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Dayton Roots

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University of Dayton administrator and graduate Kathleen Henderson will be featured along with 11 well-known African-Americans next month in *African American Lives 2*, a new PBS television series that uncovers long-lost family histories.

Dayton native Henderson was selected out of 2,000 applicants as the only not-so-well-known person whose family was researched for the series, which traces genealogy through research and DNA testing. It airs 9-11 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, and Wednesday, Feb. 13, on

ThinkTV16/WPTD.

Henderson, director of the office of first-year student engagement for the University of Dayton, said she has always felt a strong connection to her family – both living and dead. Genealogy is a personal passion, fueled by stories about "family business" told by her parents, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and aunts.

Through the series' research, Henderson's already-large tree got a lot bigger, and millions of people will be present at the unveiling of more "family business" next month.

She said it never really occurred to her that she would be sharing her family's stories with the rest of the world, until she sat down with host Henry Louis Gates Jr. to film her reaction to the discoveries. "I never really thought about it. I just wanted to get those pieces of history," she said. "It was the first time it really occurred to me that I'm sharing my family with all these people."

That family is still centered in Dayton and Middletown. Henderson grew up in the Westwood neighborhood of Dayton, where she and her mother Gaye, brother J. Michael and family still attend the church where her great-grandmother worshipped. Sisters Lisa Woods of Xenia and Janine Rogers of Cincinnati were part of the family gathering in September when results were revealed and cameras were on hand to document their reactions. Henderson's father James passed away in 1995.

Her family's story will appear on the program along with notables including poet Maya Angelou, author Bliss Broyard, actors Don Cheadle and Morgan Freeman, theologian Peter Gomes, publisher Linda Johnson Rice, athlete Jackie Joyner-Kersey, radio personality Tom Joyner, comedian Chris Rock and rock 'n' roll star Tina Turner.

Researchers interviewed family members, pored over written records and even took DNA samples to trace family origins and place a family's journey into the context of American history. The highly acclaimed original series *African American Lives* aired on PBS in 2006; last year *Oprah's Roots* focused on Oprah Winfrey's family.

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