



Included below is a press release regarding Cincinnati businessman and philanthropist Roger Grein, who will discuss becoming engaged in community philanthropy Nov. 4 at Ferris State University. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Cincinnati Philanthropist Roger Grein to Speak at Ferris

BIG RAPIDS – Philanthropist Roger Grein has helped implement community giving nationwide, and the Cincinnati businessman will discuss becoming engaged in community philanthropy Nov. 4 at Ferris State University.

Sponsored by the Academic Service Learning Project, Grein will speak at 6 p.m. in the Business Building, room 111.

“He will not only talk about philanthropy, but he will also illustrate how each one of us can be philanthropists as everyday people,” said Stephanie Thomson, Ferris assistant professor of Communication. “It doesn’t take someone who is a millionaire or billionaire – it takes someone who has the desire to give back.”

Grein, adopted during the mid-1940s and shortly diagnosed thereafter with cerebral palsy, faced and conquered great strife during his life. Beating the odds and expectations of others, he earned a degree, started a business and began to live a life of philanthropy.

Wanting to supply local community organizations with much-needed funding and to introduce young people to philanthropy while broadening their knowledge of their communities, Grein partnered with Campus Compact in 2005 to create the “Pay It Forward: Strengthening Communities Through Student-Led Philanthropy” initiative.

Currently, seven Michigan colleges and universities are participating in the program during 2009-10, in addition to Ferris State, with 18 campuses between Kentucky, Michigan and Ohio. This includes 34 Pay It Forward courses with 739 student participants completing 12,934 volunteer service hours. There have been 89 community non-profit organizations that were awarded \$153,000.

Thomson's Persuasive Speaking students, along with Ferris associate professor Sandra Burns' Dental Hygiene Community Dentistry students, are spending fall semester researching non-profit agencies, learning about them through volunteerism and identifying which community organization(s) they believe will most benefit from the grant funding in Mecosta, Osceola or Lake counties. The grant also provides for a third course to host the program in spring 2011 semester.

"This is really exciting because students are learning about the course specific topic and philanthropy while at the same time having an opportunity to give back in a very big way," Thomson added. "We're giving them the reins and allowing them to determine how to distribute the grant funding."

Burns, RDH, RN, MS, agreed. "Service learning allows students to get a really hands-on experience, and it gives them an eye inside that will make them much wiser in the future. The Community Dentistry class has focused on service learning in the past, so this program fits right into the course. It's nice to be able to give back to local organizations, which will be able to do so many more things."

For more information about the Academic Service Learning initiative at Ferris, call Wendy Samuels, Academic Service Learning co-coordinator, at (231) 591-5896.

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