Take Back the Tap: UD River Steward Cohort Senior Project

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Abstract
Every fall college students arrive on campus with preconceptions about tap water, bringing cases of bottled water onto our campus. Bottled water has been found to be unsustainable as well as harmful to the environment, communities, and human health. The City of Dayton has very high quality drinking water in abundance, a fact which makes bottled water on our campus an unnecessary luxury. Each year the River Stewards, a co-curricular program which is housed in the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, participate in a senior project that benefits the community in some way. This year, the 2013 River Stewards Cohort worked with the City of Dayton and NSO to help tackle the issue of bottled water on campus. The Stewards helped coordinate a water bottle free Fall 2012 orientation and educate incoming students about the quality of Dayton’s tap water. This included collaborating with the City of Dayton to design, purchase, and distribute special “Take Back the Tap” reusable water bottles to the incoming freshmen, as well as providing a water truck for students on campus to fill up their new water bottles. In addition, the senior cohort is currently partnering with ArtStreet in order to add a filling station on campus that will simultaneously educate about and provide access to tap water. The 2013 Cohort’s Senior Project gave the Stewards the opportunity to apply the knowledge and leadership skills that they have acquired from three years in the River Steward Program.

Goals of our project
- Promote Dayton’s water resources
- Alter negative perceptions of tap water
- Educate the UD community
- Increase access to tap water

Methods
- Partnered with Dayton Water Department for funding for reusable water bottles to be distributed to incoming first-years and to use the department’s water truck on campus
- Designed water bottles and compile an educational handout to distribute with the bottles
- Partnered with New Student Orientation (NSO) to distribute water bottles during opening ceremony and presented to the students on the benefits of drinking Dayton tap water
- Created a brief presentation and video to inspire the first-years to use the reusable water bottles and educate them on water quality in the Dayton region
- Worked with Dayton Water Department to organize water bottle distributions at orientation in the future
- Partnered with ArtStreet and Facilities Management to have an outdoor water fountain and art kiosk installed

Dayton’s Water Resources
- Dayton sits on the Great Miami Buried Valley Aquifer
- The aquifer provides drinking water for 97% of the city
- City of Dayton tap water is tested every hour for purity, while bottled water is only tested once a week

Results

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