4th Annual Farm Tour Educates, Inspires
Community farms, apiary, orchard, flour mill, all in one day!

On a beautiful Saturday, August 18, a busload of 40 campus and community participants set out on SEED Wayne’s 4th Annual Farm Tour. First stop was SEED Wayne partner organization, Earthworks Urban Farm on the eastside, the city’s first and only certified organic farm, where we were greeted by farm manager Patrick Crouch. Earthworks composts more than 300,000 pounds annually which they spread on the farm and share with other community gardens. “Compost is the engine that drives an organic farm,” explained Crouch. The farm grew more than 14,000 lbs. of produce last year.

From there, we hit the freeway to a community garden project in Flint run by Karate Masters Jacky and Dora King, with their students. After a warm and gracious welcome, Master Jacky explained that self-defense was about more than strengthening one’s body through vigorous physical discipline. It also includes paying attention to what one ate and the physical and social community one helped build around oneself. Over the last five years, they cleaned up 33 vacant lots, developed a garden with two hoop houses that capture rainwater, and planted a nursery with 200 fruit trees. Last year, they harvested 200 pounds of honey.

Almar Orchards in Flushing, with 150 acres in organic apples, and another 250 in other organic fruits and vegetables, was our next stop. Owner Bill Koan shared that this year was the worst he had seen in his life, with an early thaw followed by hard frosts which killed off apple blossoms, and resulted in a loss of more than $400,000. However, Koan is able to keep going because he has developed a broader revenue

Right: Bill Koan of Almar Orchards, center, speaks to the group about growing apples and making cider.

WSU Farmers Market Wins MEDC Grant
Senior Shuttle, Bulk Purchases, Equipment Supported

Having completed three months of its fifth season, the WSU Farmers Market continues to fulfill its many purposes: to increase access to fresh and local foods to campus- and midtown-based shoppers; bring eaters and producers together; grow food entrepreneurs; offer a site for learning about healthy diets, food, and agriculture; and create a fun and sociable place on campus.

This year, the WSU Farmers Market won a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, in partnership with the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, whose Northwest Detroit Farmers Market is now in its seventh year. The grant will fund a shuttle that connects eight midtown senior/subsidized housing complexes to the market, purchases from the market by campus dining halls and a neighborhood retailer, and equipment such as commercial grade tents and tables for future years.

Several community partners are also helping in these efforts, including Fair Food Network, Eastern Market, Hannan House, and the senior complexes being served. We are particularly grateful to Rachel Jacobsen of Hannan House and Hayward Penny of Detroit Medical Center, both longtime market friends, for their help with the shuttle program. Campus partners include AVI Foodsystems and the Office of Campus Sustainability. We look forward to sharing the lessons from these initiatives

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stream through a cider co-operative, a research nursery, and sales of apple pulp to a hog operation.

At Anthony Bee Farm in Swartz Creek, an operation with nearly three hundred hives, we saw how honey is extracted from frames. With equipment that conveys 60 frames at a time to a centrifuge to draw out the honey, the farm processed 38 tons last year, almost all sold in 55 gallon drums to 5 gallon buckets to food processors, brewerries, cosmetic, medical and a range of other industries. We also learned about hive-building and other beekeeping basics. Did you know, for example, that that one bee produces about 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in a season, and that it takes 2 million flowers to produce 1 lb of honey? The drought year this year thus has been tough on bees as well.

Our last stop was the state’s oldest flour mill in Linden, MI., Westwind Milling Co. Owners Linda and Lee Purdy also have land which they barter for certified organic wheat production for the mill; they source the rest from other organic farms. This year’s drought reduced their harvest by 25 to 30 percent. After learning about the nutritional make up of the wheat grain, the group toured the mill, originally powered by water, now by electricity. Built in 1836, and as was typical for the period, the mill formed the core around which the town gradually developed. It processes 80 to 100 tons of grain a year, with flour sold wholesale to area bakeries and grocery supermarkets, including Meijer’s stores. Linda graciously treated us to lemonade and baked delicacies from the mill’s products. Between these treats and delicious wraps and home-made potato chips from AVI’s campus kitchens, and fresh apples, tour participants were well fed.

Each of the stops merited an entire day of learning compared with the forty minutes or so we were able to spend there. Nonetheless, each offered a different glimpse of the mosaic that is Michigan’s food system. Each operation showcased the many ways in which it depends on nature, other facets of the food system, and the communities to which it is connected. Although each also showed great resilience in dealing with the severe drought this season, it was also clear that a warming climate poses many uncertainties that will continue to test these operations into the future.

Farmers Market, Continued from page 1

in future SEEDLING issues.

Coordinated by the Office of Campus Sustainability, the shuttle offers two sets of two routes each, to collect shoppers from Brush Park Manor, Warren Plaza, Bicentennial Tower, Lexington Village, and University Meadows, among other stops. Ridership in these early weeks has ranged from five participants to triple that number. Program coordinator Daryl Pierson is reaching out to spread the word of and sign up participants to the program. An effective outreach tool is the Double Up Food Bucks program, which doubles Bridge Card spending at the market (up to $20 per day) and is an attractive incentive for seniors with limited means.

The grant also allows partnering retail operations, such as campus dining halls and neighborhood store Peaches and Greens, purchase larger quantities of produce from the farmers market at lower “bulk purchase” prices. These interactions will hopefully solidify relationships for future direct purchases from the market by the partners. Finally, grant funds will be used to purchase commercial grade tents and other equipment to sustain market operations into the future. We are grateful to the MEDC for helping us build stronger relationships within and outside the WSU Farmers Market.

In other market news, despite temperatures that climbed to the upper 90s on several days, shoppers turned out in large numbers to get lunch, shop for dinner, take in a performance by Mosaic Youth Theater or Inside Out youth poets, or observe a chef’s demonstration. The unusual weather this year, which all but decimated tree fruit production in Michigan, resulted in fewer cherries, plums, and peaches and apricots at the market. Now that the fall semester has started, however, we expect to see both our customer counts and sales go up.

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Right: Chef Phil Jones of COLORS-Detroit restaurant cooks mujaddarah and sides with market veggies and herbs at the WSU Farmers Market.

Bottom, right: Robin Darling and Daryl Pierson, Shuttle Program Leader and Coordinator, respectively, are working hard to bring midtown seniors and subsidized housing residents to the WSU Farmers Market.

SEED Wayne Partners
They get at the grocery store, but they don't even understand where the ingredients in their food originate. Shockingly, many people don't, for example, know that all-purpose flour is a product of wheat. I see this as a problem. Organizations like SEED Wayne help to bridge that gap between consumer and farmer. I feel that this reconnection with our food supply is not only important, but necessary. Without volunteers, organizations like SEED Wayne are not possible. For this reason, I continue to support SEED Wayne and other local organizations in this endeavour and I encourage others to do the same.

I am Leigh Slater, an honors student at Wayne State. I discovered SEED Wayne because of a project assignment in an honors class. We had to pick an urban problem and discuss possible solutions, and my group decided on urban agriculture. We found SEED Wayne through the organization’s website and emailed Charles (Lisee; SEED Wayne Program Leader), who welcomed us with open arms. He helped us with our research and taught us a lot about gardening.

After that project, a friend, Matt Melucci, and I decided to get a plot at the St. Andrew’s Garden and continue to volunteer at the Warrior (Winter) Garden. We now help at the WSU Farmers Market, which is really a great experience. During my research I had attended Eastern Market several times and had always been too overwhelmed to shop, but the WSU Farmers Market is much more personal and you really get to know the vendors.

Volunteering has been rewarding, because of the garden harvests we took home (my personal favorite being mustard greens), and you get to learn a lot about where your food comes from. The food also tastes a lot better when you have the satisfaction of it being a product of your hard work. SEED Wayne is a great way to get involved on campus and meet a lot of people making an impact in the city. I have met many entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations involved in urban agriculture. It is a good idea for anyone interested in urban agriculture or urban development in general, and anyone that is just interested in trying something new or that loves food.

I am a student in the School of Business Administration, pursuing a degree in Global Supply Chain Management. I learned about SEED Wayne from their information tent at the WSU Farmers Market. I really love the farmers market and see it as an invaluable resource for students and people in the community. Naturally, I have a desire to support SEED Wayne and their initiatives through volunteering for the farmers market and participating in other activities.

I grew up in a very rural area where farming and relying on local food sources is pretty much a way of life. Many of my summers were spent with my grandmother and we would spend hours working on the farm. Everything that my grandparents need is on their farm. They have fruit trees, nut trees, livestock, and a greenhouse where they can grow vegetables pretty much year-round. In my opinion, this is an ideal way to live. They rely only on their own food supply for survival, and many others in that area support themselves in the same way.

When I moved to Detroit, I was surprised to learn that many people don't even know where the food that they eat on a daily basis actually comes from. They know that it comes from a box that they get at the grocery store, but they don't even understand where the ingredients in their food originate. Shockingly, many people don't, for example, know that all-purpose flour is a product of wheat. I see this as a problem.

Organizations like SEED Wayne help to bridge that gap between consumer and farmer. I feel that this reconnection with our food supply is not only important, but necessary. Without volunteers, organizations like SEED Wayne are not possible. For this reason, I continue to support SEED Wayne and other local organizations in this endeavour and I encourage others to do the same.
This is my first year with SEED Wayne. My only regret is that I have not joined earlier! It all began when I started noticing this huge sunflower that was growing in St. Andrew’s garden. On my way to the lab, every time I passed by, I could not take my eyes off of it...I was mesmerized by the size of that flower!

One time, I saw a group of people working in the garden, everyone was busy...planting... watering...weeding... harvesting... so I walked over and asked about what this garden was, and there was Charles Lisee, ever so enthusiastic about the whole project behind SEED Wayne. He briefed me about what the group is doing and said it would be very easy to join, and so it was. Next year I was on board with the group. To me, it’s been such a rewarding experience in every sense. It is fun, you get to meet many people and exchange many ideas... it is educational, you learn about different aspects of organic gardening, urban farming, natural pest control... it is satisfying, you contribute to your community by giving some of your time... and, it is very relaxing, especially after spending long hours doing your experiments or reading your papers. Working in a beautiful setting outdoors, gives you a nice mental break, and an amazingly refreshing feeling that only nature can provide. And, you get to grow your own huge sunflowers!!

At first, SEED Wayne was only a means to an end. As a master’s student in a 2011 Instructional Technology class on video editing, I needed a subject for an assignment. I wandered into the Wayne State Wednesday farmer’s market, and as is sometimes the case, my chance encounter turned out to be transformative. A simple class project turned into a paid research position to create six video documentaries on SEED Wayne. I have since added volunteer hours to videotape and edit seminars in the Cities and Food class offered by Professor Kami Pothukuchi.

I also altered my master’s thesis/project. I decided to create a video storytelling course that SEED Wayne participants could use. I saw that SEED Wayne produced more than home-grown food; it also produced home-grown stories. Detroit residents with basic video skills could shape and sustain their urban agriculture movement. I hope to teach urban farmers and other food activists how to harvest and publish food stories using amateur equipment. I designed a week-long seminar to teach three participants how to collect stories through interviews and edit them into a coherent narrative.

The pilot course ran in June and I plan to write on my findings. Hopefully, with funding, the project can spread into Detroit neighborhoods. My wife and I now spend weekends talking about bees, soil, and rainwater harvesting. SEED Wayne changed my life and it can do the same for you.

New businesses that have joined the market include Acre Farm, a small urban farm in Corktown, and the Detroit Bulk Company which sells locally sourced, dry goods assembled into ready-to-prepare recipes. Come find Acre Farm and Detroit Bulk Company on the north side of the market. Both are starting to build a customer base, and are seeing some repeat business from customers.

The next issue of SEEDLING (December) will contain a full report on the WSU Farmers Market with the entire season’s data. However, readers will note that the market is a far more complex operation than it was five years ago, with SEED Wayne picking up set up and take down functions, and also adding more activities. We are grateful to our growing list of partners for their help in sustaining and enriching the WSU Farmers Market.

Below: Brother Nature Produce on the north side of the WSU Farmers Market
After volunteering just once, I knew that this program could empower, teach, and celebrate community using the simple idea of FOOD.

Matt Glaab, a graduate of Lawrence Tech, volunteers for the WSU Farmers Market and Detroit FRESH.

My name is Matt Glaab, I work at the Wayne State Farmers Market. I found out about SEED Wayne in 2011 when I attended the Detroit Food Summit put on by the Detroit Food Policy Council (www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net). I instantly became interested in one of the program’s projects called Detroit FRESH. Detroit FRESH aims to enable corner stores in the community to regularly stock fresh, affordable produce.

SEED Wayne volunteers do outreach in the surrounding neighborhood to inform people about the produce and engage them in conversations about healthy diets. One activity in Detroit FRESH is the Healthy Food Fair, offered in partnership with participating stores and neighborhood organizations. The Fairs engage residents in activities related to healthy diets, including games, screenings, cooking demos and other resources to connect the community. The scope of the project interested me. I had to be part of it.

After volunteering just once, I knew that this program could empower, teach, and celebrate community using the simple idea of FOOD. As the year progressed I became more involved with Detroit FRESH and other SEED Wayne activities. In passing I became aware of the Farmers Market. I am not a student at Wayne, having recently graduated from Lawrence Tech. So I had never been to the market. When an opening became available to work at the market for a few hours, I jumped at the chance. It seemed like a great opportunity to learn more about food and celebrate the Mosaic Youth Theater, local eats, cooking demos, and the local farmers.

If you want to learn about where your food comes from, healthy diets, supporting a thriving local economy, or just talk shop about a recipe you’re interested in, the Wayne State Farmers Market is worth checking out. It’s a community everyone should be aware of and a part of.

I began volunteering with SEED Wayne last September, shortly after relocating to Detroit after my husband, Andy Newman, took up a position as a WSU faculty member in the Anthropology department. New in town and living just down the street from the Wayne State campus, I was eager to meet people, feel a part of the Wayne State community, and find a way to contribute to my neighborhood. I began volunteering with the WSU Farmers Market and quickly found myself looking forward to market day.

In addition to accessing local, organic and seasonal fruits and vegetables, volunteering with SEED Wayne helped me feel more rooted in the community and introduced me to key members of Detroit’s local food network, including Detroit-based farmers, food vendors, and activists. Through my affiliation with additional SEED Wayne volunteer initiatives such as the community gardens on campus, I’ve learned how to garden, grow my own fruits and vegetables, and have connected with farms and gardeners throughout Detroit.

With both a background and keen interest in Public Health and Nutrition, I have found volunteering with SEED Wayne to be particularly rewarding because it has allowed me to contribute to various programs and initiatives that help students, staff, faculty, and Detroit residents gain access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables.

Volunteering with SEED Wayne has helped me feel more rooted in the community and introduced me to key members of Detroit’s local food network. Shaira Daya, a faculty spouse and relative newcomer to Detroit, has a master’s degree in public health from Columbia University.

CALLING WAYNE STATE STUDENTS!
SEED Wayne relies upon the leadership of students and staff who volunteer. If you would like to participate in the gardens, market, or Detroit FRESH, please write k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu
I now understand that food MUST be considered when planning for the sustainable future of any city. Sareen Papakhian is getting a master's in urban planning.

My name is Sareen Papakhian and I am getting my Master’s degree in Urban Planning at Wayne State University. I was introduced to SEED Wayne while enrolled in a food policy course entitled, ‘Cities and Food,’ taught by Professor Kami Pothukuchi. With little to no background in food policy, I was immediately drawn to SEED Wayne out of curiosity, and for the hands-on learning and volunteer opportunities it offered. It allows for students from various educational backgrounds to come together and represent Wayne State University in food-related activities in the Detroit community. My time spent volunteering for SEED Wayne has been very meaningful to me. It has taught me the importance and value of food beyond the basic human need that is shared by all.

As a planner, I have learned so much and I now understand that food MUST be considered when planning for the sustainable future of any city. SEED Wayne is an exciting and great way to be involved at Wayne State and to get hands-on experiences in the community of Detroit. I recommend it to anyone and everyone who likes to volunteer and have fun!

This past quarter, as an extension of our Detroit FRESH activities, we offered two healthy food fairs in partnership with eastside neighborhood organizations. On June 16, RECI, Riverfront East Congregational Initiative, organized a large People’s Fair in which neighborhood residents were invited to participate in a wide range of health services and gain related resources and information. On July 14, a similar but smaller fair was held in the Church of the Messiah neighborhood.

SEED Wayne staff and volunteers, along with students from WSU public health and nutrition departments engaged participants in conversations about healthy diets, challenges related to including fresh fruits and vegetables at recommended rates, and tips to manage diabetes and hypertension through better diets. We also gave away plenty of resources including tote bags with kid-tested recipe books, kitchen utensils including measuring cups and spoons, cutting boards, and refrigerator thermometers. The healthy food fairs also included cooking demonstrations, participatory visioning for the future of the neighborhoods, and games for youngsters.

As the first phase of Detroit FRESH wraps up, we’re reviewing lessons from the program to identify next steps and future directions. The Healthy Food Fairs were conceived of as a way to complement activities to build corner store capacity to carry fresh fruits and vegetables. They engage residents in conversations about healthy diets and offer interactive activities that build related knowledge and relationships. As we review options for our corner store work, we expect to continue to offer similar healthy food fairs in partnership with participating stores and neighborhood organizations.
As a result of these reactions, the mayor’s office has since backed away from the sale. Nonetheless, the need for a fair, transparent, and equitable process for disposition of publicly owned land is urgent.

After brief welcomes from DFPC President Phil Jones and GCFB’s John Kastler, Dan Carmody and Myrtle Thompson Curtis of the DFPC framed the scope and goals of the session. Underscoring both the complicated process of land transfer and the need for a fair and transparent process in which every one knew the rules and could participate, Carmody and Curtis called for a dialogue that was forward-looking, positive, and effective.

They were followed by community garden leaders Jerry Ann Hebron of Oakland Avenue Community Garden and Northend Community Development Corporation, and Rosie Sharp of Shipherd Greens. Hebron described her organization’s futile efforts over several years to purchase seven lots from the city. This, after they had been billed by and paid a total of $68,000 to the city for grass-cutting on the lots between 1990 and 2012, placed $1,120 in deposit, and submitted three sets of application for the same parcels! They have planted perennials, shrubs, and even installed a sculpture in the community garden, which is regarded as a safe, respectful, and productive community space by neighbors.

Sharp recounted their group’s efforts to purchase 2 lots on the Eastside, currently leased from the city, on which the community garden was located. The garden, a haven for the neighborhood, is the product of thousands of donated hours by neighbors who cleaned up the property, maintain the garden, physically carry water to the plants, and built benches and a rain-catching gazebo. Several attempts to learn of the method and costs of purchase the property and related applications only resulted in a denial from the city. Continue to lease the land, advised the city’s planners.

Attention then turned to the director of the city’s Planning and Development Department, Rob Anderson. Acknowledging problems with the adjacent vacant lot program, he vowed to make the procedures “prompt, professional, and predictable.” He also encouraged attendees who wanted to purchase land through the program to write their names on a list that evening for prompt action by his agency.

Anderson was followed by Marcell Todd, director of the City Planning Commission. Todd explained the role of the CPC in surplus land sale decisions and the importance of review by their agency and City Council to ensure that the proposed use of land sold by the city was consistent with the city’s master plan and its zoning ordinance.

Points made in the public comments that evening included the following:
• Residents should get higher priority to purchase land over outsiders.
• Corporations should not have it easier than ordinary residents to purchase land; all should play by the same set of rules.
• The city should make it easier for residents to purchase land and make related information on costs, ownership, and procedures more easily available.
• The city needs to be more transparent about and accountable to residents in decisions related to land disposition; we need to know if a few individuals are buying up large numbers of parcels over time.

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On August 22, the Detroit Food Policy Council convened a listening session to hear from the city’s residents about their experiences with and opinions about buying plots of land that have come into the city’s ownership. The event was held at the Gleaners Community Food Bank. More than 250 people attended.

The listening session was precipitated by news earlier this year of a proposal by Mayor Bing to sell 1,900 vacant parcels on the city’s eastside to Hantz Farms, without consultation with City Council or the City Planning Commission, both entities which have official responsibilities in the disposition of city-owned land. This back-room deal would get the city $300 a parcel, hardly a bonanza for the cash-strapped city.

Furthermore, had the sale gone through, it would have presented the city with many contradictions and potential embarrassments. For one, in 1995 City Council resolved that such proposals undergo a thorough examination of current and proposed land use and, in case of a zoning change, be subject to a formal public hearing, which would have been required for the mostly residential parcels in the Hantz deal. City policy on urban agriculture is also still being developed; agriculture zoning does not yet exist. The sale would also raise questions about precedent, fairness, and transparency given the epic struggles experienced by individual residents to buy vacant lots from the city. Community activists were understandably outraged that well-heeled and connected individuals are able to cut such huge deals while they themselves are stuck in a bureaucratic morass despite caring for vacant land in their neighborhoods for years.

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