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Building an Inclusive Community

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Daniel J. Curran, president of the University of Dayton, will receive a 2007 Humanitarian Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) of Greater Dayton. He will be honored at the 30th annual Friendship Dinner at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 22, at the David H. Ponitz Center at Sinclair Community College.

It's the second honor Curran has received this year for his commitment to diversity and inclusion. In August, he was awarded the inaugural Joseph E. Lowery Human Rights Legacy Award from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at its national conference in Atlanta.

"The humanitarian award recognizes those in the community who, through their work, do our work. They are proponents and advocates of social justice," said Patricia Meadows, executive director of NCCJ. "Dr. Curran has lived our mission through his work and leadership at UD. This award recognizes all the diversity and inclusion initiatives that have been developed under his leadership. It's for his personal advocacy and energy toward building a more inclusive community."

Besides Curran, Michael Houser, Joan Knoll and Tess Little will receive 2007 Humanitarian Awards. Treva Wynn will receive the Youth Leadership Award.

"This is not a personal award. This is an award for the faculty, staff and students at the University of Dayton, who are making a difference — on campus and in the greater Dayton community. Together, we live out UD's mission of educating for service, justice and peace," Curran said.

Earlier this year, Curran served as honorary co-chair of Dayton's Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration and helped lead the popular MLK march that attracts thousands from all parts of the region. He will take on the same role in 2008.

As part of the University of Dayton's Diversity Lecture Series that began during Curran's presidency, UD has brought nationally recognized speakers to Dayton to keynote both the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration dinner in the community and the annual MLK prayer breakfast on campus. Speakers have included Johnnetta B. Cole, who made history in 1987 when she became the first African-American woman to serve as president of Spelman College, and Clarence Page, nationally syndicated Pulitzer Prize-winning Chicago Tribune columnist. In January, Grammy Award-winning songwriter and musician Kirk Franklin, who changed the landscape of contemporary gospel music, will keynote community and campus events remembering King's legacy.

During Curran's tenure, UD also has started new exchange programs in China, hired an executive director of institutional diversity and inclusion, and launched the Dayton Early College Academy with the Dayton Public Schools. DECA prepares first-generation college students -- most of whom are African-American -- for success in college. All 32 members of the first graduating class headed to college this fall. Ten enrolled at UD.

In 2005, Curran joined University of Dayton students on a relief trip to hurricane-stricken Mississippi. In 2002, he received the Eternal Flame Award, an international award given for "exceptional contributions to the field of Holocaust education."

A sociologist by training, Curran is a noted scholar in criminology, juvenile justice and social problems, with a deep interest in international issues. He is an expert in coal mine health and safety legislation. Most of his research has focused on ways to address social inequality.

The NCCJ is a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry and racism in America. NCCJ promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions and cultures through advocacy, conflict resolution and education. The University of Dayton is one of the preeminent Catholic universities in the nation and the largest private university in Ohio.

Contact Patricia Meadows, executive director of NCCJ, at 937-222-6225, or Teri Rizw at 937-229-3241. A photo is available.