4-2010

Community Leader, Vol. 08, No. 03

University of Dayton. Fitz Center for Leadership in Community

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Recommended Citation
University of Dayton. Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, "Community Leader, Vol. 08, No. 03" (2010). Community Leader.
Book 4.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/fitz_newsletters/4

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NEVER A DULL MOMENT FOR BROTHER RAY FITZ

By Mark Gore, Graduate Assistant

Eight years after stepping down as president of the University of Dayton, Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., Ph.D., continues to be an active leader in the University and Dayton communities. Brother Ray, the University’s first Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice, annually teaches three courses, mentors students, faculty and staff, and participates in many community projects. He has given several lectures and presentations about issues at the intersection of urban areas and social justice, including participation in a Social Inquiry for Social Justice symposium hosted by UD in honor of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

This fall, Brother Ray and Bob Stoughton, research administrator for the Office of the Montgomery County Family and Children First, began work with the Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) Design Team, convened to focus on achieving all of the Family and Children First Council community outcomes. The Design Team will target school readiness and pre-K to second-grade learning initiatives. The Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative project has four primary goals, which are to create conditions to help children be kindergarten-ready, attend school regularly, be proficient in third-grade reading and math, and have fewer untreated health conditions and developmental delays. The team is presently working with two of the Fitz Center’s Neighborhood School Centers and nonprofit partners, Ruskin School/East End Community Services and Edison School/The Dayton Urban League and their surrounding neighborhoods. Brother Ray, Bob and the CNI Design Team are working with partners to begin program implementation this summer.

Brother Ray is also presently working on a research project that focuses on the “Church’s Response to Urban Challenge.” The goal of this work is to discover the ways in which the Church has responded to urban challenges throughout American history and to think about the best way for the Church to answer the challenges of the modern urban crisis.
RIVERS INSTITUTE: STILL FLOWING STRONG!

By Maggie Varga, Graduate Assistant, and Leslie King, Coordinator of the Rivers Institute

The spring semester got off to a busy start with the addition of three new student interns to the Rivers Institute staff. Bethany Renner took over educational outreach and a six-week project with Holy Angels Elementary School, while McLean Johnson assumed responsibility for media and communications. AJ Ferguson has taken on the task of organizing the third annual River Summit, which is co-hosted by the Miami Conservancy District and will be held on April 15. All three interns are members of the 2012 sophomore cohort of River Stewards.

In January, the Rivers Institute presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, D.C. The seven-person panel, including three students, discussed ways that the Rivers Institute is “Creating Stewards of our Communities.” The presentation highlighted the Rivers Institute’s model as a best practice in the areas of civic engagement, community building and co-curricular learning.

In February, intern Sarah Peterson presented alongside Dusty Hall of the Miami Conservancy District at a local conference sponsored by the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE) focused on the greening of the curriculum. Sarah shared her personal experiences as a River Steward and provided an overview of her involvement in the development of the River Leadership Curriculum, an interdisciplinary course sequence that will be offered by the College of Arts and Sciences this fall. The development of the River Leadership Curriculum is supported by the McGregor Foundation award received by the Rivers Institute last June.

The Institute also participated in the Adventure Summit for the first time, joining over 100 other exhibitors throughout the three-day event. Hosted by Five Rivers MetroParks, the summit, an adventure-based exposition, attracted around 6,000 visitors. The event provided an opportunity for the Rivers Institute to share our contribution toward the MetroParks’ goal of making Dayton the outdoor recreation capital of the Midwest.

At the end of this semester, the Rivers Institute will say goodbye to its first cohort of graduating River Stewards. While a couple of the nine senior Stewards will be sticking around next year, their passage represents a significant milestone for the Institute. They are the first students to complete the three-year sequence of civic engagement. Their contributions and water knowledge have shaped the program as well as the direction of the Institute. The seniors will share their senior project documentary at the Stander Symposium on campus and at the River Summit. The presentations will highlight the 50-mile paddling trip the seniors completed last August. The Fitz Center would like to thank the 2010 cohort and wish them the best of luck as they graduate and become leaders and stewards of their future communities!
It’s no secret to the University of Dayton that young adults are full of talent — the kind of talent that businesses lust for. Young talent is an increasingly sought-after commodity, and tens of thousands of young people are products of the Dayton area’s universities and colleges. So, where is our flood of new businesses? Or, more important, where are all the new young grads?

A recent report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute suggests that about six out of every 10 of Ohio’s college students will leave, or are leaning toward leaving. This “brain drain” is not good news for a state with an aging work force and stagnant population.

The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community at the University of Dayton understands that a young, talented work force is essential to businesses, and it doesn’t believe Ohio’s and the region’s losses are inevitable. It’s working hard and smart for change that is altering the course of dozens of UD graduates. What is the Fitz Center’s secret? It’s the students themselves — with a little water and a few canoes and kayaks mixed in.

Founded more than 60 years before the great flood of 1913, UD is home to a relatively young Rivers Institute. What sets it apart from similarly named institutes around the world is that students have been largely responsible for its birth and evolution. The Rivers Institute is a product of student leadership.

Today, the Rivers Institute promotes the mutual interest of more than three dozen River Stewards earning degrees in 15 different academic areas. The Stewards are enormously talented, and they share an interest in our river. River trips bring these talented young adults one step closer to the compelling grip of our river cities. In the words of Nolan Nicaise, a 20-year-old biology major: “We’ve formed connections with our place, our city, our Dayton.”

Because the Stewards are connected to the community, because they’ve learned to love the river, they will be more likely to stay here after they graduate. They will be more likely to be an economic force and new civic leaders. Already they are leaders within the University, and some are contributing to policy discussions in city government. The Fitz Center has discovered a recipe worth copying. Take talented students from a supportive institutional framework, put them in kayaks and canoes, add water, mix in some community partners, and let the creativity flow.

For those of us in local and regional government, the message is clear. Our challenge is to actively and creatively engage them; to share our experiences, listen to their ideas, provide constructive input, and then to break down barriers so they can do their work.
DAYTON CIVIC SCHOLARS WELCOME 2013 COHORT

By Anna Hurley, Graduate Assistant

The Dayton Civic Scholars just wrapped up the second semester of our minicourse. Once again, this semester was filled with great speakers and discussions. Guests this semester included: Mark Sisson from UD’s Career Services, Scott Murphy from updayton, Laima Rastikis from Rastikis, Inc., Katie Schoenenberger from UD’s geology department, Kevin Jones, president of FROC Priority Board, and Brother Ray Fitz, the Fitz Center’s Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice. The speakers engaged students on topics of internships and careers, place-making, grant writing, GIS mapping and community building.

After a fall and winter spent recruiting first-year students to the join Dayton Civic Scholars, the program has certainly found some of the best UD has to offer. The 2013 cohort includes 12 students who come from varied majors including political science, sociology, psychology, criminal justice, economics and teacher education. Members of the new cohort hail from diverse and interesting communities including: Dayton, Chicago, Canton, Cleveland and Detroit. It is with pleasure that we introduce the 2013 cohort: Brandon Glasper, Kyle Grabowski, Cara O’Grady, Zachary Hadaway, Briana Hollis, Marina LoCasto, Kelsey Loughman, Brooke Moore, Katie Repic, Jeffrey Schumacher, Nicholette Smith and Amy Sullivan.

Neighborhood School Centers Intern Profile: Casey Aldrich

By Emily Klein, Graduate Assistant

Casey Aldrich is a junior psychology major at the University of Dayton. As a Dayton-area native, she naturally got involved in the Fitz Center’s civic engagement program, the Dayton Civic Scholars. Her many connections to the UD and Dayton communities encouraged her to want “to be a bigger part of that community” by enrolling in UD and getting involved in many campus organizations.

For the past two years, Casey has worked at Cleveland Elementary, one of Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers. Casey works with Kym Beasley, site coordinator at Cleveland, on afterschool programming for Cleveland Elementary’s students. According to Casey, this work at the school in combination with her experiences as a Dayton Civic Scholar have given her the “opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone and gain more experience working with a variety of different people.” This work has also helped her to solidify her future career goal: to be a school psychologist.
COMMUNITY SERVICE HONOR ROLL

By Cameron Fullam, Assistant Director for Media Relations

The University of Dayton has been named to the 2009 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service learning and civic engagement. Of the 742 schools on the honor roll, Dayton is listed among the top 15 percent, earning a designation of “distinction.”

UD President Daniel J. Curran said the recognition belongs not just to the University, but also to the thousands of students, alumni, faculty and staff who embody the University’s “Learn, Lead, Serve” philosophy.

“When people ask what it means to be a Catholic, Marianist university, this is it,” Curran said. “It’s a powerful belief in community and servant leadership. This passion to serve others and live life together is present in the University’s institutions, classrooms, student clubs and in the day-to-day lives of our students.”

Honorees are chosen based on a series of selection factors including the scope and innovation of service projects, percentage of student participation in service activities, incentives for service, and the extent to which the school offers academic service-learning courses.

More than 70 percent of University of Dayton students engaged in community service in the 2008-09 academic year, with nearly 20 percent of students contributing at least 20 hours of service per semester.

“The University of Dayton has an extraordinary presence in Dayton and is worthy of presidential recognition,” said Dick Ferguson, executive director of the Fitz Center. “I am confident that we are educating leaders who know how to build and strengthen communities. Wherever in the world our graduates go, most will know what it means to be civically engaged and will know how to make a difference. This is the University of Dayton at its best.”

More Students Volunteering in Local Schools

By Andy Badinhaus, AmeriCorps*VISTA

In the spring semester, UD students continue to offer their time and talent to area schools. More than 30 students are working on a variety of projects and programs in the Neighborhood School Centers (NSC) including classroom help, assisting ESL youth, mentoring girls in Fairview’s Girls’ Club, and helping Kiser seventh- and eighth-grade students create and edit a school newspaper. At nearby Patterson-Kennedy School, 12 UD students are helping out in classrooms and using their language skills to help ESL students whose primary languages are Spanish and Arabic.

Four pre-dentistry majors from UD prepared and presented a lesson on oral health to children at Edison and Fairview NSCs. As part of this lesson, the UD students distributed “treat bags” filled with toothbrushes, floss and coloring books donated by Procter & Gamble and area dentists.

A number of service-learning courses are also paired with the Neighborhood School Centers. Among these is a marketing course that provided Edison NSC with several options for a flyer to advertise the opening of their new school to neighborhood families. Also, by the end of the semester, 60 child psychology students will have each helped out at an event at one of the NSCs, in all supporting more than a dozen events.

Above: Pre-dental students present oral health “treat bags” to Ruskin Elementary students.
GROWTH SPURT FOR SEMESTER OF SERVICE
By Joanne Troha, Director of Community Service Learning, and Kathy Trick, Graduate Assistant

With the start of its eighth year, University of Dayton’s Semester of Service (SoS) program received record-breaking applications from UD undergrads. Semester of Service allows students to take a semester away from full-time study to contribute 450 hours of direct service in the Dayton community. Students also participate in a three-credit course that provides a context for their service by examining urban issues and social justice. The program is open to all majors and has the capacity to enroll 20 students each year. A total of 34 students submitted formal applications for summer and fall 2010. Those numbers brought this year’s total applicants to 45. Many students said they were inspired to apply by their friends and classmates who were pleased with their own Semester of Service experiences.

In January of each year, the Semester of Service staff launches an extensive recruitment and placement process for both the upcoming summer and fall terms. On campus, during a seven-week period, we promote the program, hold information nights, accept applications, individually interview students, and organize site open houses at all partner agencies for student visits. Simultaneously, we evaluate our partnerships with community agencies. After interviews with SoS staff, students are asked to choose two to four sites where they would like to interview; those agency interviews then unfold over two weeks. Our SoS partners are to be commended, this spring especially, for accommodating the number of UD students seeking interviews, which roughly tripled numbers in the past!

Our year-round agency partners include Adventure Central, Dakota Center, Daybreak Youth Center, Dayton Christian Center, East End Community Services and Salvation Army Booth House. Additional partners during the summer include Miami Valley Literacy Council, Dayton Early College Academy (DECA), We Care Arts! and Life Essentials.

SoS success depends on a good fit for both the partner agencies and the students. Following individual student interviews, the partner agencies rank the candidates and the candidates rank the agencies. It is the role of the SoS staff to select a diverse team of students who can enrich the SoS class with their various majors, backgrounds and ideas while meeting the partners’ priorities. In the end, our most important responsibility is to provide each student with the best opportunity for a truly educational experience.

Eleven students will participate in summer 2010 and six students in fall 2010. We will be sharing their stories in upcoming issues of this newsletter.
CLOSING REFLECTIONS OF FIRST GRADUATE COMMUNITY FELLOWS COHORT

The end of the University year will bring to conclusion the two-year experiences of the first cohort of Graduate Community Fellows. Each of the fellows shared her impression of the program and its impact on her life.

Terri Pelley, Daybreak: “The program has impacted my life in so many ways. First, it reinforced my desire to work in the field of clinical psychology and showed me ways to do this outside of the typical counseling setting. My agency gave me a large amount of responsibility. The built-in reflection course forced me to think about what impact I wanted to make and how I could focus my energy on achieving my goals in my short time there. This program has showed me a multitude of ways that I can make a difference through combining my career with volunteerism.”

Tierra Blackwell, Cityfolk: “As a Graduate Community Fellow working on the Culture Builds Community project, I have had the opportunity to see how arts and culture can be used to build relationships within broken and divided communities. I have learned how to enter into a completely new situation and create a meaningful position for myself and this organization. Not only do I play a major role in the success of the community residents by leading and overseeing the preparations for the community celebrations, but I have also created a program evaluation that I am currently using as my master’s thesis project. It is my hope that I will be able to provide evidence supporting the theory that positive cultural experiences have a positive effect on the ethnic/racial identity of elementary school-aged children.”

Katie Barnett, Life Essentials: “During my time as a fellow, I have had the opportunity to work in my career field while improving my knowledge and skills. I feel I am more aware of the issues that people with a mental illness experience on a daily basis. This helps me, as a counselor, to see firsthand how the stigma of mental illness affects them and how they are able to overcome it. In my two years at Life Essentials, I have worked with seven groups, and of the seven, five groups have graduated. It is amazing to see the growth of esteem, confidence and sense of purpose in each member at the end of the nine months.”

Jama Brown, Catholic Social Services: “The Graduate Community Fellows has given me the opportunity to expand my learning and education beyond the classroom. I have been blessed with an experience that has allowed me to connect the concepts and values of my program to the realities of the greater Dayton community. I have been able to see myself as more than just a graduate student at the University of Dayton working to expand my own self-interests and desire, and I have been able to become an active member of the city community.”

Below: Graduate Community Fellows (from left) Tierra Blackwell, Jama Brown, Terri Pelley and Katie Barnett
FITZ CENTER THANKS YOU FOR AN AMAZING YEAR

As a follow-up to our thank-you in the last issue of Community Leader, the Fitz Center would like to thank our December 2009 donors for their generous contributions! Without your support, our work would not be possible.

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