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UNIVERSITY of



DAYTON

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NEWS RELEASE

150 UD TEAMS TO PLEDGE 150 VOLUNTEER HOURS AS PART OF UNIVERSITY'S SESQUICENTENNIAL

DAYTON, Ohio — When 150 teams perform 150 hours of community service, that's equal to 22,500 hours, or two-and-a-half years of nonstop, 'round-the-clock aid to Miami Valley people and the agencies that serve them.

That's the goal of the sesquicentennial service initiative being launched today by the University of Dayton, founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary (the Marianists). The Center for Social Concern is sponsoring "Celebrating 150 Years of Service in Faith," a campaign to recruit UD students, faculty and staff members to pledge 150 hours of service between now and Nov. 1, 2000, either singly or with a team of colleagues.

The sesquicentennial celebration will kick off Saturday, Sept. 25, with a Mass at 1 p.m., celebrated by Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, and end with a jazz concert by the UD Jazz Ensemble and Woody Herman band at 7:30 p.m. and a show of low-rising fireworks at 10 p.m.

All events are free and open to the public. Free parking is available on campus and in the NCR parking lot on Brown Street, where a shuttle will pick up guests and transport them to campus.

The service projects can be as earthy as eradicating wild honeysuckle from a city park and as delicate as nurturing a child's sense of self-esteem, said organizers.

"We're encouraging people who aren't doing any community service to begin and people who are doing service already to expand their commitment," said Brother Phil Aaron, S.M., the campus minister who is organizing the campaign. UD students performed more than 13,600 hours of community service during the 1998-99 academic year through campus ministry activities and also contributed nearly 9,000 hours to the community through service-learning projects that use real-world service to reinforce classroom theory.

Reflection on service carries great weight in the Marianist philosophy, and each of the service activities sponsored by UD includes time and resources to help students — and now

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faculty and staff — analyze their experiences. Volunteers will be urged to chart their hours and reflect on their service at the project's Web site, located at www.udayton.edu/~csc/sesqui.htm.

"There's a tendency to think of community service as 'doing a good deed,' but there's much more to it than that," said Aaron. "It becomes a powerful act of growth when you reflect on the causes of homelessness or environmental pollution and realize that you are in a position to influence the policies that bring about community ills as well as community solutions. You begin to develop a sense of whose responsibility it is to solve these problems."

A pre-launch canvass netted 20 faculty and staff members to serve as charter volunteers to set the standard as the campaign officially starts. The student sign-up phase of the campaign is being conducted through campus ministry service clubs.

Patrick F. Palermo, associate provost for faculty and academic affairs, was the first to sign up as a charter volunteer, and he credits his instinct for service to a number of influences.

"I grew up in a service tradition," he said. "I grew up in a small town, Watertown, N.Y., where service is integral to being a good citizen, and I was an activist in the 1960s, so I also come out of that tradition of commitment to ideals and involvement. Being a volunteer is also very much within the Marianist heritage here at UD of being a servant leader."

Palermo said he will easily meet the goal of 150 hours by November 2000. He spends an average of seven hours a week fulfilling his commitments as chair of CultureWorks, serving on the Montgomery County arts and cultural district grant allocation committee and giving Leadership Dayton presentations. And he's about to join the YMCA board of trustees.

Although any and all community service counts toward the campaign, community development, environmental restoration and housing projects are being recommended to those who don't already have service connections.

The environmental projects — such as nurturing plants to restore Fernald land tainted by contaminants, a project of the Marianist Environmental Education Center at Mount St. John, and developing Wesleyan Nature Center in northwest Dayton, a Five Rivers Metro Parks effort — symbolize the future and the past, say organizers. "As part of the sesquicentennial, we're celebrating the past, but we're also looking to the future," said Sister Nancy Bramlage, S.C., director of UD's Center for Social Concern. "The environment is so crucial to the future of our world, our planet and humanity."

Another project on the roster is Habitat for Humanity. UD has featured a student chapter since 1989, and last year members donated 3,902 hours to the organization's building projects in the Dayton area.

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Additional projects recommended by the Center for Social Concern are:

- Assisting local neighborhood development organizations.
- Providing greenhouse and community garden development as well as computer education in the Edgemont neighborhood.
- Assisting AmeriCorps volunteers in the Fairgrounds neighborhood through UD's INCLUD program.
- Housing rehab, youth work and social service delivery with St. Mary's Development Corp.
- Housing rehab and organizational development in Southern Dayton View.
- Removing honeysuckle and maintaining trails at Narrows Park on the Little Miami River in Beavercreek for Greene County Parks.
- Restoring wetlands with the Beavercreek Wetlands Association.
- Assisting with seasonal activities such as the Oct. 9 RiverFest at Island Park and the Oct. 16 Forest of Time at Wesleyan Center with Five Rivers Metro Park.

UD's history of service to the Miami Valley reaches well into the past, when in 1913 the Great Miami River flooded and devastated Dayton. UD housed and fed 800 refugees in St. Mary Hall, a safe location thanks to its own spring water, infirmary and heating system — not to mention its location on high ground. During the flood, the Marianists cooked three meals a day for patients at Miami Valley Hospital and organized a relief column to reach stranded St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

The tradition continues today, as exemplified by the biannual survey on Miami Valley race relations that the Center for Family and Community Research conducts and activities such as helping Dayton secure a multimillion grant to tear down public housing complexes and rebuild an old Dayton View neighborhood.

Since its inception in 1850, UD has become a national leader in Catholic higher education, graduating students who are prepared to succeed professionally and who know the value of service and leadership to community. The sesquicentennial celebration, which will run through May 2001, will include song and dance, religion and humor, and events that range from film to philosophy.

A calendar of events being held in celebration of UD's sesquicentennial can be found on the Web at <http://www.udayton.edu/150/>.

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