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Meet at the River

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The Great Miami River cuts across boundaries, forming a common bond among the cities of southwest Ohio, from Sidney to Fairfield.

Leading an effort to help these communities easily share their urban, recreational and agricultural visions for the 98-mile river corridor, the University of Dayton and the Miami Conservancy District on April 28 kicked off the conversation with a River Summit on campus.

Leaders of nearly 100 governments and organizations with a stake in the Great Miami River attended the summit to discuss the importance of the river and their individual development projects.

UD also created a Web site to compile the presentations and projects shared at the summit. The site, <http://rivers.udayton.edu>, will serve as a one-stop shop for anyone wanting to know what each community is doing along its section of the river.

The University discussed plans for 50 acres of land it purchased from NCR Corp. that includes acreage along the east bank of the Great Miami River. But UD President Daniel J. Curran said the University's motivation for leading the new collaborative effort is greater than its ownership of riverfront property.

"It's the students," he said. "It's their excitement about the river when they come up to me and say, 'This is what we're learning about.' The river is such a great educational resource."

UD sophomore Tracey Horan is one of those students. She is a member of the River Stewards, a new educational program supported by UD's Fitz Center for Leadership in Community.

The River Stewards recently completed an organizational plan for a Rivers Institute, a partnership between UD and the Dayton community that focuses on three areas: bringing UD to the river, bringing the Dayton region to the river and using the river for undergraduate education.

"I was drawn to the River Stewards because of the recreation aspect, the community engagement opportunity to get beyond the boundaries of UD and because of the educational component," said Horan, who is pursuing a degree in education.

The Great Miami River has always been a focus for the communities along its banks, though for different reasons, Curran said.

"After the 1913 flood, we developed a mentality of keeping the river away from us. During the environmental movements of the last 50 years, we developed the impulse of keeping us away from the river. Now it's time to come together with the river again," he said. "This is a good thing for the region, and we ought to make sure this happens."

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.