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Alumni Profile: River lessons

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Gita Balakrishnan • January 31, 2017

Floating down the river, Candice Mortara '98 experiences peace and calm.

Her love for the water and her exposure to the Fitz Center during her time at UD inspired the philosophy major to work to establish the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway.



A nonprofit, the organization works with communities along the Fox and Lower Wisconsin rivers to celebrate and preserve the river's heritage, which had once brought industry to the area due to its massive hydraulic power.

Mortara, who also received a master's from UD in 2006, helped organize the grassroots initiative in 2009 and currently serves on its board of directors. Her interest was twofold: to be thankful for the river's role in incentivizing industry to come to the area and to recognize the river's recreational potential.

"It's a place to get out and be surrounded by nature. It flows right through the middle of these cities and allows for an escape that's right in peoples' backyard," she said.

Now, the parkway works with more than 70 partners to enhance programs and build capacity for historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, tourism and education.

Mortara recalled being the most inspired when she saw a woman, paralyzed from the waist down, kayaking down the river — a feat she could only accomplish because the parkway had built boat launches.

“I think it’s wonderful. The river has a way of bringing us together and equalizing our abilities,” Mortara said.

Mortara and her husband also started a commercial business, Fox River Tours, to further attract the public to the waters.

“I think that we’re all so caught up in technology and to responding to demands and people immediately,” she said. “There’s something that gets you back to the core of who you are when surrounded by trees and water. It’s exceptionally important to take the time and to recognize the importance of preserving these resources.”