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When the Walls Talk

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When the Walls Talk

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Friday December 8, 2023

By Eric F. Spina

“Our Heart. Our Home.” These welcoming words greet me outside my office, and the sight always brightens my day.

Thanks to a recent transformation, the second floor of St. Mary’s now showcases the University of Dayton’s history and highlights moments of courage, perseverance, inclusion and innovation. It’s a spectacular sight, and an attractive one, too.

Through vivid colors, imagery, typography and words, the walls invite visitors to experience a University that soars to new heights while remaining firmly rooted in its mission.

“We are stewards of an extraordinary legacy,” says Kim Lally, executive director of University marketing, who collaborated with Art Director Gina Gray and Archivists Kristina Schulz and Jim McKinnon on the concept, design, and execution. “For more than 170 years, the University has seamlessly paired unwavering faith with courageous vision.”

Photos and graphics that illustrate our Catholic, Marianist identity adorn the east wall, while the west side of the hallway features [a timeline](#) of pivotal moments in UD's 173-year history. Here are just a few that caught my eye:

- An October 1920 clipping from the *Exponent* of the changing of the institution's name from St. Mary's College to the University of Dayton "to do honor to the City of Dayton, which has always entertained a kindly interest in its principal school."
- A 1903 black-and-white vintage photo of the men's basketball team dressed in team shirts featuring an interlocking S and M to reflect the school's religious heritage. A Marianist brother, Adam Perth, S.M., introduced basketball to the school in 1892.
- Shout outs to John Alexander and Jessie Hathcock, the first Black man and first Black woman to graduate from UD in 1925 and 1930, respectively. In 1969, UD, which admitted women decades before other Catholic universities, became one of the first schools in the nation to establish women's athletics under the umbrella of intercollegiate athletics.
- Other pioneering moments are chronicled, too — from the establishment of the nation's first undergraduate program in human rights studies in 1999 to UD becoming the first Catholic university in 2014 to align its investment strategy with sound stewardship of the earth.
- The timeline depicts UD's transformation from a primary school for boys to a major Catholic university that greatly expanded its footprint with the acquisition of land and a former world headquarters from NCR. The University honed its reputation as an anchor institution by sheltering 800 people displaced by the 1913 flood, partnering with Premier Health to purchase the former Montgomery County Fairgrounds for a future imagination district, and creating an innovation hub in the rejuvenated Dayton Arcade.

These walls have become a canvas for honoring our history while illustrating how we continually adapt and change for the times.

If you lean in and listen, the message is clear. "Our momentum," one wall panel proclaims, "moves the world."