Mansfield's mother, Lynne. "She really enjoyed SMEA and her part in that. We're quite surprised they offered to do the benefit. We were overwhelmed by their commitment to her. At a time that was very difficult for us, they were there for us."

The two families know they face even more difficult days ahead, including May 3, which would have been the day Mansfield graduated. Oakland University is awarding an honorary degree to her family during commencement. May 17 will also be a trying day, as that was the day Mansfield was to be married to Steven Root. The Mansfield and Root families will join together to walk in the Relay for Life in Lake Orion in Mansfield's memory. To sponsor the team, visit their **Relay for Life** site.

SMEA-OU's dinner will include dinner, dancing and a silent auction. The auction will feature items such as a quilt, gift baskets, Detroit Tigers tickets, paintings and golf course items.

Tickets to the event are \$35 per person. Tickets can be purchased from the SMEA-OU office in Pawley Hall or by contacting Katie O'Donnell at **kmodonne@oakland.edu**. Tickets should be purchased by May 15. The event will be semi-formal.

SUMMARY

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