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## Trailblazers

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# Trailblazers : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Monday March 5, 2018

## Trailblazers

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By Eric F. Spina

As part of Women's History Month, the Women's Center is honoring 15 trailblazers in an exhibit on the windows of the Heritage Center, Chaminade Hall and Roesch Library.

The display honors the contributions women have made at the University of Dayton and beyond, both past and present. These women broke proverbial glass ceilings, and many lead the way for new initiatives, policies, and practices that make our campus more inclusive and equitable.

I was grateful today to say a few words at a ceremony that paid tribute to these extraordinary women: Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous, Jessie Hathcock, Dr. Deb Bickford, Dr. Emily Bonistall Postel, Dr. Juli Burnell, Dr. Donna Cox, Dr. Kenya Crosson, Daria Graham, Kathleen Henderson, Dr. V. Denise James, Dr. Pat Johnson, Amy Lopez-Matthews, Crystal Sullivan, and Kathy Webb.

My reflections:

I want to start by saying thank you to Lisa (Borello) for her generative leadership. I already know that you will deflect credit for the idea and execution of this exhibit, but this is a powerful, timely, and deeply meaningful initiative for which you deserve great credit.

While you have only been at UD a short time, it is obvious that you are already in touch with the soul of this place. Thank you.

In society today, the virtuous are too often dismissed and generally not celebrated. Rather, it is the boast and the flexed muscle and the “in-your-face” act that gets the attention. But listen to these names and, as I say them, think of the character, and the virtue, and the impact of these women:

Blessed Adèle, Marie-Thérèse, Jessie, Deb, Emily, Juli, Donna, Kenya, Daria, Kathleen, Denise, Pat, Amy, Crystal, Kathy.

While none of these women is a saint (and given this list, it truly is important for me to add “yet!”), the power of their virtuousness is both overwhelming and inspiring. That power has shaped the Society of Mary, has changed and shaped this University, has shaped our reputation, has shaped our graduates.

Are these women tough? You bet. Tough enough to overcome significant obstacles at every turn.

Are they smart? Absolutely. Smart enough to conceive and spearhead initiatives and programs that define UD’s excellence.

Are these women leaders? Watch them work! They have led from in front and from behind, they have led quietly and with assertiveness, they have led visibly and from behind the scenes.

Are they superb examples for every female staff member, faculty member, student, and alum? Well, no, not exactly...in fact, they are superb examples for EVERY member of our community, no matter their gender, because of their virtue, because of their tremendous character.

We talk a lot at UD about selflessness and humility, as well as about adaptability and boldness. These 15 remarkable women — each in her own way — have been able to perfectly blend these laudable, Mary-like virtues with a bias toward action that has led to the improvement of this University.

Indeed, as we move toward our aspiration of being the University for the Common Good, the lives and careers of these 15 women (most still vitally central to our future) point the way forward. In our aspirational goal of achieving a truly equitable, diverse, and inclusive

University, let us all work to channel their spirit, their perseverance, their strength, and their virtuousness.

In this process, let their example inspire us to ensure that every person — no matter gender, race, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or nationality — has a seat at the table and is able to use their voice just as these 15 extraordinary women have done. We will be a better institution for it.

Blessed Adèle, Marie-Thérèse, Jessie, Deb, Emily, Juli, Donna, Kenya, Daria, Kathleen, Denise, Pat, Amy, Crystal, Kathy: Thank you for your courage, thank you for your virtuousness, thank you for your strength, thank you for your example.

You inspire us.