At the University of Dayton, we cultivate leaders who serve through leading by example. No one embodies that spirit more than Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., the longest-serving president in school history. This fall, we renamed the College Park Center for him.

Brother Ray is humble and unpretentious. Yet he inspires people to commit within the depths of their souls to causes that bring people together in a spirit of collaboration.

“As president, Brother Ray moved the University of Dayton into national prominence,” said Daniel J. Curran, president. “He’s still hard at work on issues of social justice and faith that have defined his life and left a permanent mark on this university. For our students, he exemplifies what it means to use your education and faith to work for justice, serve others — and change the world, in ways big and small.”

Brother Ray served as president from 1979 to 2002. His twin abilities to think boldly and empower people led to remarkable growth during his tenure with dramatic gains in the operating budget, endowment and sponsored research. An engineer by training and a deeply spiritual man, he is known for his systematic, persistent approach to addressing complex community issues.

In the 1990s, Brother Ray chaired Montgomery County’s Child Protection Task Force after five children in Dayton’s child welfare system died. He also helped shepherd two human services levy campaigns to victory. For the past dozen years, he has served as the Ferree Professor of Social Justice at the University of Dayton, where he provides leadership on community boards and teaches classes that connect Catholic social teaching to urban justice issues.

“We challenge students to learn beyond what they thought they could,” he said when he stepped down as president. “You’re not given an education for yourself. There’s a social obligation to make a difference in society and the community in which you live. … The very essence of this work of leadership is faith. Thomas had faith because he touched the wounds. Can we have the power and strength to touch people today, the dispossessed, the poor?”

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After five years as the coordinator, Leslie King was named director of the Rivers Institute and Leadership Formation in July 2014, after completing a Master in Public Administration degree with a certificate in nonprofit and community leadership. Her graduate studies complement her bachelor’s of science degree in agricultural sciences well, which focused on environmental protection and protected area management. Leslie’s work has focused on a comparative approach to how communities interact and manage their natural resources. Before returning to her hometown of Dayton, she researched, studied and lived in many different parts of the world and country. Whether a naturalist on the waters of Alaska, a researcher in the mountains of the Himalayas and Andes, or an instructor for an outdoor leadership school in Central America, Leslie completely immerses herself in each of the cultures and natural environments in which she lives and works.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CONNECTION TO NATURE THAT HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE?

At Centerville High School, there was a teacher who taught environmental ethics and economics. Mack Van Allen introduced us to concepts like unintended consequences and externality costs, as well as exposed us to nature and transcendental literature. In the summer, he led students on two-week wilderness trips to the Canadian Boundary Waters. This truly shaped me and my leadership journey. By the third summer, I led my family on our own expedition. This was my first step in providing opportunities for others to connect deeply with nature.

Q: BEING A LEADER AROUND RIVERS IS NOT AN EASY TASK AS MANY PEOPLE IN TODAY’S SOCIETY ARE SO DISCONNECTED FROM OUR WATERWAYS. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO INCREASE PEOPLE’S AWARENESS AND CONNECTION TO WATER AND NATURE IN THE COMMUNITIES WITH WHICH YOU HAVE WORKED?

The first step is to learn about the community, its people, the culture and the ecosystem. Understanding how communities perceive and manage their natural resources is next. This can look very different in a remote indigenous village in the Andes compared to the high-traffic tourist area of Mount Everest. Typically, when in remote areas of developing countries, people tend to live very close to the natural world around them simply by necessity. They are often accustomed to going to the river every day for water, laundry or bathing. However, they might not be aware of how that relationship impacts the rivers, both positively and negatively.

In developed countries, and communities like Dayton, the situation is often different and the community’s relationship to the river and water is distant or no longer there. People may barely know the name of their rivers or they may just expect the tap water to run.

Left: Leslie King, director of the Rivers Institute and Leadership Formation, has facilitated Rivers Institute cohorts since 2009.
This actually provides a great opportunity to provide education and community outreach to increase awareness of our river systems and water resources. Dayton is in a region with amazing and abundant water resources. This can become a point of pride for the community. Luckily, our rivers are a lot of fun too. So whether we offer people a chance to kayak down them, bike along them, fish in them, or just enjoy the scenery, through that experience people tend to make the decision for themselves that our rivers are an amazing asset and central to the vitality of our community.

**Q: THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCES IN MOUNTAIN AND RIVER COMMUNITIES, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE DEVELOPING AS A LEADER?**

Leadership development should always be a bit challenging. Otherwise you are not growing. However, some of my more memorable challenges early on in my journey are around the concept we refer to in the Fitz Center as balanced inquiry and advocacy.

When studying abroad with The Mountain Institute as an undergraduate student, we worked with a group of natural resource managers and learned about their reforestation projects (or deforestation projects). Several students and I quickly decided these folks shouldn’t be cutting down their rainforests for rubber palm plantations. Their reaction and answer was a bit humbling. The local experts explained how the U.S. clear-cut most of its forests several times by now with very little reforestation, and all they were trying to do was improve the economy and quality of life in their country. They also pointed out the fact that the rubber palm industry is mostly for cosmetics in developed countries. This was a huge learning experience for me and influenced the way I now work with communities and frame the conversation.

**Q: WHAT WOULD YOUR ADVICE BE FOR ANYONE PURSING A LIFE IN COMMUNITY OR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP?**

Leadership is a development process; it’s a journey. Each experience and decision builds you as a leader and person. Be aware of the people who cross your path throughout this journey. These mentors will be the ones who teach, inspire and nurture your growth and choices along the way. They will be the ones who encourage you to follow your heart. I cherish those people who have been part of my journey and am extremely grateful for each of their influences. Be patient when you think you might be heading in the wrong direction. A winding path is often the most exciting!

**Q: IF YOU WERE TO ENVISION YOURSELF TO BE A MOUNTAIN OR A RIVER, WHICH ONE WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?**

I think the mountain is my home and my true nature, while the river is my work. As a lot of literature mentions, you go to the mountaintop to be close to the heavens for peace, solitude and meditation; whereas the river brings people together and is a communal place to gather. Just like mountains are the true headwaters of our rivers, maybe I am naturally a bit of both.
As the director of Community Engaged Learning (Cel) in the Fitz Center, I am thrilled and honored to have the “job” of helping catalyze and sustain collaborations that “exCEL.”

My work each day entails connecting inspiring community partners with equally inspiring University faculty and staff who are all exCELeNT co-educators for developing justice-minded citizens. Whether the collaborations are for integrating community-engaged learning into courses or programs; highlighting and responding to community priorities, needs and assets; bringing awareness to opportunities for community-engaged scholarship; or building capacity for our community, I am blessed to have work that is mission-focused and helps others to transform and engage our students while addressing critical justice issues in Dayton.

In keeping with the Fitz Center mission and the mission and identity of our Catholic and Marianist university, the Fitz Center strives to catalyze collaborations that are reciprocal, asset-based, sustained and have agreed-upon goals and accountability.

To model our mission and learn more about the practices that are helpful for our Dayton community, our Cel team facilitated and participated in a book read with faculty, staff and community partners using the book The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning (Stoecker and Tyron 2009). The conversations during our four times together were transformational by helping us to learn about our hopes and challenges in community engagement and identifying our shared hopes and goals for student learning and community impact. We discussed issues of power, privilege and diversity that often show up in service-learning practices, and we evaluated how “business as usual” types of engagement can burden community partners, reinforce negative stereotypes, and miss the potential for deep and sustained change for the common good.

We ended our time together by sharing what would be helpful for all partners in establishing longer-term partnerships and deeper community engagement that exCELeNs. The results of our time together include: (1) a partnership/learning agreement that can be used by faculty, students and community partners to guide students in preparing both cognitively and pragmatically for a community-engaged learning experience; (2) a partnership development resource for faculty, and a separate one for community organizations, to prepare for new collaboration conversations, and (3) a set of principles and values for community-engaged learning that we felt grew out of our mission and identity and hopes for our friendships in Dayton. These principles and values include human dignity, right relationships, inclusivity, respect, mutual benefit, empathy and humility, reflection, genuineness, and honest and open communication.

With these tools and values, collaborations between faculty/staff and community partners not only offer deep and engaged learning for our students and impactful changes for the common good, but they also have the potential to reflect and model the relationships we would like for our community, students and selves to embrace — “love your neighbor as yourself.”

UD students engage with the community through Wheels for Kids (above) and Adventure Central (left).
During my summer Semester of Service experience at Adventure Central, I had the great and unexpected pleasure of meeting a man who taught me many lessons through our friendship and partnership. I must also mention that Mr. Will and I operated very differently. Mr. Will and I were co-group leaders for youth participating in Adventure Central’s summer day camp. Those who know me would tell you that I like to spend a lot of time making good plans. I am also always determined to see plans come to proper fruition. So, I naturally brought a very realistic and serious “Type-A” attitude with me, as I worked with Mr. Will to plan and implement daily activities with the kids. I usually came to work early to set up for the day, so that all of the activities would hopefully come off perfectly according to plan.

As you can imagine, I was in for a rude awakening when Mr. Will, the “Zig” to my “Zag,” came to work with a much more relaxed and “fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants” approach toward the day. At first, I found myself a little frustrated, as I realized that our activities were not occurring as planned. We often would have to stop and restart, or even change an activity entirely, in the heat of the moment. With this, I am sure Mr. Will was a little frustrated as well, as he watched me constantly react quietly and seriously with a somewhat dumb, anxious look on my face — a look which often occurs just between my being in shock of some unforeseen circumstance and my trying to embrace a healthier, more flexible problem-solving mode.

After having finished my summer at Adventure Central, I can honestly say that my partnership with Will brought indescribable joy, lessons learned and goodness for the kids. Effective and constant communication with one another helped us work across our differences and brought us closer together. When one of us was confused or frustrated with a situation, we both were open and honest about our thoughts and ideas. This allowed us to work across our great differences and accomplish goals far beyond what I had envisioned — far beyond what I had planned for. Working across difference is not necessarily eliminating difference; being successful and effective involves bringing our differences to the table, communicating honestly, openness, and trust that are all motivated by a shared vision. If we approach difference within our community in this way, we might just come collectively to a conclusion more beautiful and effective than we ever could have thought possible.

LEARNER. LEADER. SERVANT.

Continued from Page 1
In the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, also named after Brother Ray, students build and sustain partnerships with the Dayton Public Schools, after-school education programs, nonprofits, local governments, businesses, and cities and associations in the Great Miami River watershed.

“We’re trying to create an environment where students are excited about volunteer service,” Fitz once reflected. “We have a responsibility beyond our jobs. We have a responsibility to build our communities.

“My greatest joy has been to witness the growth of many of our students and see what a difference they have made in all facets of society.”
One of the community partnerships of the University of Dayton Fitz Center is the Dayton Neighborhood School Centers program, a partnership of UD with Dayton Public Schools and four nonprofit organizations — the YMCA of Greater Dayton, Salvation Army Kroc Center, East End Community Services and Good Samaritan Hospital.

A key component of the University’s role in this partnership is providing three UD student interns at each of the five Neighborhood School Centers. While the Fitz Center is part of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Fitz Center also recruits students from the School of Education and Health Sciences to serve as Neighborhood School Centers interns.

At Cleveland PreK-6 under the supervision of Site Coordinator Mary Case, all three of the UD Fitz Center interns are education majors in their junior year: Katelyn Sample from Franklin, Ohio; Maggie Quinn from Wheaton, Illinois; and Sarah Thomas from Raleigh, North Carolina.

In considering how the Neighborhood School Centers internship will help prepare them for their first full-time teaching assignments, the three interns had the following responses.

KATELYN: “I feel that I will have more confidence in how to handle my future students from the various experiences I’ve had both inside and outside of the classroom. I’ve been able to work with third-grade students on their reading assignments and also work with students after school in programs like the Cleveland Girls Club.”

MAGGIE: “The internship has made me realize that a lot more goes into the job of a teacher than just work in the classroom. My experience of seeing the Cleveland students in the classroom and participating in after-school programs helps me understand each individual student better.”

SARAH: “This type of an internship shows you the dynamics of a school — all parts of it. Not just the classroom but also behind the scenes — what makes a school work.”

When asked to share any inspiring experiences they have had as interns, Katelyn shared how excited she was as she watched the progress of a third-grade classroom in their reading comprehension during the past school year with all of the focus in the State of Ohio on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. That third-grade classroom made significant improvement during the school year, and their final testing result was one of the reasons that Cleveland PreK-6 had one of the highest third-grade reading results in the Dayton District.

Maggie also described a program at Cleveland called Paws to Read that used therapy dogs as a part of the programming. One of the participating students who was often rambunctious in the classroom and who said he didn’t like to read did engage in the reading activities because of the use of the therapy dog, reading to the dog during the activity. Maggie said that this experience demonstrated how creative techniques can be found to engage all students in learning.

All three students are looking forward to their future teaching careers and will remember this internship experience as an important part of their career preparation.
CREATING SAFE SPACES TO REINVIGORATE A NEIGHBORHOOD

BY MARINA LOCASTO, GRADUATE ASSISTANT, DAYTON CIVIC SCHOLAR ’13

The capstone project feature of the Dayton Civic Scholars (DCS) program continues to prove how dedicated these student leaders are to creating positive change in the larger Dayton community. As the senior cohort continues to meet weekly at Fairview PK-8 to help children of African refugee families improve English language literacy, the junior cohort is beginning to see its once vague ideas become reality this semester.

During orientation week, the junior cohort met with Don Vermillion, director of public projects and the DCS program, to begin brainstorming project ideas and to figure out where to spend their time and talent for the next two years. They immediately came to a consensus that they wanted to move away from the recent trend of DCS capstone projects focusing on schools. They want to be different and they want to work with an entire neighborhood rather than just one specific population. They have decided to work with the Ole Dayton View neighborhood and have begun the planning phase of their capstone project with full force. They have already made themselves visible in the neighborhood, gauging general interest from the neighborhood residents. The 2016 cohort sees the community assets: new houses, strong families and good community partners. What they do not see is a sense of community engagement and pride. Ian Dollenmayer of the 2016 cohort says, “People simply exist here; they don’t live here. We want to change that. We want to help find them something to rally around, something to get out of the house for, something that draws them together.”

This has been the inspiration of the 2016 cohort’s focus: safe spaces that the entire neighborhood can enjoy together and utilize as a hotbed for community engagement. The cohort has already met with landowners to determine what vacant land they can access. They have photographed potential sites for a community gathering place and have surveyed the residents. They hope to understand what would truly invigorate the community from these surveys. In addition, they are asking neighbors if they would be interested in designating their homes as “safe spaces” for neighborhood children who may find themselves in danger and need a safe space to access quickly.

Collaboration has always come easy to the DCS. They are hoping to work not only with residents of the neighborhood, but also to partner with community organizations that are already present in the community as well as the Dayton Police Department and the UD Criminal Justice Studies program. “Our cohort truly believes that if neighbors get to know each other, they will become invested in their community,” says Dollenmayer. “And investment in the neighborhood leads to the kind of abundance that makes a better world.”

The 2016 cohort of Dayton Civic Scholars from left: (back row) Olivia Hirt, Jake Morrison, Beverly Johnson, Maggie Quinn, Sydney Antolini, Allie Serey; front row: Sarah Thomas, Theresa Schneider, Sam Mullins, Ian Dollenmayer, Kristen Abbarno, Josh Tovey, Jasmine Lahoud, Morgan Pair.
During my past year as a Fulbright Scholar in Honduras, the river was my refuge and a valuable asset for community development and empowerment. The knowledge I gained throughout my three years as a River Steward positioned me to be an integral member of the Community Development team for the nonprofit organization, Heart to Honduras. This allowed me to continue practicing the guiding principles of the Fitz Center.

After traveling miles on mountainous, pothole-ridden roads, our team would meet with local leaders and begin with the questions, “What is your vision for your community?” and “What resources do you have to make that vision become reality?” Sometimes the responses were quiet looks implying, “We don’t have anything ... isn’t that why you are here?” Following the awkward silence, something magical happened. Someone would suggest, “Well, we have lots of strong boys.” Labor: check! Others say, “Shovels and … water because the river is right down there.” A woman shyly adds, “I can cook for the workers.” Church leaders say, “We can pray for the project and store the bags of cement from spoiling in this dreadful rainy season.” By the end of our meeting, we would have an abundant list of community assets that could be utilized for whatever projects the people decided would improve their community most.

In some cases, an optimistic community member would suggest we pile into the truck bed and solicit help from local politicians. Many times, the local politicians would support the collaboration and provide qualified manual labor to help projects such as replacing leaky school roofs, or building water holding tanks and washing stations, or rigging posts for an electricity project. I began to realize and remember how the process is just as important as the community projects themselves.

People became empowered and learned how to utilize their local resources; this is true development. With a common vision and hope that it’s attainable, people develop pride of place, an idea I learned through my three years as a River Steward. When I was a part of a common vision, as an undergraduate student at UD and in the Fitz Center, I became proud to call Dayton, Ohio, and its rivers my home. Now, no matter what watershed I end up calling home, I will be able to work with the community to identify and utilize its assets and resources. And, as I still not so naively say, I will make a positive difference in my corner of the world.

Above: Milena Pisani taught English in the local village’s school as part of her year-long Fulbright Fellowship.

Left: Pisani walks along the river where Heart to Honduras built a dam to provide the village with hydroelectric power.
ROVING ILLUSTRATOR APRIL DONER KAYAKS WITH THE RIVER STEWARDS

BY KATELYN RENDULIC, RIVER STEWARD ’15

She considers herself a “roving illustrator” and participates in community-building processes fostering a sense of economic vitality and asset-based leadership. In August, she joined the Rivers Stewards for the 2014 Rivers Institute Orientation. April Doner lives in Indianapolis and works with communities using a similar model of asset-based community building as the Fitz Center. She is involved with Tesserae Learning and is a distinguished fellow at Northwestern University’s Asset Based Community Development Institute (ABCD). April’s art comes in multiple media but is driven by her singular desire to illuminate the abundance of talent and beauty in places, people and communities.

Her Dayton visit began at Taylorsville Dam with a riverside artist talk. April discussed how her own personal development as an artist reflected the places and individuals around which she was raised and now those with whom she chooses to live and practice her work. She divided Stewards into small groups and asked each Steward to identify a character trait they found admirable in themselves and another Steward. The small groups were also asked to identify a part of their story, a “stream,” which led them to where they are today. April then facilitated a group conversation about why each individual’s asset and stream was integral to the River Steward “story” as a whole. This set the tone for our first day’s 10-mile journey down the river.

During the overnight stay at Wegerzyn MetroPark, April led a more deeply reflective workshop about realizing the gifts and strengths in one another. She requested that Stewards identify specific artistic, spiritual, motivational or operational strengths of other Stewards. These assets were mapped on large sheets of paper, while others played guitar and three Stewards painted a large canvas representing the overall creative process happening. It was clear to everyone involved how a day on the river together could help us illustrate our own story as River Stewards.

Finally, the Stewards collaborated in small groups again, based on the mapped assets, and designed an art project or performance to share with the entire group. The works varied from serious to silly, but all displayed the value of working together and the benefits to leveraging strengths in community.

April’s work, like the Rivers Institute’s mission, emphasizes local and regional assets by engaging cultural, material and social resources within the community. Throughout the two days working with April, each Steward learned to value others’ individual differences and strengths and deepen their understanding of how this transfers to the larger community by harnessing others’ leadership strengths and passions, as well as their own, around our rivers.
In August, two Fitz Center staff members were promoted. Leslie King was promoted to director of the Rivers Institute, and Staci Daniels-Robinson was promoted to assistant director of Community Engaged Learning with special responsibilities for the Semester of Service and the new YEES AmeriCorps initiative.

The chart on this page shows how the Fitz Center staff is organized to conduct our community-building mission. Don Vermillion leads our public projects efforts, including Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers, Dayton Civic Scholars and neighborhood development consultations. Brenda Donnelly leads our research, program assessments and compilation of the annual President’s Community Service Honor Roll application. Kelly Bohrer is director of Community Engaged Learning and leads many of the University’s efforts to connect students and faculty to community projects, community internships and experiential learning opportunities that involve civic engagement as described by the Carnegie Foundation. Staci Daniels-Sommers, assistant director, oversees the Semester of Service and the YEES AmeriCorps programs. Leslie King, director of the Rivers Institute, is responsible for the River Stewards program, RiverMobile, River Summit, engagement with Ohio’s Great Corridor Association and leadership formation units within the Fitz Center.

Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., is the Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice within the Fitz Center. Bob Stoughton is our guest; he serves as research administrator for the Montgomery County Department of Families and Children First.

Our administrative assistants are Suzette Pico, Char Cook-Robinson and Judy Keyes. We are supported by six graduate assistants, eight school-year and six summer undergraduate interns, and a corps of more than 160 students in our leadership programs.

My job? Hold it together and move forward in service to our Dayton community.
AFRICAN LEADER VISITS UD

BY BOB STOUGHTON, RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR, MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST

For two days in September, the University of Dayton was a welcoming host for Likoko Eunice from Kenya. Out of 50,000 young (under age 35) African leaders who applied, she was chosen to be one of the 500 members of the inaugural class of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, the flagship program of President Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative.

In Kenya, Likoko lectures on issues of sustainable development and is one of the founders of Full Circle Trust, a rehabilitation center for women in prostitution whose goal is to provide an alternative source of income for such women and to prevent women from resorting to prostitution in the first place.

Arriving in the U.S. in June, Likoko first spent six weeks in Phoenix at a Civic Leadership Institute. Following a Presidential Summit in Washington, D.C., in late July, she became one of the 100 Fellows chosen for eight-week internships across the country. Likoko was placed with the Montgomery County Office of Family and Children First (OFCF) where she quickly immersed herself in local issues. “She didn’t hesitate to participate in meetings covering topics such as ex-offender reentry, prostitution, and immigration to name just a few,” said Joe Spitler, Criminal Justice Director for Montgomery County. “She was able to provide a unique point of view on many subject matters.”

The partnership between the Fitz Center and OFCF brought her to UD on Sept. 11 and 12. While on campus she met with students, staff and faculty and was a guest lecturer in two classes. “Likoko’s visit was wonderful. She helped remind us of the importance of listening to the constituents we are striving to serve, especially when it comes to supporting local communities in which we do not live. We need to listen to the constituents’ needs in order to find sustainable and practical solutions,” said Harriet Kamakili-Brown of UD’s Center for International Programs.

Dr. Ruth Thompson-Miller of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work told Likoko that her students “were quoting some of the things you said in your lecture for my class. They were struck by all the information you shared that they can use in their own projects that they are working on. As human rights students they are always seeking ways in which they can search for social justice.”

As Likoko was returning to Kenya, she said, “I am greatly honored to have interacted with all of you. I am also very grateful for the opportunities you made available for me to speak and interact with students and faculty members from different departments in UD. Thank you for the many conversations that gave me new insights and perspectives to research. I look forward to future partnerships with all of you, both here and in Kenya.”

CityLinks

CityLinks celebrates 30 years of bringing Dayton neighborhood leaders together to share ideas and strategies on how to improve neighborhoods in the City of Dayton. The 30th Annual Neighborhood Conference will be held on April 10, 2015, at the University of Dayton’s River Campus, 1700 S. Patterson Blvd. Excitement, motivation and inspiration await you at this year’s neighborhood leadership conference. This year’s conference Moving Dayton Forward through Neighborhood Leadership will present more workshops and a powerful message from renowned motivational speaker, Father Greg Boyle, Founder and Director of Home Boys Industries, Los Angeles, California. Please join us for this historic event.

Above: Neighborhood leader Judy Zimmerman enjoys a talk with author David Rusk.

Below: Participants attend workshops on diverse topics offered throughout the day.
SEASON’S GREETINGS FROM THE FITZ CENTER TEAM,
including the 160 student leaders who engage as Dayton Civic Scholars, River Stewards, Semester of Service, YESS AmeriCorps, Neighborhood School Center Interns, Fitz Center Interns, and Fitz Center Graduate Assistants.