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Pay It Forward

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It may be as simple as leaving a plate of cookies in someone's office. Or buying a cappuccino for a student in the ArtStreet Café on campus. Or writing a long-overdue thank-you note to an engineering professor who believed in you.

The University of Dayton is encouraging random acts of kindness as part of a monthlong social media campaign called "I Love UD." This week promotes the love of giving back.

Participants are asked to download a "Be UD Kind" card, engage in a "random act of kindness" and leave the card with the recipient. The card encourages the holder to offer a kind gesture to someone else.

"What better way to celebrate the University of Dayton's mission of service to others than with random acts of kindness?" asked Teresa Perretta, assistant director for University outreach and engagement and a 2009 alumnae. "Even a small gesture can make a big impact."

Alumni around the country also are getting in the spirit. In Columbus and Dayton, alumni are volunteering at soup kitchens. In Chicago, they're cleaning and painting an elementary school. In Raleigh, alumni will work on outdoor projects for a nonprofit wildlife sanctuary. Alumni in New York and New Jersey are planning a Hurricane Sandy relief event.

In addition, faculty, staff, students and alumni are encouraged to sign the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Pledge and complete at least four hours of volunteer work sometime during the semester. It's part of Black History Month activities on campus.

Frank Geraci, a two-time University of Dayton graduate who serves as a federal judge in Rochester, N.Y., suggested a Random Acts of Kindness campaign when he served as president of the National Alumni Association. He envisioned the power of 100,000 small gestures of kindness from alumni in their communities around the world.

"Imagine 100,000 acts of kindness passed on to 100,000 others and continuing forward. At a time when the news is filled with stories of violence and tragedy, these acts will demonstrate that basic good is present in the souls of most," said Geraci, who's been sweeping the snow off co-workers' cars and pushing other drivers out of snowdrifts during a rough Rochester winter. He leaves behind a "Be UD Kind" card in the hope that "they all pay it forward."

Each week in February, the campus community is being invited to show their love for the University of Dayton in various ways. The campaign kicked off with an interactive "Porch Sheet Challenge" contest — a nod to the creative porch sheets students hang at their houses in the student neighborhoods to welcome their parents or make such pronouncements as, "Holy Sheet! Where Did the Last Four Years Go?"

During "I Love UD Athletics Week," students tested their knowledge of Flyer lore in a Facebook contest and "broke up" with their T-shirts from other schools. On Valentine's Day, they traded in approximately 200 shirts from places like Xavier and St. Louis for free "I Love UD" shirts. A student group called Students Today, Alumni Tomorrow is donating these shirts from other schools to the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter.

During the final week, those whose lives have been touched and changed by the University can share their stories via email or video upload.

A 1995 alumnus who wishes to remain anonymous has offered to match \$10 text-to-give gifts for scholarships, up to \$5,000. Donations of any size during the month will be counted toward the February fundraising goal of 2,800 gifts. The University is nearly halfway toward meeting that goal, according to Chad Warren, executive director of University outreach and engagement and a 2005 alumnus.

"The I Love UD campaign is about building connections, strengthening relationships, and building affinity and reputation for the University of Dayton," Warren said. "The pride we show is meaningful. This month, we're demonstrating that, while individual

love is strong, when we come together, the power of our love is infinite. We're asking all who love UD to show support through service, engagement and giving."

The inaugural I Love UD campaign is sparking attention.

"Our likes on Facebook and followers on Twitter are growing by the minute. We have grabbed the attention of alumni and students. People want to show their love for UD," Perretta said.

For more on the I Love UD campaign, see <http://www.udayton.edu/iloveud>.

For media interviews, contact Chad Warren at 937-229-3588 or cwarren1@udayton.edu or Teresa Perretta at 937-229-3811 or tperretta1@udayton.edu.