Beginning with a video that highlighted past winners of the CityLinks Community Builders Award and concluding with an inspiring speech by Father Greg Boyle, founder and executive director of Homeboy Industries, the 2015 CityLinks Conference was one of the most successful in its history.

Sessions during the morning included topics of interest to the 240 neighborhood leaders and residents at the conference. Power Gardening featuring Stephen Mackell of the Mission of Mary Cooperative and Sharmin Black of the Edgemont Solar Garden was attended by an overflow crowd. Gwen Buchanan from the Carillon Civic Council and Mike Schommer representing the Walnut Hills Neighborhood Association led their session that focused on convincing the next generation of neighborhood leaders to step forward.

Chief Richard Biehl spoke with attendees about the need for neighborhoods and the police to work together to create peaceful and safe neighborhoods. Pastor Sherry Gale of Grace United Methodist Church and Pastor Randy Chestnut of Hope Community Church described how their faith-based institutions have become active partners in working with the Dayton community, particularly with the children in Dayton’s neighborhoods.

The recipient of the 2015 Community Builders Award is Leslie Sheward, president of the Twin Towers Neighborhood Association. In accepting the award, Leslie described her story in working to improve her neighborhood instead of moving away to what some would describe as a “better” neighborhood.

The 31st Annual CityLinks Conference is scheduled for April 15, 2016, at the University of Dayton River Campus.
OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY MAYOR IMPRESSES CROWD AT 8TH ANNUAL RIVER SUMMIT

BY JEFF MALIK, GRADUATE ASSISTANT, RIVERS INSTITUTE

How can a river build community? And what could more than 200 million dollars in public and private investment do to transform a riverfront community? The answer is to bring people together via a state-of-the-art regional scale public park, pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements, riverfront erosion control, a brand new convention center, two hotels and numerous new businesses in a once boarded-up downtown. Attendees of the Ohio’s Great Corridor Association’s annual River Summit gathered to hear the remarkable story of Owensboro, Kentucky’s transformation from a struggling small city to a vibrant community that embraces its river and provides a high quality of life for residents and visitors.

The River Summit, co-hosted by the Rivers Institute and Ohio’s Great Corridor Association (OGCA), was held once again at UD’s River Campus and attracted 200 local and regional leaders. The OGCA works to revitalize the communities along the Great Miami River and promote a high quality of life by focusing on riverfront development, outdoor recreation, and open space and farmland preservation. Elected officials, organizations, business owners, students and more gathered to discuss ongoing initiatives to improve the riverfront communities along the Great Miami River and our region’s quality of life.

The highlight of the summit was this year’s keynote speaker, Mayor Ron Payne of Owensboro, Kentucky. In his charming Southern accent and down-to-earth manner, Mayor Payne described how Owensboro transformed its downtown from a collection of boarded up businesses to a thriving city with a small-town feel, facing and embracing the Ohio River.

The strategy used by Mayor Payne and his team involved considerable fundraising by increasing the fees attached to insurance policies within the city. This method drew funds rather equitably from all residents, but unlike a traditional tax, is not paid every time a purchase is made, or during end-of-year tax filings.

Owensboro was able to leverage this revenue to obtain federal funding and other sources to build an elaborate riverfront erosion control system, which also supports the city’s massive new public park and riverfront plaza.

The city worked out an additional deal with the state of Kentucky to take local control of a state highway that ran through the community, giving Owensboro more control in how it redesigned that road. These pedestrian-oriented improvements, and commitment to the riverfront, encouraged numerous private developments in Owensboro, leading to new and expanded businesses throughout downtown.

Mayor Payne was joined by City Manager Bill Parrish and Parks and Recreation Director Amanda Rogers, who explained in greater detail the funding, features and construction of the riverfront wall and park. The OGCA and the Rivers Institute were grateful to learn from the success of Owensboro and can’t wait to continue working on our rivers in the Dayton community!
SENIOR RIVER STEWARDS TRANSFER WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED

BY LESLIE KING, DIRECTOR, RIVERS INSTITUTE

As the 2015 cohort of River Stewards graduates and heads off into the next phase of their leadership journey, one thing is for certain: they will be taking with them everything they have learned and experienced in the program, and transferring it to their next community. So whether staying in Dayton for their first jobs, diving deeper into grad school, flying to Thailand for a year of service, seasonally migrating to Alaska, or moving back to their home towns, the entire Rivers Institute community is confident these seeds of river stewardship and leadership have just been planted — and that each of you will continue to cultivate what began right here, at the University of Dayton, on the Great Miami River.

Below is the abstract from the 2015 senior cohort project, which has become a model and best practice for how River Steward capstone service projects will be implemented for years to come.

Going nuts: Cultivating seeds of leadership

BY MADISON IRWIN, RIVER STEWARD ‘15

As part of the University of Dayton River Steward program, each cohort completes a senior capstone project. This year, the 2015 cohort has been collaborating with Adventure Central, a youth education center in Dayton. Adventure Central is a result of a partnership between Five Rivers MetroParks, Ohio State University Extension and 4-H Youth Development. Goals of Adventure Central include empowering youth, creating a space for positive youth development and using experiential learning to create positive affiliations with nature. Its mission and values align well with those of the Rivers Institute, which aims to promote and protect the Great Miami Watershed through building community around Dayton’s rivers.

This provided an opportunity for a mutually beneficial partnership between the 2015 cohort and Adventure Central. The overall goal of the collaboration was to work with the teens, or the “purple group,” at Adventure Central to carry out a sustainable reforestation project in which local nuts and seeds were collected, germinated and grown, with plans of planting them in Wesleyan MetroPark along the Wolf Creek.

To support this overall goal, the 2015 cohort has spent the last two semesters building a sustained relationship with the teens at Adventure Central. This relationship has been fostered through weekly visits to Adventure Central, River Steward-hosted and themed leadership development events, and overall engagement with the teens through the reforestation project. During the course of this project, the 2015 cohort has documented the development of the project, as well as the partnership, between the two organizations. This project, only made possible through the partnership of the 2015 River Steward cohort and Adventure Central, shows the power of youth and young adult involvement to successfully complete conservation projects, build community and promote leadership.
Three years ago, 15 sophomores embarked on a journey that would change their undergraduate career. They moved to campus a week before classes began to become oriented with the city of Dayton and all it had to offer, from the rich historical background in the Wright-Dunbar neighborhood, to the array of community partnerships that empower citizens across the city, and the excitement surrounding Dayton Dragons games. It was during their orientation week that this group became the 2015 cohort of Dayton Civic Scholars (DCS), but it was throughout their three years together that they truly became leaders who build community.

This May we proudly watched these students graduate from the program. That is no small feat; Scholars make a three-year commitment that encompasses an array of academic requirements, 60 hours of civic engagement each semester, an internship and a group capstone project.

The 2015 cohort’s capstone entailed an after-school program for low-performing African refugee students at Fairview PK-8 every Friday for 18 months. The impacts of this after-school program were showcased April 15 at the Stander Symposium, the campuswide alternate day of learning. There, we learned that the students who attended this program each week had an average of 22 percent improvement in their reading test scores, and their counterparts who were not part of the program had a 15 percent decline in their test scores. The mentoring relationships formed between the DCS and the Fairview students proved to be truly transformational.

As graduate assistant to the DCS and former intern for the program, I hold this cohort especially close to my heart. They were the first cohort that I got to see grow through all three years of the program, and their orientation week was the first one I planned and executed on my own. I asked each senior to submit a comprehensive reflection of his or her time in the program, to expand on what they learned from it. Senior Sara Giuliani reflected on how DCS “exposed me to all that Dayton has to offer. … I find myself getting very defensive of this city when I hear people say there is nothing to do in Dayton; if people think there is nothing to do in Dayton, they have not experienced Dayton like I have.”

As they move to their next chapter in their lives, we congratulate those in this outstanding group of community leaders: Molly Brasure, Chelsea Buckman, Jessalyn Crossman, Frankie Flannelly, Emilie Fose, Michael Franzese, Sara Giuliani, Sarah Liming, Ashley Ann Marshall, Lauren Mooney, Dylan Moore, Danielle Pohlman and Jack Raisch. They will be Civic Scholars of any community in which they find themselves, wherever they may go.
ALI AMEND REACHES OUT TO REACH OUT MONT COUNTY

BY KELLY BOHRER, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

Ali Amend worked with the Community Engaged Learning Team spring semester as one of our student interns and graduated in May with her Bachelor of Science in Pre-Medicine. Ali began her involvement with the Fitz Center last year as a community partnership intern, focusing on the pre-medicine’s office partnership with Reach Out of Montgomery County, a healthcare organization that provides access to healthcare services for the underserved and underinsured.

My role as the community partner intern was to work with UD’s pre-med office, the Fitz Center’s Community Engaged Learning Team, and Reach Out Montgomery County to help UD students become active and effective volunteers in the healthcare field. I was the TA for UDI 270, a course that prepares students to volunteer clinically at Reach Out. I also helped with Reach Out’s partnership with Mound Street Academy (a charter school in downtown Dayton) by assisting students in UD’s Ethics in Action Learning-Living Community to work alongside Wright State’s School of Medicine students as they taught healthy lifestyles and preventative medicine to students at Mound Street Academy. I loved being able to facilitate student involvement at Reach Out. This gave undergraduates the opportunity to have hands-on experience in a clinical setting while also witnessing the barriers to healthcare that the underserved population experiences.

Ali has been a huge asset to our team, contributing to the Fitz Center’s mission and goals through building capacity and collaborating with the community for better partnership outcomes. She is off to University of Cincinnati’s Nursing School in the fall. Good luck, Ali!

Nyla Morgan (pictured right) has been working with the Community Engaged Learning Team spring semester as the Neighborhood School Centers intern. She graduated in May with her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Nyla began her involvement with the Fitz Center during the summer of 2014 when she participated in Semester of Service at DECA Prep. As an intern in the Fitz Center, Nyla helps recruit and coordinate UD student volunteers for the one-time events in the Neighborhood School Centers. Some events she worked on this semester were Eggsplosion at Cleveland PK-6, the Day of Caring Breakfast at Fairview PK-8 and Family Nights at Ruskin PK-8.

When asked to speak about her experience on the CEL team this semester, she said, “This semester, I had the privilege of working with a team of confident, caring and beautiful women. I have truly enjoyed learning more about the Fitz Center and their partnerships within the Dayton community, and communicating directly with students and community leaders. Dayton has been my home for the last four years, and I am so thankful that I was able to end my last semester of undergrad working with individuals so invested in the future and well-being of the Dayton community.”

Nyla has been a huge asset to our team and will be missed greatly. She will be attending Xavier University for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Master’s program in the fall. Good luck, Nyla!
The following Semester of Service seniors graduated in May 2015. Congratulations!

Andrew Koerner  
Major: Mechanical Engineering  
Site: Adventure Central

Samantha Quigley  
Major: English with a minor in Communications  
Site: Daybreak

Lane Gibson (Summer 2015)  
Major: Communication Management with a minor in English  
Site: Daybreak

Catherine Arensberg  
Major: General Studies, Sustainable Development  
Site: Homefull

Jessalyn Crossman  
Major: Psychology with a minor in Nonprofit Community Leadership  
Site: St. Vincent de Paul

Sarah Liming  
Major: Psychology  
Site: Life Essentials

Alexandra Brizzi  
Major: Secondary Religious Studies  
Site: Adventure Central

Carissa Madderom  
Major: Intervention Specialist with a minor in Spanish  
Site: Dayton Christian Center

Patrick McKeone  
Majors: Communication and Human Rights  
Site: We Care Arts

Nyla Morgan  
Major: Psychology  
Site: DECA Prep

Tyler Kessler  
Major: Psychology with a minor in Philosophy  
Site: Adventure Central

Michelle Tucek  
Major: Secondary Catholic Education with a minor in English  
Site: East End

James Sylvester (Jim)  
Major: Human Rights and Psychology  
Site: Adventure Central

Shaughn Phillips  
Major: History with a minor in Religious Studies  
Site: Daybreak

Kathleen Murphy  
Major: Middle Childhood Education  
Site: Dakota Center

Rachel Phillips  
Major: Political Science  
Site: Life Essentials

Danielle Pohlman  
Major: Human Rights and Spanish  
Site: DECA Prep/DECA

Jacob De Bellis  
Major: Pre-Medicine and Psychology  
Site: East End

Molly Cremons  
Major: Biology  
Site: Daybreak

Colleen Grassley  
Major: Biology  
Site: Dakota Center
MONALISA MULLINS COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY AWARD RECIPIENTS

BY KATIE BROSSART, FITZ CENTER INTERN ‘17

The Monalisa Mullins Commitment to Community Award is given to a second-year student who has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the greater Dayton community over his or her first and second years at UD.

This year the award was given to two extraordinary students, Marisa Napoli and Gabrielle Boltz.

Marisa Napoli (pictured, bottom) is a teacher education major with a concentration in adolescent to young adult language arts. She has been engaged in the Dayton community through her roles as vice president of philanthropy for Pi Beta Phi and as the fundraising and finance chair, and now president, of UD’s Miracle. She has also served by organizing various service events as well as a member of the Optimist Club International.

Gabrielle Boltz (pictured, top) is a sociology and English major with a minor in criminal justice studies. She has been engaged with the Dayton community through her efforts in assisting the start-up and operation of the Dayton Community Engagement Project. Gabrielle also co-organized events for the Self and Community Learning-Living Community to connect the areas of criminal justice, sociology, political science and psychology with the Dayton community.

EMILY M. KLEIN STUDENT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

BY KATIE BROSSART, FITZ CENTER INTERN ‘17

The Emily M. Klein Student Community Leadership Award, also known as “The Emily,” is awarded annually to a graduating student in a Fitz Center program who best exemplifies the passion for Dayton, commitment to strengthening UD student connections to the city, openness to learning and making a lasting impact on the urban community, and leadership excellence demonstrated by Emily Klein in her five-year student career with the Fitz Center.

This year “The Emily” is awarded to Emilie Fose. Emilie is graduating with degrees in human rights and Spanish as well as a minor in political science. She is a Dayton Civic Scholar and has shown her concern for the Dayton community through co-founding the El Puente Club, which tutors primarily Spanish-speaking students in the area. She is also an interpreter for Catholic Social Services Refugee Resettlement Program and in the International Student Buddy Program. The Fitz Center congratulates her as the recipient of the 2015 Emily M. Klein Student Community Leadership Award.
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Between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2014, the Fitz Center received financial support from 361 alumni, friends and foundations totaling $78,835.24. Thank you, Fitz Center donors, for your continued support.

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BROTHER RAY FITZ RECEIVES ACCU AWARD

BY JUDY KEYES, SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TO BROTHER RAY FITZ, AND ABBEY SAURINE, FITZ CENTER INTERN ’17

Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., Ph.D., received the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC Award for outstanding contributions to Catholic higher education.

This award was bestowed upon Brother Ray by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities at the ACCU’s annual banquet in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31. They stated that many Catholic higher education leaders look to Brother Ray for wisdom and direction in their own work and to the University of Dayton as a model for how to advance a thriving Catholic mission.

Brother Ray was nominated for this prestigious award by UD’s president, Dr. Daniel Curran, to recognize and celebrate Brother Ray’s achievements. Dr. Curran added a personal touch by presenting Brother Ray with this distinguished award, along with Michael Galligan-Stierle, president of the ACCU.

The Association of Marianist Universities (AMU) provided a reception honoring Brother Ray following the banquet and ceremony. Many Marianists, colleagues and friends joined in the celebration to congratulate Brother Ray.

Brother Ray is the Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice in the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community and the Past President of the University of Dayton.

FITZ CENTER GRADUATE ASSISTANT WINS OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

BY DON VERMILLION, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Fitz Center is proud to announce that Marina LoCasto, graduate assistant for the Dayton Civic Scholars program, was selected as the recipient of the first Outstanding Community Engagement Award from the University of Dayton Graduate School. Marina has been a student intern in the Fitz Center as an undergraduate and served as the Dayton Civic Scholars graduate assistant while enrolled in the master’s of public administration program.

Marina’s selection for this award was based on her service in the Dayton community with Victory Project. The Victory Project is a privately funded organization that focuses on after-school programming, mentoring disengaged young men in Dayton by using a curriculum that includes education, entrepreneurship and enlightenment.

The Director of the Victory Project, Monnie Bush, states, “Marina’s skills and talents are most evident while working alongside our youth. Marina expresses concern, accountability and seriousness of the job while at the same time celebrating and having fun with those she helps. She has a gift of maturity and compassion beyond her years. I can speak for all the youth, staff and volunteers at Victory Project when I say that Marina LoCasto represents the very best of what the University of Dayton has come to be known in our community.”

Congratulations to Marina and best wishes to her as she returns to Chicago to begin work with a nonprofit agency there that serves youth in high-poverty neighborhoods.
Father Greg Boyle, S.J., founder and executive director of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles was the keynote speaker for the CityLinks 30th Annual Conference. A native of Los Angeles, Father Boyle was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1984. He was transformed by his work in Bolivia, Mexico and Folsom Prison with those who “live at the margins.” His dedication to finding a place for all led him to the Boyle Heights community of East Los Angeles where he served as pastor of Dolores Mission Church — then the poorest parish in the city — from 1986 through 1992. It was there that Father Boyle started what would become Homeboy Industries, now the largest gang intervention, rehab, and re-entry program in the world. He is the author of The New York Times best-seller Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion.

Our local connection with Father Boyle is through Brother Brandon Paluch, S.M., coordinator of community outreach at the University of Dayton Center for Social Concern, who met Father Boyle while teaching in Los Angeles. Father Boyle's presentation was a major highlight of the 30th Annual Conference.