

# The Bulletin

## BSAG, ABUSUA Block Party Connects College, Community



Black Student Union and Black Student-Athlete Group hosted their third annual Block Party.



Students enjoy activities planned by BSAG, ABUSUA.

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On Sunday, May 5 at the Heisman Club Field House and surrounding area, Oberlin's Black Student Union — ABUSUA — and Black Student Athlete Group hosted their annual Community Block Party. First organized by fourth-years Alyson Jefferson and Wya'e Stewart in their second year, the Block Party made its third annual return to Oberlin's campus.

Activities included gellyball, roller skating, a petting zoo, a bouncy house, airbrush tattoos, and a caricature station. A live DJ was present at the event. There were also free food trucks, including one for funnel cake, available for attendees, which included children and parents from the community and students from the College.

"We want everything to be free, especially in a town where there is a low-income population; we are in their area and on land that isn't ours," Stewart said. "Making sure that people here have free access to it [is necessary]."

Stewart tutors Oberlin elementary schoolers in math through the Bonner Center Program. She spoke to them this week about the impact of the event.

"For me, this event is about bringing the community [together with the] College," Stewart said. "Many kids in the area talk about how they don't have a lot of things to go to and feel trapped in the small town. So, especially when there are events like this where the community can come and interact with College students, it's always going

to be beneficial. I think the school should take more notice of them and be able to merge those gaps because we are taking up their area. If we do these small things to engage with them, then we're going to make our relationships better."

One elementary schooler, Theodore McGuire, exclaimed his enthusiasm for this event and its likelihood of happening in future years.

"I've always loved bouncy houses," McGuire said. "They're just something for me [and] oh my god! Yes, [I will come again next year]."

Along with strengthening the relationship between the College and community, the Block Party also benefits student culture.

"A lot of people on campus stick to their own groups, whether it's friend groups, athletics, their classes, or their majors," College first-year Maia Johnsson said. "[This event] brings all types of people together. It's a Black group who planned this, and since the diversity here is relatively low, it's a nice place to meet other people of color [on campus]."

Third-year College student Cami Sweet agreed with this sentiment and noted that it was great to come to support BSAG, ABUSUA, and her friends running the event.

"It's important to have this event because it connects us with the community," Sweet said. "It's also just something fun to do. Having a highlighted event for BSAG [and] ABUSUA, a big event [that] all their funding goes to, is great to see."

Second-year Ella Bezkorovainy, who also came to the event the year before, finds the Block Party to be an important community event.

"It's always great to have free events like this because it keeps it accessible to anyone, from the College [to] the town," Bezkorovainy said. "I think it's a good way to bring different groups of people into the same communal space so they can share food and have [a] good time."

Stewart's best friend and co-creator of this event, fourth-year varsity basketball player Alyson Jefferson, head of BSAG, cherishes her time as an organizer of the event. Though she's sad to see the end of her organizational days for the Block Party, she looks forward to its future leadership and has enjoyed the connection that the event has facilitated between North Campus, where student-athletes tend to congregate, and South Campus.

"I definitely notice a disconnect," Jefferson said. "We were [thinking] this would be a great event to put on to connect the different aspects of campus, but then to connect that community part as well."

However, in putting together this event every year and adding new elements, such as the petting zoo this year, Jefferson noted the importance of faculty in this process.

"This is an event that everyone looks forward to every year and we've had some — it's not even anybody's fault — logistical [and] funding issues," Jefferson said. "There's always some obstacle or something that hinders the process, [so] it's nice when we have faculty [doing] their best to help us with the event, which was very much appreciated; it can sometimes be difficult especially since it's [on] such a large scale."

In reflecting on the impact and importance of this annual event that Jefferson and Stewart have organized, their care is highlighted, and their admiration for the event's ability to bring people together is the central focus.

"I'm sad to be graduating, but I'm glad that we were able to do this event and that the town was able to connect with Oberlin [College]," Stewart said. "I hope that we can continue doing events like this in the future, even outside of the Block Party. There needs to be way more events that are happening that are connecting the town and the College, not just this."



Activities at the Block Party for students and children included a roller skating rink and a bouncy house.



Photos by Erin Koo, Photo Editor