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University of Dayton

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Grant to support University of Dayton-led community brain health initiative

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The University of Dayton will receive a three-year, \$450,000 grant from The Dayton Foundation to fund education, research and community outreach to help improve prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for traumatic brain injuries.

The University's Brain Health Collaboratory will be the lead partner for the grant, which will support communitywide efforts to help individuals and families dealing with neurological issues. The award will fund efforts to increase access to care for individuals and families affected by brain injuries; educate professionals on brain health; conduct research based on community needs; collect data on program outcomes; and increase community awareness about brain health.

"I'm so impressed by Dr. Davies' dedication and outstanding research in the area of traumatic brain injury that has resulted in this amazing award for community outreach," said Ali Carr-Chellman, dean of the School of Education and Health Sciences."

The Dayton Foundation also will raise money during the three-year grant period to award an additional \$72,358 to UD for the effort. Funds also will be provided for UD to hire a fellow through the Del Mar Encore Initiative, a Dayton Foundation program to place older adults into the community to work on significant community issues.

"Our region has many talented health care providers, educators and researchers working on issues related to traumatic brain injuries and brain health," said Susan Davies, professor and school psychology program coordinator at the University of Dayton and Leary Chair for Innovation in Education, Health and Wellness. "This initiative will help coordinate and grow their efforts. We are grateful for this partnership with The Dayton Foundation and their innovative support to the local community."

Davies, who previously worked as a school psychologist, conducts research on concussion management and has published guidelines for school systems on best practices for helping students recover from concussions. She launched the Brain Health Collaboratory in 2021 to help better coordinate care, education and community outreach.

Around the same time, L. Tony Ortiz, a Dayton Foundation board member, contacted Foundation President Mike Parks and Vice President of Community Engagement Barbra Stonerock about funding brain health initiatives in the region. Ortiz had recently met Mark and Jenness Sigman of Bellbrook, Ohio, who created a nonprofit to help brain injury survivors after their son, Payne, suffered a traumatic brain injury during a car accident. After undergoing a lengthy rehabilitation process, Payne graduated from high school and college, and earned a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from UD in 2022.

Once The Dayton Foundation learned of Davies' work, Davies met with foundation representatives and the Sigmans to discuss their mutual interests and community needs surrounding brain health. A community survey helped identify four areas the grant will help support, and regional organizations to lead that work.

The areas include continuum of care and health equity (Goodwill Easterseals Miami Valley), interdisciplinary education (Clark and Montgomery County Educational Service Centers), applied research (Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association), and marketing, awareness and promotion building (Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services).

"There's such enthusiasm and support for this initiative," Stonerock said. "The resources the University of Dayton is providing to this effort will help make this incredibly successful."

The grant also will provide educational opportunities for students at UD, including guidance on research projects, and support for an annual symposium. UD held its first Brain Health Collaboratory symposium in March.

For interviews, please contact Shannon Miller, associate director of news and communications, at smiller6@udayton.edu.