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UD Students Gain Class Credit, Perspective in Tutoring Dayton GED Students

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**UD STUDENTS GAIN CLASS CREDIT, PERSPECTIVE
IN TUTORING DAYTON GED STUDENTS**

DAYTON, Ohio -- Nicole Beasley, a senior studying English at the University of
Dayton, sees a little of herself in the two teen-age mothers she tutors in preparation for the
General Educational Development (GED) exam. She wants to show them that motherhood
doesn't mean the end of their educations.

"I have two little kids and most college students don't," she said. "Hopefully they can
see that kids don't stop you from doing what you want to do."

Beasley is one of a dozen UD students who travel once a week to the Career Academy
downtown to tutor people, age 16 to 50, who missed passing the GED exam by just a few
points. Through a class taught by English professors Brian Conniff and Betty Youngkin,
students can tutor for English credit or as a service activity.

"We wanted to get the two groups together to serve each other," Youngkin said.

Last semester, Youngkin and Conniff's class worked with welfare mothers who came
to UD for literacy training through literature and creative writing. For the GED training, the
the students write essays and critique each others' work for the first part of the two-hour
session and later help their partners with more specific problem areas like math. Although
the program is structured for the GED, there's still room for creative writing.

Emily Dobson, who passed the GED practice test, wants to improve her writing skills.
She said that sometimes her ideas don't reach the paper the way she intended.

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"I do like to write poems and songs and sometimes I leave the reader hanging in the air," she said.

Conniff said that creative endeavors in the class range from a rap song written about Jesus to a poem by Dobson about the students who tutor her.

"I don't think they (the students) are in an environment very often where that kind of thing comes to the forefront," Conniff said. "A lot of these people are closet poetry writers."

In addition to learning about writing, the students learn about each other.

"Each person has a different set of circumstances why they didn't finish high school, and it is interesting to hear each person's story," said Bridget McKeever, a senior English and communication major.

For Youngkin and Conniff, who have both worked with literacy education in the past and received a grant from Ohio Campus Compact for the class, this sharing of stories is crucial for both sets of students to grow from the experience. The stories helped eliminate some of the intimidation felt by both groups of students.

American studies major Jennifer Jones felt awkward tutoring people close to her age.

"I feel comfortable now because it's not like I'm trying to teach something," she said. "It's like the two of us are trying to understand. We learn from each other."

Youngkin is impressed by the University administration's support of the program. She also notes that a similar service-oriented program at Rutgers University received praise and a visit from President Clinton.

"I thought, well, you know, Rutgers isn't the only one who's doing that," she said. "And that made me feel happy that we were on the cutting edge."

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For more information, contact **Brian Conniff** at (513) 229-3430 or **Betty Youngkin** at (513) 229-3437. Tutoring takes place on Tuesday nights at Dayton's Career Academy.