



WENDT CHARACTER INITIATIVE  
UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE

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**Spring Wendt Character Lecture**  
**Sister Helen Prejean, C.S. J.**  
***Dead Man Walking:***  
***The Journey Continues***



Sister Helen Prejean, 2015 Spring Wendt Character Lecturer, captivated her audience March 30, 2015 with her Southern storytelling style. She argued her case against the death penalty, mixing humor, facts, and confession.

“The death penalty epitomizes all of our problems as a society—poverty, racism: the deepest wound of all is believing that acts of violence can be redemptive,” she pled before an audience of almost 400 people.

This journey began decades ago when she was asked to be the spiritual advisor for a man on death row, and talked about how “sneaky Jesus” got her involved in this work. Since then, she has experienced systemic inequalities as she walked six men to their deaths. While some are innocent, some are not; but she believes killing them is not the answer. Along her journey, she confessed to making many mistakes, particularly with victims’ families.

Sister Helen wrote of her experiences in *Dead Man Walking: The Eyewitness Account Of The Death Penalty* and in *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*. The first book was turned into an award-winning film, and then a play, and more recently, an opera.

**Spring Wendt Banquet**

The Wendt Character Scholars capped the year with their annual Spring Wendt Banquet on Monday, April 27. Alumni Adrian Brambila and Ashley Barwick spoke in tandem about *Finding Purpose Beyond Your Title*—that is, defining yourself by more than your career. Adrian and Ashley’s message centered on developing character and focusing on your life story, rather than on how much money you make or what kind of job you have. They emphasized how character, illustrated through the golden rule and serving others, is what matters most to your life story.  
(cont. p. 3)



## Completing and/or Graduating Wendt Character Scholars



**Brian Beverly II**  
Class of 2015  
Master of Divinity  
UDTS



**Matthew Kilburg**  
Class of 2016  
Flight Operations &  
Computer  
Information Systems



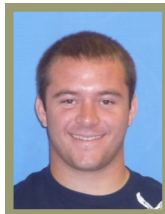
**David Ploenzke**  
Class of 2016  
Religion & Philosophy



**Hunter Brown**  
Class of 2015  
Accounting &  
Marketing



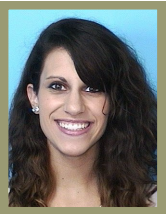
**Megan Loes**  
Class of 2016  
Elementary  
Education



**Jacob Ricketts**  
Class of 2016  
Wellness &  
Exercise Science



**Vanessa Carlson**  
Class of 2015  
Biology



**Jennifer Martinez**  
Class of 2015  
Nursing



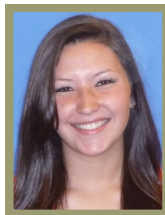
**Nicholas Rivera**  
Class of 2015  
Computer Information  
Technology  
& Mathematics



**Tyler Dobratz**  
Class of 2015  
Wellness &  
Exercise Science



**Nickolette  
McKenzie**  
Class of 2015  
Wellness &  
Exercise Science



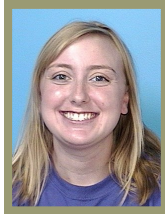
**Alyssa Sajnaj**  
Class of 2016  
Psychology



**Jonathon  
Hazelwonder**  
Class of 2015  
Accounting



**Scott Meyer**  
Class of 2015  
Master of Divinity  
UDTS



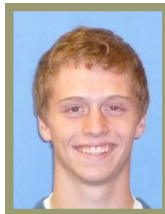
**Shauna Schmitt**  
Class of 2015  
Marketing



**Ekram Kachu**  
Class of 2015  
Master of Divinity  
UDTS



**Dinethra  
Mudalige**  
Class of 2015  
Elementary  
Education



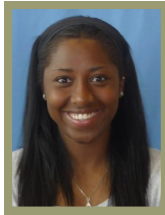
**Lucas Van  
Norman**  
Class of 2015  
Elementary Education



**Lucas Kahl**  
Class of 2016  
Accounting &  
Marketing



**Brenda Nava**  
Class of 2015  
Flight Operations &  
Aviation Management



**Alexandria Brown**  
Class of 2018  
Human Health Science



## Spring Wendt Banquet (Cont'd)

### Guest Lecturer: John Knefel

Independent journalist, John Knefel, spoke to Wendt Scholars February 9 about his experiences with the justice system in a lecture titled "The National Conversation on Justice." He covered the Occupy Wall Street



movement from their campouts to their marches, even being pulled from his sidewalk coverage into the street by police so that they could arrest him. He's written about Guantanamo Bay, and about terrorism for *Rolling Stone*, *Huffington Post*, *The Nation*, and *This American Life*. And he created and co-hosts with his sister Molly, *Radio Dispatch*, a daily political show.

An important part of John's identity is that he grew up in Dubuque and is our own library Director, Mary Anne Knefel's, son!



*Dr. Slemmons with his graduating scholars.*

The banquet ended with the scholars, mentors, staff, and guests linking arms and saying the Wendt Character Scholar Pledge. What a lovely way to end a wonderful night. Thank you to all who helped to make the banquet a success!

The night continued with an awards ceremony where mentors shared comments about the graduates. Also recognized was Dr. Adam Hoffman, retiring after three years as a mentor



*Scholars line up for a delicious buffet.*



*Dr. Hoffman and graduating scholar Vanessa Carlson congratulate each other with a high-five.*

### Guest Lecturer: Dr. Brian Farrell

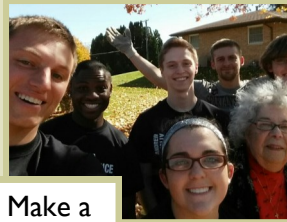


On March 2, the President of the Innocence Project of Iowa, Brian Farrell, challenged Wendt Character Scholars and guests to consider that wrongful convictions take place on a regular basis. Mr. Farrell is a lecturer and assistant director of the Center for Human Rights at the University Of Iowa College Of Law. Through the Innocence Project of Iowa, Mr. Farrell is dedicated to the prevention and remedy of wrongful convictions. Mr. Farrell highlighted the unreliability of eyewitnesses and described several cases of people imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. The Project has been working to free these innocent people. The lecture was an eye-opening experience for the scholars and members of the community.

Fall 2014



Sept 4: Scholars' Fall Kickoff Picnic



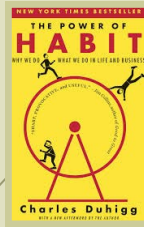
Oct 25: Make a Difference Day



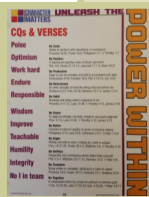
Nov 10-14: Gratitude Week



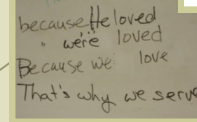
Sept: HLC Luncheon



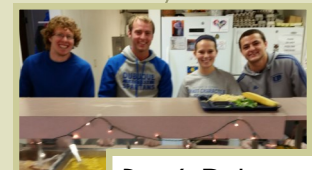
Sept: Character Matters and Athletics



Nov 10: Carrie Newcomer



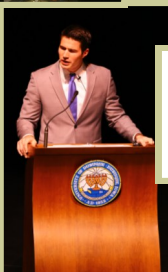
Dec 1: Christmas Banquet



Dec 6: Dubuque Rescue Mission



Oct 13: Fall Wendt Character Lecture, Capt. (ret.) Jason Church





## Spring 2015



Jan 26: Scholars' Spring Kickoff Pizza Party



Apr 20: Wendt Tea



Mar 30: Spring Wendt Character Lecture, Sr. Helen Prejean, C.S.J.



Feb 9: John Kniefel "The National Conversation on Justice"



Feb 3: Tim Wise

Apr 8: DAYLC/UD Character and Leadership Workshop



Mar 2: Brian Farrell Lecture - The Innocence Project



Apr 27: Spring Wendt Banquet



## Character & Ethics in UD Women's Soccer



In December 2014, the UD Women's soccer team won the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Team Ethics Award of Merit – Bronze Level. This is the program's fifth straight award of its kind, the team having won another Bronze award and three silver awards since 2010. Such awards are given to teams that

receive 0 red cards and limited yellow cards during their seasons. Thanks to the members and coaches of our women's soccer team for spreading character and ethics on the field!

## Order My Steps, Lord

By Mary Anne Knefel, University Librarian and Wendt Advisory Board Member

**M**y Wendt sighting occurred when Sr. Helen Prejean, Spring Wendt Character Lecturer and author of *Dead Man Walking*, was on campus on March 30. Some faculty and staff were invited to have coffee with Sr. Helen that morning. You might expect someone who has devoted her life to eradicating the death penalty would be serious, even morose; but Sr. Helen is filled with joy. She is a storyteller who was eager to hear our stories.



Mary Anne Knefel

**God moved and we connected naturally through that song.**

**Bridgett Boone**

When she spoke with UDTs' Bridgett Boone, Sister Helen was delighted to hear that, like her, Bridgett hails from Louisiana. And when she found out Bridgett is the Director of UD's Gospel Choir, Sr. Helen burst into the hymn "Order My Steps." Bridgett, being a good sport, began to sing along. "God moved and we connected naturally through that song," reflected Bridgett.

Of course this brought down the house, and it made me happy the rest of the day. After hearing Sr. Helen speak that evening, it occurred to me that it is her compassion that makes her stories about death row so powerful. This compassion, which flows from living the Gospel, allows her to connect with all of God's people, even in song!

## 2015 Character Athlete Awards

**T**o support the great work of coaches and athletes seeking to be people of character, even in their sport, the Wendt Center gives awards to the Character Athlete of the Year in each sport—22 sports in all! With the Coaches and Athletic Staff's help, two overall Character Athlete's of the Year are selected. Congratulations Tyler Dobratz and Meggie Schmidt for demonstrating excellent character leadership in your sports!



## DAYLC 2015

The Wendt Character Initiative welcomed 100 Dubuque area high-school juniors to campus on April 8 for the Dubuque Area Youth Leadership Council's (DAYLC) Annual UD Character and Leadership Workshop. Sponsored by the Wendt Center for Character Education, the workshop focused on helping the students develop leadership that aligns with excellent moral character. Attendees spent the morning learning about their individual leadership styles, strengths, and values; and in the afternoon, they learned to apply character-filled leadership through case study exercises and small group discussions.



President Bullock



Thirteen Wendt Character Scholars served as mentors for the DAYLC students, facilitating conversation in small groups and challenging the students to new ways of thinking about character issues. The Scholars' efforts made tremendous impact, as one of the attendees said, "the groups . . . were very conducive for the discussions." And another said, "I really enjoyed the activities! Very thought-provoking and fun!" A third added, "I learned a lot of new things."

*It was a wonderful day!  
Thank you. I'm so lucky to be here!*

2015 DAYLC Student



Wendt Character Scholar Sharon Boer led two of this year's small group discussions.

### Stem Festival Volunteers Make It a Success

Education professor, Deb Stork, needed help for two Dubuque area STEM (Science, Technology, Education, Mathematics) festivals. She put out a request for volunteers from UD—and was overwhelmed by the response. "Over 80 student volunteers and 20 faculty showed up to help serve the almost 600 people at the first event," she noted. "I asked the football team if we could get 5 or 6 volunteers, and 15 showed up staying all day. They served with a smile on their faces and positive attitudes." What a great way to demonstrate character to our community!



## Character and . . . Social Media

The Wendt Character Initiative unveiled its new online journal, titled *Character and . . .* in February. This year's issue, titled *Character and . . . Social Media*, focuses on how activity on social media sites—including Facebook, news sites, blogs, and even fantasy football forums—reflects and impacts our character.

*Character and . . . Social Media* includes three main articles: UDTS student Gary Panetta's "Stewardship and Global Social Media," UDTS faculty member Matthew Schlimm's "Fantasy Football and Friendship: The Company We Keep Online," and UD faculty member Jenn Supple Bartels' "Parents' Growing Pains on Social Media: Modeling Authenticity." Also included are a response article by UD Special Assistant to the President John Stewart, and an introduction by Wendt Character Initiative Director Dr. Annalee Ward.

Read the full journal issue at <http://digitalud.dbq.edu/ojs/character>, and consider how social media might impact your character, and, maybe just as important, how your character might impact social media.



## Spring Wendt Character Lecture Sr. Helen Prejean Meets Classes and Faculty

"The opportunity to participate in a group reading, 'Dead Man Walking,' and then actually visit with the author was very meaningful. Sr. Helen is a remarkable woman! This was a great example of a book I would probably never have read on my own; it would have been too easy to turn away from the difficult issues she addresses, with the excuse that this is not relevant in my life. That would have been unfortunate," says Phyllis H. Garfield, Director, International Studies



During her day at the University of Dubuque, Sister Helen



spoke to several classes about her work as a death-row abolitionist. She also talked to Honors and Criminal Justice students at a luncheon, as well as spent time with the faculty and staff who had been in the Book Discussion group. "I was so blessed by both the reading group and Sister

Helen Prejean's lecture. She embodies our Savior's call to serve our neighbors in love. I was challenged to watch for ways that 'sneaky Jesus' is calling me to action" enthused Kathleen Saleh, Assistant Professor of Education.

*Sr. Helen Prejean's visit and presentation, peppered with equal amounts of compassion, dark realities, and humor, was a bright call to action for our community.*

*Ken Turner*

*I was challenged to watch for ways that "sneaky Jesus" is calling me to action.*

*Kathleen Saleh*



## 2015 Wendt Tea



UD Faculty Members Brian Hallstoos (left) and Jonathan Helmke present on their project with help from their students.

The Wendt Character Initiative provides small grants to support faculty projects focusing on character. Faculty reported at a Wendt Tea which celebrated 11 faculty projects spanning from Dubuque to New York City, to Cuba, to Germany, and back to Platteville, WI.

Each year, the Initiative reviews and accepts a number of faculty grant requests for a myriad of projects. Faculty members applying for the grants



UD Faculty Member Jonathan Barz presents on his project with Mary Anne Knefel.

complete a Wendt grant application, which involves connecting their project with character. Once a grant request is submitted, it is reviewed by the Wendt Advisory Board and Wendt Director. If the request fits with the Wendt Character Initiative, a grant is awarded for the project.



UD Faculty Members enjoy tea and treats while browsing this year's Wendt-funded projects.

At the end of each academic year, those who have received Wendt grants gather at the annual Wendt Tea with their students

to report on their projects. These 3-5 minute presentations focus on how each project intersects with character.

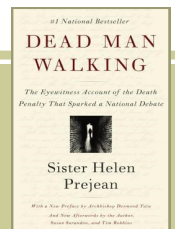
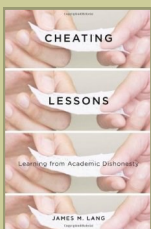
Projects funded by the Wendt Character Initiative help further and showcase our mission of integrating character into the entire UD campus. Thanks to all those involved!

Wendt Tea Celebration of Wendt Character Initiative Grants April 20, 2015	
Welcome	Dr. Annalee Ward
Empathy and Compassion in Society	Amy Resstler
Service and Cultural Challenge in Cuba	Julie Phillips & Ken Godwin
Human Trafficking Seminar	Kim Hilby
Voices Ahead of the Curve: Oral History	Brian Hallstoos & Jonathon Helmke
New York Insiders and Outsiders: Who Belongs?	Jonathon Barz & Mary Anne Knefel
African American Museum of Iowa	Brian Hallstoos
Human Trafficking Survivor Story	Kim Hilby
Digital UD - Character and ...	Jonathon Helmke
Character in Ropes and Challenge Course	Victor Popp
Work: Curse or Calling Art Gallery Catalog	Ethan Hall
Discussion of Dachau: Holocaust Camp	Ethan Hall

## Spring Wendt Book Discussions

This semester, the Wendt Center hosted four book discussion groups on two books: Sister Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* and James M. Lang's *Cheating Lessons*. 23 faculty/staff members gathered to discuss *Dead Man Walking* and 17 met to talk about *Cheating Lessons*. UD Wrestling Coach Jon McGovern said the discussions "...were helpful in

understanding ways to educate as well as inspire students on the personal benefits of academic integrity." He added, "I always come away from these group sessions inspired by our faculty and staff." Carla Gibbons, a UDTs staff member, notes, "We had fruitful, thought-provoking discussions at each gathering." And Library Director Mary Anne Knefel added, "Sr. Helen invites the reader on her journey, which helped us discuss such an emotional subject." UD Staff member Mary Kruser said, "It was very interesting to learn how our response to a first act of dishonesty conveys a clear message to students."



Spring 2015

## Wendt Center for Character Education

Dr. Annalee Ward,  
Director

Patience McCarty,  
Administrative Assistant



WENDT CHARACTER INITIATIVE  
UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE

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#WendtCharacterInitiative  
#WendtScholars

## A Note from the Director



I don't know about you, but when I drive, I'm usually intent on moving forward. I may glance in my rear-view mirror, but for the most part, I'm zooming ahead.

Putting together the newsletter reminds us to glance in that mirror. Too often we forget to appreciate the landscape of what we've just passed through. This issue gives us that chance to glance back with gratitude to God for his faithfulness this semester, this year.

With a theme of *Justly Fair, Fairly Just*, our Scholars worked hard to explore issues such as privilege, racism, Biblical models of justice, capital punishment, guilt and innocence, restorative justice, and forgiveness. We wrote a song together with Carrie Newcomer. We completed hours and hours of community service (approx. 2000!) We struggled together over so much pain in the world and our own culpability for some of it.

### Rear-view reflections

The theme extended to all of campus as we heard from challenging Wendt Character Speakers: Capt. Jason Church and Sister Helen Prejean. Those lectures are worth revisiting and are available on the Wendt Lecture Series page on the

Wendt website.

In Book Groups, our faculty and staff read three books—exploring the issue of justice as well as issues of habits and issues of academic integrity. And Wendt Character Grants fostered creative opportunities for students and faculty together to engage character issues.

The rear-view glance reminds me that we made progress on our journey and aren't standing still. That's only possible because of the power and commitment of this community and the grace of God.

We hope it's been a good year of growth, shaping us all as a community who impacts the world for good. A few glances back, but our journey continues forward!

—Annalee

*Thanks, UD campus, for exemplifying  
good character this year! Have a great  
summer, and we will see you next fall.*