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Newsletter: Community Connections

Fitz Center for Leadership in Community

9-2023

Community Connections, September 2023

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University of Dayton

Fitz Center for Leadership
in Community

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Warm Welcome to New Fitz Center Staff



LAUREN POOR

Dr. Lauren Poor is the Director of Public Humanities and Arts (PHA) and an Assistant Professor of Practice at the Fitz Center. As Director of PHA, she collaborates with community partners and UD faculty to pursue extramural funding to support public humanities and arts projects. She is in consultation with faculty to develop a new Introduction to Public Humanities and Arts course to be offered at UD in the near future.

She is originally from Boston, and now lives with her husband and their twin six-year-old boys in the Dayton region. In her spare time, she loves hiking (especially in Scotland!), traveling and caring for her many pets.

THUY HA

Thuy is in the Master of Science in Education, School Counseling program and will graduate in Spring 2024. She joins the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community as a Graduate Assistant. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, going to local coffee shops, watching tennis and playing soccer.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nancy McHugh 2023 PPN Leadership Award Winner



Dr. Nancy McHugh is the winner of the 2023 PPN (Public Philosophy Network) Leadership Award! She is being recognized for her work on restorative justice, her work teaching incarcerated students and students transitioning out of the prison system, and the kaleidoscope of community-engaged projects she's developed here at the Fitz Center!!! Well done Dr. McHugh, Congratulations!

Impactful Work from New Urban Research Initiative

Executive Director, Dr. Nancy McHugh, speaking about the impactful work being done in our community led by Fitz Center's Director of Urban Research, Amy Jomantas



RECENT EVENTS

Health Equity Orientation

The inaugural Health Equity cohort kick-started orientation week on August 14th with a Dayton scavenger hunt! A great bonding experience exploring downtown Dayton and taking pictures in front of various locations. They built upon their relationships with each other at Camp Joy, having a ton of fun on the high ropes. The week also consisted of partner site visits with Children's Hospital and Omega CDC, where they had impactful conversations surrounding the social determinants of health.



RECENT EVENTS

River Stewards Orientation



The Stewards had an **AMAZING** time on the water during orientation week! Day 1 was a 9 mile kayaking trip from Taylorsville Dam to Island Metropark. Day 2 was a 7 mile trip from Island Metropark to SunWatch Archaeological Park. We're so excited to get to work this year! #RiverLove

RECENT EVENTS

Dayton Civic Scholars Orientation

Dayton Civic Scholars kicked off their year with a jam-packed orientation week in which they bonded with each other, explored Dayton, and learned about different aspects of civic engagement.

Highlights include team building at Camp Joy, attending a City Commission meeting, and exploring downtown Dayton on the Flyer. The senior cohort kicked off their capstone planning by immersing themselves into a Dayton neighborhood, where they were welcomed into the home of a local changemaker. We are thrilled to see what the rest of the year will bring!



RECENT EVENTS

Ethics and Leadership Symposium

On August 4th, 13 students across all majors took part in presenting in the Ethics & Leadership Initiative 2023 Summer Internship Program Student Symposium! This immersive program, in partnership with local organizations including the Dayton Mayor's Office, Learn to Earn, Adventure Central, Omega CDC, Think TV, Ethix Merch, Little Miami Watershed Network, and the Rivers Institute, provided these future leaders with hands-on experiences and a platform to grow in their leadership skills and personal values. From engaging in weekly class discussions to presenting their insights at the symposium, these students demonstrated their commitment to making a positive impact in various spheres. The synergy between classroom teachings and real-world applications as well as the commitment to leadership our students have demonstrated has paved the way for a promising future for all.



UPCOMING EVENTS



REGISTER



FOR THE

Community Engagement Mixer

[HTTPS://UDAYTON.GIVEPULSE.COM/EVENT/387601](https://udayton.givepulse.com/event/387601)

OR



Join UD's Community Engagement Centers for a meet and greet mixer connecting faculty and staff together with community partners.



20 September 2023

3:30pm-5pm



1401 S. Main St.

Dayton, OH

Community Room



Organized by: The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, Human Rights Center, Center for Social Concern, ETHOS Center, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, & Hanley Sustainability Institute

UPCOMING EVENTS

IMAGINING Health and Environmental Justice COMMUNITY 3RD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

The symposium is a space for community members and partners to come together for conversations regarding health and environmental justice in Dayton and strategies for shaping a healthy, thriving region.



April 11-12, 2024



THE HUB

POWERED BY PNC BANK
AT THE DAYTON ARCADE

The symposium will be free and open to all. For more information, email imaginingcommunity@udayton.edu

IMAGINING COMMUNITY(IC) Sponsoring Institutions:

University of Dayton, Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, Sinclair Community College, Wright State University, CultureWorks, Hub Powered by PNC Bank at the Dayton Arcade



Student Highlight

Interviewed by Anita Armstead

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

I am a junior at the University of Dayton that is studying Environmental Geosciences with a minor in Computer Science. I am a member of the River Stewards 2025 cohort and am involved in water isotope research through the geology department. In my free time, I enjoy bird watching, kayaking, and reading.

2. You were recently an intern with the Fitz Center. Can you tell me about that experience?

My internship at the Fitz Center was an incredibly fulfilling experience. My position at the Rivers Institute entailed several tasks, but the largest was using GIS technology to compile a StoryMap that documented the past, present, and future of the River Stewards program. It was great to get involved in the Rivers Institute in a way that I was not able to before, and I am grateful for the wonderful people I had the opportunity to work with.

3. What do you wish other people knew about the Fitz Center?

I wish more people knew about the many projects and initiatives that the Fitz Center is involved in. Many people feel as though their time with the University flies by, and many times this means that they will miss out on such opportunities due to never hearing about them.

Robin Lambert
Class of 2025



4. Where do you see yourself in the next ten years?

I hope to continue to utilize my unique strengths and gifts to continue to serve my community in the way that the Rivers Institute has taught me. I also hope to continue to learn more about my local watershed and educate others on what we can do to preserve the natural world right outside our front door.

Faculty Feature

Interviewed by Anita Armstead

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your work with UD and in the community?

I am a developmental psychologist, so on campus I teach courses in child development and young children's learning. My research focuses on cognitive development in early childhood, with a specific focus on increasing equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences for children to promote school readiness skills. I work with many community organizations, including Preschool Promise and Miami Valley Child Development Centers.

2. Can you talk about your current project surrounding children's school readiness and why this project with Preschool Promise and the Northwest Dayton Partnership is important to you?

There is currently a significant teacher shortage in the childcare workforce, and the reasons are varied, but importantly, early childhood educators are woefully underpaid given the critical service they provide to the community. A pilot program to increase pay through grants for all staff in select early childhood centers in Northwest Dayton provided an opportunity to help the community assess the impact of increased pay on children's school readiness. Ultimately, my goal is always to search for ways to promote high-quality early learning environments for young children. Teachers and other early childhood center staff who are adequately paid for their critical work may be less stressed and more satisfied in their jobs and more likely to have the capacity to create optimal learning environments.

**Mary Wagner –
Associate Professor of
Psychology,
Faculty Fellow
University of Dayton**



3. Effective community engagement requires diligence, careful planning, and grit. What inspires you to persevere when things become challenging?

This is MY community. I live here, I'm raising children here, I love the city of Dayton. In my ten years at UD, I have worked very hard to create lasting partnerships with the early childhood community, and it always starts with taking the perspective of my community and listening to their hopes for Dayton's youngest children. I am inspired to continue to persevere when things become challenging because ultimately, what is the purpose of my work if not to be useful to my community?

4. What is the most important takeaway you want your students to understand before completing their educational program at UD?

I want my students to understand that any community engagement endeavor requires humility, openness, and flexibility. Higher education at UD is about so much more than coursework and degrees, it's also about listening to those with diverse perspectives and figuring out ways that you can be an active participant in your community.

Partner Feature

Interviewed by Anita Armstead

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your role at Preschool Promise?

I am the founding and current Executive Director of Preschool Promise. I have led Montgomery County early childhood collaborative work for a while now – the work originally started as ReadySetSoar, an initiative to improve kindergarten readiness that was funded by Montgomery County and The Frank M. Tait Foundation. Then I worked closely with Dr. Tom Lasley to build Learn to Earn Dayton. We launched Preschool Promise as a separate 501c3 in 2016, after the City of Dayton residents voted for Issue 9, which dedicated additional funding to make Preschool Promise happen across the City of Dayton.

2. Preschool Promise's mission is to equip preschools and families with exceptional support, coaching and education. You are committed to promoting equity in all facets of the Preschool Promise, with the goal of ensuring that all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, abilities or socioeconomic status, are fully ready to learn when they start Kindergarten. What is a current project that you are excited about?

Several years ago we were analyzing our data and discussing the reality that our Black Boys are consistently not receiving what they need to be successful. I looked around the table and realized that we did not have any Black men at our table, and then set out to figure out how we could involve Black men in helping us develop solutions to the inequities facing our Black boys from the very start.

**Robyn Lightcap-
Executive Director
Preschool Promise**



Thank you to Reverend Joshua Ward and Mr. Jonathan Washington for co-chairing a group of 15 Black men who met monthly to make recommendations to Preschool Promise on what we can do differently to improve preschool for Black boys. We hired Christopher James from that committee to join our staff, and he is now leading our work that we call "Black Boy Brilliance." He and his colleagues are facilitating year-long training with teachers on how to create Black boy-friendly classrooms and I believe this is important and transformational work. I am embarrassed it took us this long to get here, but we are committed to figuring this out and making sure we create environments where our Black boys thrive. One thing we are doing right now is showing the documentary "Black Boys" this fall, at various venues across the community. I encourage you to attend one of the free showings, and you can sign up at [this link](#).

3. Preschool Promise and the Northwest Dayton Partnership are working with University of Dayton Faculty Fellow Mary Wagner to better understand how increased staff pay at early childhood learning centers relates to children's school readiness.

What has been the outcome of this project so far?

Child care professionals are paid an average of \$12 an hour – which is a pathetic statement about how we have valued early childhood teachers in our country. We know that early childhood teachers are instructing and caring for our young children in the most important time of brain development. Thanks to our partnership with Learn to Earn Dayton, we were able to implement a one-year RESPECT (Respecting, Esteeming, and Paying Early Childhood Teachers) pilot, where we paid 250 early childhood professionals a monthly stipend or grant to recognize the importance of their roles. Dr. Wagner and her colleagues are still analyzing our data, but we see early signs of improved retention and overall well-being with our teachers. We hope these learnings will compel state and federal leaders to improve the financing mechanisms for early childhood so that teachers and staff can be paid respectable wages for the important work they do.

**Do you know a community partner,
faculty or staff member, or student that
should be recognized for their
community engagement in our next
newsletter?**

**Please submit your
recommendations to
aarmstead1@udayton.edu**

**Don't forget to follow
The Fitz Center
on Instagram, LinkedIn, and
like and follow us on Facebook!**

(See links below)



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