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University of Dayton

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Dayton Civic Scholars

University of Dayton seniors are working with a Dayton neighborhood association and Greater Dayton Premier Management to turn vacant lots left undeveloped after the housing downturn into a small park for Ole Dayton View.

The project caps a three-year commitment by 15 students as Dayton Civic Scholars. The program, run by the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, challenges undergraduates to get off campus and
find a way to create a positive impact in the Dayton community.

The scholars went door-to-door in Ole Dayton View and studied maps of the neighborhood to collaboratively decide on a sustainable project that would benefit residents, said Ian Dollenmayer, a political science and philosophy student.

They partnered with Greater Dayton Premier Management to use HUD funding to convert six vacant lots into a place where people could get to know their neighbors. Greater Dayton Premier Management CEO Jennifer Heapy said the land had been slated for single-family new construction through the Hope VI program before the recession brought interest from eligible buyers to a halt.

The new Audubon Park features a figure-eight walking path, benches, landscaping and a sign installed with the HUD funds.

Dianne James, president of the Ole Dayton View Neighborhood Association, said the park adds value and has enhanced pride in the area.

“There are some finishing touches that need to be completed,” she said. “However, I will say this: It’s beautiful.”

Dollenmayer said the students have hosted a grand opening and a holiday party for the neighborhood, and plan to hold more events next year before their May graduation.

“The residents of Ole Dayton View can carry on this park,” Dollenmayer said. “They now have a space where they can come outside and meet their neighbors to build a comfortable, sustainable and safe neighborhood.”

Every cohort of Dayton Civic Scholars completes a project in the community. The 2015 cohort created an after-school literacy program at Fairview PreK-8 for African refugee children called Fridays at Fairview.

More information on the Dayton Civic Scholars program is available at the related link.

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