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May 10, 2006
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NEWS RELEASE

REYNOLDS AND REYNOLDS GIVES MORE FUNDS TO URBAN TEACHER ACADEMY, WHICH PREPARES GRADUATES TO TEACH IN DAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DAYTON, Ohio — Suzan Bowe attended a public high school in suburban Columbus, Ohio, but she's chosen to teach in one of Dayton's inner-city schools this fall.

"You know that you're needed there," said Bowe, who landed a teaching offer months before graduating this spring from the University of Dayton with a degree in early childhood education.

She's a part of the University of Dayton's Urban Teacher Academy that prepares students to teach in the Dayton Public Schools and helps keep new teachers in the classroom. Nationally, "in some high-need urban schools, the teacher dropout rate is higher than the student dropout rate," according to Kathleen Fulton, director of Reinventing Schools for the 21st Century for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

The Reynolds and Reynolds Foundation has given the University of Dayton \$40,000 to support students and teacher mentors in the Urban Teacher Academy. In 2002, the company committed \$105,000 to help launch the innovative teacher recruitment program.

Students who complete the Urban Teacher Academy are guaranteed a teaching job in the Dayton Public Schools and receive an annual \$3,000 stipend for three years to apply toward graduate school, student loans or other uses. Mentors — veteran teachers in the Dayton Public Schools — receive an annual \$2,000 stipend for three years for their work in helping the new teachers be successful.

"The University of Dayton's Urban Teacher Academy is the type of initiative that bolsters the area's reputation for innovation and change," said LeighAnne Baker, vice president of human resources at Reynolds and Reynolds and a member of the Reynolds Foundation board. "It truly is a benchmark program that that can change the way educators approach teacher education. As we reviewed this project on the Foundation board, we recognized it as a unique approach to putting the right talent in the right situation to make a big difference — in this case, the right teaching talent in an urban school with a teaching mentor."

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Teacher recruitment has reached a crisis in some schools around the country. "There's a real need for highly qualified teachers everywhere, particularly in schools with an achievement gap," Fulton said. "The biggest issue is teacher turnover. If new teachers don't feel prepared to teach in an urban environment, they will leave."

That's why students in the Urban Teacher Academy are paired with veteran Dayton teachers who have shown exemplary classroom performance for the final two years of their bachelor's degree program and the first three years of their teaching careers. They complete their student-teaching assignments in urban schools and take special, targeted seminars that address such topics as the effect of poverty on education.

"This is a grow-your-own concept," said Roberta Weaver, associate dean for community outreach in the University of Dayton's School of Education and Allied Professions. "It's a tough job, and we're looking for students who are committed to those children."

In the fall, the Urban Teacher Academy will enroll a record 20 education majors — 10 seniors and 10 juniors.

"Without programs such as the Urban Teacher Academy, Dayton Public Schools would be unable to fulfill the vision that this community has for urban schools," said Percy Mack, superintendent. "The UTA is committed to preparing excellent and effective teachers, and those are precisely the type of teachers Dayton Public Schools needs and wants."

The Urban Teacher Academy reflects the University of Dayton's commitment to urban education, according to Rochonda Nenonene, director of the program.

"Urban education has such a great need," said Nenonene, who attended and taught in Cleveland Public Schools. "I understand the power of good teachers. There are so many inequities in urban school districts. You may not have the funding, but if you have a good teacher, that makes all the difference."

Nenonene, a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at UD, plans to finish her dissertation this summer on the effectiveness of Urban Teacher Academy graduates in the classroom.

For Suzan Bowe, 22, that commitment is just beginning.

"The teachers we work with in Dayton Public Schools are very supportive that they've made it easy to make the transition," said Bowe, who just finished student teaching in a first-grade classroom at Patterson-Kennedy International Heritage Academy on the outskirts of campus. "The kids are very loving, and they work so hard. To see their excitement when they read for the first time — that's the reward of teaching."

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For media interviews, contact **Rochonda Nenonene** at (937) 229-2489; **Roberta Weaver** at (937) 229-3342; and **Kathleen Fulton** at (202) 464-1929. To schedule an interview with **LeighAnne Baker**, call (937) 485-8107. To schedule one with **Percy Mack**, call (937) 542-3054. To reach **Suzan Bowe**, call **Teri Rizvi** at (937) 229-3241.