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An 'Unsung Hero'

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Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) has chosen the University of Dayton's Fitz Center for Leadership in Community as one of its NUSA Notables, to be recognized at NUSA's annual conference May 20-23 in Spokane, Wash.

The nonprofit organization describes NUSA Notables as "unsung heroes." While neighborhood leadership and involvement is not their primary function, they make a "significant and positive impact on neighborhoods and neighborhood people."

"Community building is hard work and often thankless," said Dick Ferguson, executive director of the Fitz Center. "It requires a shared vision and leadership that understands how to facilitate finding this vision. The University of Dayton is a private, Catholic university with an extraordinary tradition of such community leadership. The Fitz Center is honored to work for a better Dayton and grateful for this recognition."

Judy Martinson, the City of Dayton's citizen participation manager and NUSA vice president, nominated the Fitz Center for the award.

"The nature of the leadership challenges in the Dayton community requires adaptive learning and leadership across professional and community sectors," Martinson wrote. "The University of Dayton has established a reputation as an effective community partner, especially with urban Dayton, on difficult community challenges. The University of Dayton adds value with the Fitz Center, which brokers and leads ongoing community building partnerships."

Created in 1975 to share information and experiences toward building stronger communities, NUSA now continues to encourage networking and information-sharing to facilitate the development of partnerships between neighborhood organizations, government and the private sector. Each year, NUSA recognizes the commitment of neighborhoods and neighborhood-friendly individuals or enterprises in awarding Neighborhood of the Year, Best Neighborhood Program and NUSA Notables awards.

The "Savior of Our Cities" national survey of community revitalization ranks the University of Dayton No. 1 among Catholic universities and No. 3 overall (behind the University of Southern California and the University of Pennsylvania) in helping to save America's cities from blight.

The programs of the Fitz Center are examples of the University's Catholic and Marianist commitments. The Fitz Center works to build partnerships that benefit the Dayton community and add to the experience of learning through leadership and service.

Fitz Center initiatives include:

- **Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers** - Encourages parent and neighborhood participation in learning, increases resources through community partnerships, and improves the neighborhoods surrounding five Dayton public elementary schools.
- **Rubicon House** - Assists in the ongoing revitalization of the Rubicon Park district adjacent to the University of Dayton.
- **CityLinks Neighborhood Leadership Conference** - Features workshops that bring Dayton and Montgomery County citizens together to learn from national speakers and from one another ways to revitalize neighborhoods and nurture grassroots leadership.
- **Rivers Institute** - Reunites Dayton and its rivers, creating opportunities for Dayton citizens to see the rivers as economic, recreational, ecological and aesthetic strategic resources.
- **Semester of Service** - Allows students to take a semester away from classes and serve full time in nonprofit centers for inner-city children and teens, individuals who are homeless and neighborhoods undergoing revitalization.
- **Dayton Civic Scholars** - Creates a pathway from the classroom to community leadership and public service by preparing each class of students for meaningful civic leadership roles.
- **Graduate Community Fellows** – Pairs graduate students with local service organizations to make a positive impact in urban Dayton through direct involvement in the community.
• **Leadership in Building Communities Seminar** - Places students inside a Dayton neighborhood to understand the inner workings of local politics through lectures, tours, neighborhood meetings, a team project and extensive reading.

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