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Graduated Giving

12.04.2007 | Students, Campus and Community University of Dayton graduate Brian Lowry learned one of his most important lessons at a college party.

"It was about giving back to others," Lowry said of Christmas on Campus, a holiday tradition at UD serving hundreds of local school children that has become one of the nation's largest single-day community service projects on a college campus.

More than 40 years after it began, the celebration continues to resonate with Lowry and hundreds of UD alumni, who will share that same spirit of giving this month with charities and children in 33 cities across America.

Lowry and his wife Renai — also a UD graduate — sponsored the first-ever Christmas off Campus event in 1990 at Chaminade College Prep School in St. Louis to benefit the St. Patrick Center.

"We were very fortunate to have attended UD and wanted to continue the tradition of the University in St. Louis," Lowry said. "We thought it would be appropriate to continue serving in a way that was in keeping with the Marianist tradition."

The idea quickly caught on, and alumni chapters in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia started holding their own Christmas off Campus celebrations.

Beginning Dec. 1 through Dec. 21, UD alumni in New York City, Chicago, Boston, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and 29 other cities will serve hundreds of local children and charities and celebrate Christmas in a manner first experienced during their college years.

"These celebrations show the heart and soul of our entire University of Dayton community," UD President Daniel J. Curran said. "The amount of involvement by students and alumni shows our commitment to our mission of community outreach."

Nationally prominent charities such as the Ronald McDonald House, Covenant House, the Boys and Girls Club and St. Vincent de Paul are among the beneficiaries.

"UD's New York Metro alumni club has been coming to Covenant House even before becoming an official part of the chapter's Christmas off Campus. Each year, UD alumni arrive with good cheer and gifts for our young moms and their babies," said Bruce J. Henry, Covenant House New York's executive director. "It's a wonderful relationship that has brought great joy to children and their moms."

Ellie Kurtz, director of UD's student union from 1964 to 1994, started Christmas on Campus for a group of students who simply wanted to get together before heading home for the winter break.

Today, UD students "adopt" as many as 1,200 urban school children for a day, who receive gifts, play games and celebrate Christmas a little early. It is traditionally celebrated around Dec. 8 and combined with a Mass celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

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