

Tuesday, Nov 17, 2015

Pontiac partnership with Oakland University celebrates one-year anniversary

Oakland University and Pontiac community leaders gathered on the morning of Saturday, Nov. 14 at the Welcome Missionary Baptist Church in Pontiac to celebrate the first anniversary of a **formalized partnership between the two**.

While the school and city have ties dating back more than 40 years, the first “town hall meeting” was held one year ago in November 2014. Members of both communities recommitted to each other, developing a plan of action to help the partnership grow.

In what’s been referred to as a **“town and gown relationship,”** the collaboration is providing service learning for OU students, college readiness for Pontiac residents, communications for the City, and economic development for the region.



David Szlag, an associate professor in environmental science, and David Dulio, chair of the Political Science Department, talk about the experiential learning opportunities between OU and the Pontiac community.

College Readiness

With OU’s campus only six miles away from the Pontiac school system, OU faculty and students are working to improve college readiness through a variety of programs.

This summer, Pontiac students attended free camps at OU to learn algebra skills and explore the world of business. Seventh grade students attending the **OU AVID Summer Institute** lived on campus, learned math skills in algebra they will need in the fall, enhanced their writing skills and sampled the college experience.

School of Business Administration lecturer Frank Cardimenguided students entering grades 10 and 11 through **Explore the World of Business**, learning about the fundamentals of a business education, leadership in business, the global business environment and more.

The College of Arts and Sciences created a **series of events at the Pontiac Public Library** that tie into the College of Arts and Sciences theme on literacy.

The Center for Multicultural Initiative also held its second **backpack drive to benefit students** in the Pontiac School District this summer.



Pastor Douglas Jones hosted the Nov. 14 Town Hall meeting at Welcome Missionary Baptist Church.

office

“It’s an obvious fit,” says Dave Dulio, chair of the Political Science Department. “OU students are **providing much-needed support for the city** while gaining invaluable experience in Mayor Dierdre Waterman’s office.”

Communication and journalism students are reporting on and producing stories for the *Spirit of Pontiac Newsletter*, while political science undergrads and Master of Public Administration students are working closely with government officials while they tackle major issues like funding, blight, and economic development.

Grant-funded outreach Healthy Pontiac initiatives

Through the county’s Healthy Pontiac, We Can! Program, OU is helping the Pontiac community to eat healthy, get active, and live tobacco-free.

Assistant Professor of Health Sciences Jennifer Lucarelli, Ph.D., oversees a **three-year, \$1.95-million grant** that will fund a citywide approach to making Pontiac a healthy, vibrant place to live, work and play. For example, a **six-week soccer program** combined efforts to provide no-cost, non-competitive physical activity with the Meet Up & Eat Up program that provides free meals to anyone under the age of 18 during the summer months.

Looking forward

With growing support from local community leaders and politicians, the collaboration between the Pontiac community and Oakland University continues to expand. On Saturday, a digital asset map was revealed that will provide the community with localized information about a variety of services from healthcare to education, including those available at OU, in a user-friendly, interactive format.

“It’s such a positive addition for Oakland University and Pontiac to come together, and most importantly I hope that we establish an infrastructure to sustain the project moving forward,” says Robert Maxfield, Ed.D., special assistant to the President –Pontiac Initiative.



Director of OU’s Religious Studies Program Alan Epstein (above) and László Lipták, chair of the Oakland University Math Department (below) review poster presentations at the Pontiac Town Hall event.



Development, addresses more than 100 attendees, including OU faculty and staff and members and leaders in the Pontiac community.

