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Accomplished Alumni: Kenya Baker '07 and Katie Carroll '05

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School of Education and Health Sciences

ACCOMPLISHED ALUMNI

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Accomplished Alumni

Kenya Baker '07

THE WRITE PATH

Kenya Baker '07 didn't always know she wanted to be an educator, but her path has led her to become a supportive force for students and authors in the Dayton region.

In fact, Baker was originally interested in becoming a lawyer. However, after taking a few classes at Sinclair Community College she decided she, "would rather be proactive in the lives of others, rather than reactive," she said. She changed her major to education and attended Sinclair and Charleston Southern University before finishing her bachelor's degree at Wilberforce University.

Baker earned her Master of Science in Early Childhood Education from UD in 2007 and is now a third grade teacher at Louise Troy Elementary. Not only does she support children in her classroom, she also strives to provide support through the written word. Baker has written and published two books, and has helped other authors do the same.

Her first book, "I Love My Granny," was published in 2013, and was inspired by Baker's creative writing teacher at UD, Dana Funk, and Baker's close relationship with her late grandmother.



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“Dana helped me to focus on the therapeutic nature of writing,” she said. “Writing this book allowed me to deal with the loss of my grandmother and share the importance of transgenerational relationships with younger generations.”

After “I Love My Granny” was published, Baker became interested in publishing for others, so she established Kenya Baker Books in 2014. Since then, Baker has helped two authors publish on her label.

“I wanted to simplify the publishing process,” she said. “I created a one-stop-shop to help authors with every step of taking a book from a thought to a published piece.”

Baker’s second book, “Rain-y Days”, was published in November 2015 and the character was inspired by her granddaughter, Rain Marie Divine Davis. The character represents the beauty that rainy days can bring to life, because after rain, “the grass is greener and the flowers bloom,” Baker said.

Looking forward, Baker plans to continue writing and follow her aspiration to open a coffee shop in Dayton where authors can sell their books, as it can often be difficult to get their books placed in brick and mortar stores, she said.

To date, “I Love My Granny” has sold more than 2,000 copies, and “Rain-y Days” has sold more than 600. Baker’s books are available at the University of Dayton, the Dayton Public Library, Amazon, and her website, www.kenyabakerbooks.com.

Erin Callahan '15

Katie Carroll '05

THE COMMITMENT TO ALWAYS COME BACK TOMORROW



Teachers who participate in the University of Dayton Lalanne program start with a two-year commitment to teach in an under-resourced Catholic school, live in a faith-based community, and pursue professional and personal development. Often, their commitments only grow stronger as they continue their teaching careers.

Katie Carroll '05 is one of many committed Lalanne graduates who continues to positively transform Catholic schools.

“Katie has always been very student-centered,” said Bro. Ed Brink, S.M., who directed the Lalanne program when Carroll was a Lalanne teacher. “She has always been focused on the kids, to help any way she can.”

Carroll’s dedication has been vital since the very first day she taught in Lalanne. She was placed at St. Thomas Aquinas School in Cleveland as a kindergarten teacher, but there were minimal classroom resources available. She immediately began reaching out for support in writing grants for the kindergarten program. When she left three years later, there was a curriculum in place, and she had expanded the half-full box of books and packet of construction paper to an entire closet full of learning materials and resources for teachers.

Fast-forward to today, and Carroll is now the founding director of student and family affairs at Girls Prep Charter School in Bronx, New York—a school she helped to open in 2009.

Carroll discovered this opportunity when she connected with the woman who would be the school's principal. In this role, Carroll manages discipline and culture, and positions the school as a provider of quality education. Because Girls Prep is located in an extremely high-risk area for poverty, abuse, violence and other challenges, the school strives to provide a robust family program with many resources for students and families.

The school has grown steadily from serving only 132 students in kindergarten and first grade, to now serving 450 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

These experiences have brought their share of success and challenges, but Carroll said she has always relied on the support of Brink and the other Lalanne teachers.

"The beginning years of teaching kindergarten and the beginning years of opening the school were really tough," she said, "but I always had support of the other teachers I lived with saying, 'We're in this together. We'll come back tomorrow and we're going to get through it.' This support was pivotal to my beginnings as a teacher."

Erin Callahan '15

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