GRANT FUNDS RIVER LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM  
By Cameron Fullam, University Communications

A grant from the McGregor Fund in Michigan will support the development of a new leadership curriculum in the Rivers Institute. The three-year, $180,000 grant awarded in June from the McGregor Fund will develop a multidisciplinary curriculum to form civic leaders who are committed to the greater community and good stewards of rivers and other natural assets.

The College of Arts and Sciences sought the grant on behalf of the Rivers Institute. Like other initiatives of the Fitz Center, the Rivers Institute’s new river leadership curriculum will employ both undergraduate research and experiential, community-based learning to achieve its objectives. Coordinators plan to tap expertise from all academic areas of the University to focus on the Great Miami watershed, the aquifer and the Great Miami River in Dayton as precious assets that generate communal, economic, aesthetic and ecological vitality in the region.

In the curriculum to be developed, Rivers Institute cohorts of students, staff and faculty will teach and learn collaboratively with public and private community partners to build advocacy for the watershed and promote a vision to maximize the river’s value culturally, environmentally and economically. The Rivers Institute recognizes both students and faculty as leaders in these efforts. Current River Stewards come from 15 academic disciplines.

Calling the river system “one of the region’s untapped assets,” geologist Don Pair, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said the Rivers Institute and the proposed leadership curriculum can be key resources for re-energizing Dayton and addressing its economic needs.

In September, the Rivers Institute received a $2,000 grant from the Greater Dayton Conservation Fund of The Dayton Foundation. This grant will be used to purchase additional equipment for the Water as Our Essence River Outreach Program.
DAYTON CIVIC SCHOLARS STUDY LOCAL ISSUES

By Anna Hurley, Graduate Assistant

As students fill campus and begin bustling to and from classes, their activity signifies that another summer has come to a close and autumn, as well as a new academic year, is upon us. This will be my first autumn at the University of Dayton. I am the newest addition to one of Dayton’s best-kept secrets, the Dayton Civic Scholars (DCS) program. While I am looking forward to creating a sense of familiarity with my new life here at Dayton, I am most excited about greeting each of our three cohorts and continuing the tradition of community development and civic engagement.

This year, the DCS program has made some significant transitions. Unfortunately, Dean Lovelace retired in May from the program after 25 years of incredible service and leadership to UD. With large shoes to fill, the program had to find a new way to operate. DCS is now headed by a five-person leadership team comprising of Dick Ferguson, Nancy Martorano Miller, Ph.D., Linda Potyrala, Suzette Pico and Anna Hurley. Along with new leadership, a new addition to the program was created to facilitate better community and issue cohesiveness. This year, all three DCS cohorts will have the opportunity to come together for a minicourse that meets once a week to learn from one another and discuss crucial issues with influential community leaders. DCS will also make an official statement around the community with new polo shirts for everyone involved with the program.

The 2010 cohort will begin finalizing and implementing its capstone project. The 2011 cohort is starting its second year in the program and will keep momentum up for another great year. The cohort will begin exploring internship opportunities and will also start planning their senior capstone project. We wish two of our scholars, Amanda Hortsman and Kaitlin Stretch, success as they start their internship experiences. Amanda will be interning this fall at the Department of Treasury in Washington, D.C., while Kaitlin will be interning for the City of Dayton public affairs office.

Dayton Civic Scholars welcome the 2012 cohort to the program. This past May, the new cohort completed a fascinating orientation that explored Dayton neighborhoods, the Cincinnati Freedom Center,
and a challenging ropes course at Joy Outdoor Education Center. We are proud to have 10 new Scholars: Michelle Ashcraft, Timothy Finnigan, Katherine Hammaker, Bernard Jones, Katarina Lucas, Lauren Maddente, John McGinnis, Elisabeth Ramsey, Lauren Simcic and Michael Veselik.

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL CENTERS ENTER FOURTH YEAR

By Don Vermillion, Director of Public Projects

The Neighborhood School Centers (NSC) program has completed its third year of operation with an increasing level of community involvement and activity at the five Neighborhood School Center sites.

The Salvation Army has continued its work at the Kiser Neighborhood School Center and in the surrounding neighborhood as it completes the construction of the new Kroc Family Community Center. On July 30, the Salvation Army hosted its third annual community picnic with its largest attendance yet. The Kroc Center construction continues on schedule and the grand opening of this new community facility will occur the weekend of May 8-10, 2010. The Salvation Army has also announced that Kiser NSC Site Coordinator Amber Rose has been named as the new director of education at the Kroc Center.

Two of the Neighborhood School Centers program’s partners, East End Community Services and the Dayton Urban League, have been selected by the Montgomery County Family and Children First Council to be the focus of a new Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to attempt, through a new system of neighborhood engagement, to make a positive impact on the community outcomes and indicators that are tracked annually by the Family and Children First Council. The initial focus will be on the critical issue of school readiness, with East End Community Services and the Dayton Urban League engaging families in these neighborhoods to assist in designing community strategies that will integrate with Dayton Public Schools’ School Readiness and Pre-K to 2nd Grade Learning Initiative established by Superintendent Dr. Kurt Stanic. The goal is that young children in the two neighborhoods are kindergarten-ready, attend school regularly and are proficient in third-grade reading and writing.

Cleveland Neighborhood School Center was the site of a summer camp operated by Cleveland’s partner, the YMCA of the Greater Dayton Area. The camp included field trips and educational programming, including a focus on improved nutrition habits.

The Phoenix Project and Fairview Neighborhood School Center continue to be an area of great activity in Dayton’s northwest neighborhoods. Unified Health Solutions hired a new site coordinator, Manicka Thomas, to replace Tashira Collier, who left to work for the Dayton Food Bank. The selection process included the Fairview School principal and several neighbors from the Fairview neighborhood.

The 2009-10 school year began on Monday, Aug. 17. The NSC funding partners — Dayton Public Schools, Montgomery County, United Way, the Dayton Foundation and the University of Dayton — have secured funding for years four and five of the program — beginning in the current school year — with continued emphasis on academic improvement, increased afterschool activities and opportunities for students, and increased community use of the Neighborhood School Centers program buildings.
Another busy summer for the Rivers Institute as three River Stewards, Maggie Varga, Tracey Horan and Sarah Peterson, took on leadership roles as interns, each focusing on a different project. Tracey continued to research and develop activities for the Institute’s river education outreach programs, inaugurating new ideas with YMCA students during a scheduled visit in June. Maggie helped organize the annual River Stewards Orientation and Senior Trip, and Sarah worked with the curriculum committee to gather resources and develop modules for the future River Leadership course sequence. All three Stewards are tremendous assets to the program, and we thank them for their dedication this summer to the Rivers Institute.

Members of the Rivers Institute managed to get out and enjoy the river several times this summer. On July 29, the Rivers Institute participated in the Fifth Annual Dayton Mayor’s Community Float, sponsored by Five Rivers MetroParks, one of the Institute’s major community partners. Eight Stewards and staff joined Dayton Mayor Rhine McLin and other paddlers for a two-hour trip down the Mad River starting at Eastwood MetroPark and landing downtown at the Whitewater Warehouse. All participants enjoyed interacting with the mayor in a casual environment and being part of a great effort to help connect Dayton and its rivers.

Two weeks later, two Stewards took it upon themselves to build a watercraft and represent the Rivers Institute in the annual River Derby. After a bit of encouragement, Franz Berkemeier and Nolan Nicaise decided to build their “boat” completely out of trash and recyclables found on the river. A few river clean-ups and roll of duct tape later, they made their way down to RiverScape to enter the contest, receiving the award for “The Boat Most Likely to Sink at the Dock.” The boat did float at the dock. However, when loaded with two paddlers, it couldn’t quite navigate the river. When asked what happened to the boat afterwards, Franz replied, “We recycled it!”

In August, the Rivers Institute prepared for the largest incoming cohort of River Stewards yet. Seventeen sophomores arrived Aug. 16 for the five-day orientation program, which included the two-day paddle from the Taylorsville Dam to SunWatch Village. Faculty, staff and community partners joined the new Stewards by giving presentations, participating in discussions and paddling alongside them on the river. When asked about their reactions to Orientation and their two days on the Great Miami River, new River Steward Bethany Renner said, “Last week’s trip overall, as a new Steward, was a complete growing experience. The trip has allowed me

**Reflection at end of trip**

*By Nolan Nicaise, River Steward '10*

Splash, turning, laughing, singing, listening, silence. We’ve formed relationships this week. We’ve gotten to know one another. We ate dinner together, sang together, watched flames leap from the fiery inferno together; we slept in the same tent for crying out loud! We’ve gotten to know the river, its water, its bedrock, its re-bar and seringes, its herons and scaled creatures, its bike trails and its freeways. We’ve formed connections with our place, our city, our Dayton. We have a connection to this region, bathing in its waters. We’ve formed relationships with every human that ever lived — our great grandparents — through the history of every drop. Through this river, we’ve connected with Troy and Piqua, Cincinnati and Louisville, Pittsburgh and New Orleans. This was an adventure of fun. We laughed and played and fulfilled our human desire for exploration. We welcome the new Stews and Leslie. You’ve learned more about people and Dayton in two days than in weeks of class. Don’t forget it. Go back to UD a changed person. Silence.
to see the river as a resource and asset to the Dayton community and given me the opportunity to become further acquainted with fellow students and the community.”

We welcome the 2012 cohort of River Stewards to the Fitz Center, as the Rivers Institute looks forward to another great year of education, experience and action!

SENIOR RIVER STEWARDS TACKLE 50-MILE TRIP

By Maggie Varga, River Steward ’10

Late March, in the team space in Zehler Hall, nine students representing what would be the first senior cohort of the River Stewards program began a discussion about what it would mean to be a third-year Steward. Following the Learn. Lead. Serve. model, they envisioned a project as all-encompassing as the program itself: a trip down the Great Miami River. The goal of the trip would be to document the northern section of the river from scientific, recreational, economic and artistic perspectives. Following countless meetings and months of planning, the project became a reality as the Stewards began their journey on Aug. 12.

After staying at the Governor’s Island Marianist Retreat Center on Indian Lake, the kayakers began in Quincy, Ohio. The Stewards traveled more than 50 miles in four days while visiting cities and historical sites to learn about the history of communities shaped by the river. Paddling as much as 15 miles a day, students welcomed the relief of periodic ecological testing sites where they monitored pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrate, turbidity and temperature and observed macro-invertebrate samples. To capture the experience from all angles, the Stewards gathered audio and visual recordings, conducted interviews and shot video footage from a creatively engineered waterproof “helmet cam.” The ecological information collected will serve as the foundation for the environmental science thesis of senior River Steward Katie Norris. The overall body of data and media gathered will be used to communicate a holistic view of the Great Miami at the 2010 River Summit, for academic events on campus and to the Dayton community.

The trip brought blisters, sore arms and bruises, but also a strong sense of fellowship. The nine students formed connections with communities along the river, with nature and with each other. Fueled by PB&Js and trail mix, the Stewards opened themselves to new experiences and a greater understanding of a river they have paddled countless times. Sometimes they silently delighted in nature’s soundtrack of water sounds and birds; at other times, they bellowed Disney soundtracks and enjoyed each other’s laughter. With changing moods and scenery, there was one constant in the students’ daily routine: a prayer to start each day. Gathering in the center of the river, hand in hand, with their boats in a circle, the Stewards prayed for safety, strength and open minds. They thanked God for the beauty around them, the companionship among them and another day on the river.
EIGHT GRADUATE FELLOWS WORKING, LEARNING IN DAYTON

By Emily Klein, Graduate Assistant

The Graduate Community Fellows program has doubled its size this fall with the addition of four new fellows. They began their program on Aug. 16 in four new placement locations. Chinenye Ikeme, a student in the clinical psychology program, has joined Samaritan Behavioral Health Inc. Chinenye is a graduate of Enugu State University of Science and Technology in Enugu, Nigeria, with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Angela Wasserman is working with the Catholic Education Collaborative. She will be studying in the community counseling program. Her undergraduate degree is in psychology from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Drew Formentini is a University of Dayton alumnus with a degree in sports management and fluency in Spanish. He has begun the school counseling program and is working with the Dayton Christian Center. Erin Anderson, also a UD graduate with degrees in international studies and religious studies, began work with the Dakota Center Inc. She is working toward a master’s degree in theological studies.

Each of these placements offers growth opportunities and new capacities for the Fitz Center, the community partners and the Graduate Community Fellows. The new fellows are enrolled in a one-credit seminar led by Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., who will facilitate reflection on their work in their agencies and its connections to their classroom learning.

The inaugural group of Graduate Community Fellows is entering its second year of service and academic work. Tierra Blackwell, Terri Pelley, Jama Brown and Katie Barnett worked through the summer with their two-year placements at Cityfolk, Daybreak, Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley and Life Essentials, respectively. They have each found their niches in these agencies and are making significant contributions to the development of programming and outreach.

Terri Pelley has instituted a token economy program that encourages Daybreak residents, who are runaway or homeless youth, to participate in counseling sessions, attend school, and work and pitch in around the center. The token economy program enables residents to pay rent to the center, save money, and purchase necessary items like food, appliances or toiletries.

Volunteers are essential to Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley. Jama Brown continues to collaborate with her agency and the United Way’s Volunteer Connection to establish Global Youth Service Day in the Miami Valley in April 2010. The event will encourage youth to address needs in their communities and to become more civically engaged.

Carrying on the supportive services of Life Essentials, Katie Barnett is working with the Chums II groups for adults with severe mental illnesses to volunteer in the community. She leads two groups and an additional two groups for clients with other disabilities. Altogether, her work has supported more than 36 clients.

Tierra Blackwell’s work at Cityfolk has centered on the Culture Builds Community initiative. The goals are to increase acceptance and cultural sharing in Dayton’s neighborhoods through the arts. This year’s major project was community quilting project that was put together by children at Fairview, Ruskin and Edison elementary schools.
SEMESTER OF SERVICE
A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

By Kathy Trick, Graduate Assistant

“Semester of Service was a unique and very valuable learning experience that taught me so much about myself and others.”

“It introduced me to a whole new world of people and issues to keep in mind as I attempt to grow.”

“I realized that we are all human beings and have basic needs in this short life here on earth.”

“This experience has changed my outlook on the world around me.”

These are just a few of the many comments made by the Semester of Service students following their experiences this summer. While the students’ experiences included tutoring high school students, running afterschool programs, teaching adult literacy classes, aiding the disabled population, teaching art classes to youth and the disabled, and serving individuals who are homeless, they all agreed that these experiences with Semester of Service were life changing. Through their diverse experiences, the group of 11 students had the opportunity to challenge each other and themselves. These students experienced the Semester of Service mission of expanding the worldviews of participants while empowering them to become advocates for social change.

The summer was also a time of transition for the Fitz Center. Jana Strom, the former coordinator of Semester of Service, moved to Boston to pursue a doctorate in physical therapy. Others stepped in to help run the summer program; Andy Badinghaus, an AmeriCorps*Vista, and Kelly Bohrer, from Campus Ministry’s Center for Social Concern, aided Brother Ed Zamierowski, S.M., and Joanne Troha of the Fitz Center in facilitating the classes and mentoring the students.

The five students participating this fall in Semester of Service are seniors Allison Dolle, chemical engineering major working at Dakota Center; Kathleen Burkhart, psychology major with a minor in history working at Booth House; and Alisa Bartel, psychology major with a minor in English working at Daybreak. Junior psychology major Peter Ryan is working at Dayton Christian Center and sophomore special education major Beth Doenges is working at Adventure Central.

As a Fitz Center graduate assistant, I look forward to sharing in the growth and learning experiences of the incoming students this fall. I am excited about working with the students on their journey of learning, growing and challenging themselves as they take time away from their busy lives to invest in the lives of others in the Dayton community.
LEADERSHIP SEMINAR TURNS 15

By Dick Ferguson, Executive Director

How do leaders build communities? For 15 years, undergraduate and graduate students have been learning alongside their instructors the art of Leadership in Building Communities. More than 300 students have enrolled in the seminar, and many of its former student participants are now active leaders in their communities.

Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., and Dick Ferguson first offered the seminar following their leadership of the Montgomery County Child Protection Task Force. That work demonstrated the significance of several principles now included in the seminar and the work of the Fitz Center. These are:

- **Build on assets** rather than needs.
- **Develop social capital.** Relationships matter.
- **Lead constructive public conversations that balance advocacy with inquiry.** Ask questions first.
- **Create space for communities to change, to build adaptive capacity.**
- **Communities move forward with shared visions.**

Each year, Karen DeMasi, Fitz Center consultant and local neighborhood development specialist with CityWide Development Corporation and UD alumna, brings her expertise to the seminar as a guest lecturer. This year, the seminar has incorporated Karen’s book co-authored with Mary Ohmer, Consensus Organizing: A Community Development Workbook. The text is written from the perspective of years of experience in community organizing, neighborhood development and social work.

Former Montgomery County Administrator Don Vermillion joined the instructional team several years ago. Today, the seminar emphasizes community development, consensus organizing, leadership and reflection. This year’s class of 17 will write case studies of three promising comprehensive community development projects in Dayton: Twin Towers and East Dayton, Historic South Park, and the Phoenix Project in the Fairview neighborhood. The class will present their case studies at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9, in the Marianist Hall Learning Space.

Above: Students learn about the Carillon neighborhood from residents during a previous seminar.