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"CHARLIE BROWN" IS 40, AND STILL GOING STRONG, SAYS UD INSTRUCTOR

DAYTON, Ohio--Good grief. Charlie Brown is 40 years old, and he could easily last another 40, says a University of Dayton instructor.

The beloved hero of the "Peanuts" cartoon strip first saw the light of day on Oct. 2, 1950. Distributed by the United Features Syndicate, the strip now appears in 2,200 newspapers and is translated into 26 languages in 68 countries.

The strip's enduring popularity, according to Lance Rudegeair, an adjunct instructor of visual arts at UD, is due primarily to the gamut of personalities portrayed.

"Everybody has been Charlie Brown at one time or another," Rudegeair said. "But if you don't relate to him, you might relate to Lucy, or Linus, or any one of the numerous characters in the strip.

Even Snoopy, the dog, is a personality.

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"In fact," adds Rudegeair, "I think Snoopy is the Harpo Marx of the strip, the one who doesn't say anything, yet is able to express himself very well."

Rudegeair, who is a published writer/illustrator in Yellow Springs, Ohio, said the "Peanuts" creator, Charles Schulz, has his hand on the American psyche.

"What the strip's characters experience are things most of us have experienced in some form or another. Trying to kick that football, with Lucy pulling it away each time, can represent a number of things, like some sort of missed opportunity to different readers," Rudegeair said.

"What Schulz has done is to create children who are really adults. The roles they play are really adult roles. That's why we can identify with them so easily."

Rudegeair, who teaches a course on illustration at UD, has had seven children's books published by Antioch Publishing, in Yellow Springs.

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For media interviews, call Lance Rudegeair at 513-767-5801.