2012 Growing Season is Off and Running!
Low Tunnels at Warrior Winter Garden Planted

Welcome to the 2012 growing season on campus, which started February 9 with the re-assembly of the low tunnels at Warrior Demonstration Garden! Program Leader Charles Lisee led several new and veteran volunteers in the installation and planting. Two weeks later, the beds were seeded with a variety of cold-tolerant crops which will be harvested during Earth Week later in April.

The project recycled materials from last year, with hoops made from PVC pipe, molded in shape at the friendly WSU Community Arts woodshop. The greenhouse film and row covers retain moisture and solar heat and buffer against wind.

Volunteers in these activities were students from across campus: Environmental Science, Urban Studies and Planning, Honors College, Nutrition, and Biology. One volunteer is also a master gardener and an attorney. After an initial orientation by Lisee, they threw themselves to preparing the beds, installing frames, and seeding according to specifications. The many hands and cheerful banter made for such light work that participants left committing to give time to other SEED Wayne activities.

In all, the team planted three gourmet lettuce mixes, as well as Swiss chard, Toscano kale, carrots, Red Russian kale, and radishes. We will plant peas at the beginning of April so that shoots of just the right maturity can be added to the salad mix. As of this writing, the plan for the winter harvests is to supply educational lunches to a couple of influential groups on campus, including, possibly, SEED Wayne volunteers. Last year, harvests were prepared by campus chefs to offer salad taste-tests to students in dining halls. This year, we hope to engage participants in a deeper dialogue about food and agriculture issues in the region.

The winter garden has afforded all of us—staff and volunteers alike—opportunities to learn about the possibilities of and techniques for season extension in Michigan’s agriculture. Additionally, it has allowed volunteers to be engaged in food production and related food system issues during the slow winter months. The prominent location of the Warrior Garden, between the Undergraduate Library and Warrior Dining allows it to be a part of campus conversations related to urban agriculture, while proximity to the dining hall also enables partnership activities with AVI Foodsystems.

DEGC’s Olga Stella Opens ‘Building a Sustainable Food System in Detroit’ Seminars

Educating the campus and surrounding community about sustainable food systems is a key SEED Wayne goal. With this in mind, a seminar series, “Building a Sustainable Food System in Detroit,” is organized as part of the Cities and Food class, offered in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, SEED Wayne’s home. Seminars are given by local experts working actively to make the city’s food more healthy and secure, and the food system more just and sustainable. Talks are open to the public to encourage campus-community co-learning, and also to get the biggest bang for the time speakers and organizers give to the series!

To sign up for remaining seminars, please email k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu. Seating is limited.
Garden, cont’d from p. 1

We are now inviting applications for gardening at St. Andrews Allotment Garden. Teams should have at least three members each, to enable consistent participation over the spring-summer and fall terms. Each 4’x8’ bed may be leased for $10 for the season by a team made up of students, and $20 by teams containing WSU employees. Teams agree to maintain their plots regularly, participate in group activities, and refrain from using synthetic chemicals, among other things. In return, SEED Wayne agrees to provide needed supplies, coordination, oversight, and connection to university and community partners.

If your group is interested in leasing a garden bed this season, please write ctlisee@wayne.edu.

Charles Lisee contributed to this piece.

Edible WOW to feature SEED Wayne

Edible WOW, the magazine that showcases southeastern Michigan’s foods and celebrates the people who help create these foods, will run a story on SEED Wayne in its latest issue. Published by the indomitably energetic couple, Kate and Robb Harper, the magazine’s mission is “to connect, inspire and engage you to embrace the growers, artisans, stores and restaurants devoted to our region’s local flavors and culinary traditions.” Be sure to grab the Spring 2012 issue at an area outlet (e.g., Avalon Bakery in Detroit).

Seminars, cont’d from p. 1

On January 18, Olga Stella of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation opened the series by discussing problems associated with retail grocery in Detroit, and her agency’s efforts to support the development and expansion of full-service grocery stores that offer a variety of healthy food choices. Next followed Betti Wiggins of Detroit Public Schools’ Office of Food Service, who highlighted how the school lunch program is being shaped so as to offer healthy options while also reducing stigma for children who participate in the program.

DeWayne Wells of Gleaners Community Food Bank discussed emergency food assistance programs and efforts to extend them through partnerships that increase access to local, fresh food, and provide a more dignified service environment for families in need. On February 29, Dan Carmody mapped the many ways in which public marketplaces such as Eastern Market, which he represents, can serve as food hubs for the entire region.

We urge readers who are interested in these topics to sign up for seminars coming up this and next month. Catherine Badgley of University of Michigan will talk about models of sustainable agriculture, including those adopted in Cuba and Brazil; Patrick Crouch of Earthworks Urban Farm and Ashley Atkinson of Greening of Detroit will discuss the many ways in which urban agriculture in Detroit is also a tool for building community; and Jennifer Fike of Food System Economic Partnership and Susan Schmidt of AVI Foodsystems at Wayne State will discuss efforts to connect farmers with local markets, including institutional buyers. Malik Yakini of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network will close the series with a discussion of race in the food system. We are pleased with the attendance in the seminars so far, and grateful to the speakers for sharing their expertise with participants.

SEED Wayne Partners

CALLING WSU STUDENTS!
SEED Wayne relies upon the leadership of students and staff who volunteer. If you would like to participate in SEED Wayne’s activities, please send an e-mail to k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu
Sustainability Warrior William Ahee Starts Anti-Racism Group

William Ahee, 23, WSU Philosophy major, is this year’s SEED Wayne Sustainability Warrior. We define sustainability as integrating goals of economic vitality, environmental integrity, social equity, and participation by community members.

Ahee was introduced to food systems work through Earthworks Urban Farm on Detroit’s eastside. “It was my first experience with a service opportunity that broke down the barrier between server and served. I learnt there that problems in the food system occurred in a larger context of environmental and social injustice, and the way our food system is organized has to be a core focus of our work.”

To Ahee, sustainability is locally focused so any definition of sustainability would have to adapt to specific situations. “The components that go into it for me are equity, that is, equal access to resources and intergenerational equality, meaning what we consume can’t hurt future generations, and there is a level of balance with other species, so the current rate of extinction wouldn’t be acceptable under any definition of sustainability,” he adds.

Ahee’s involvement with SEED Wayne began as a volunteer for the Warrior Garden build in 2008, when he helped create beds at the Community Arts woodshop, move soil, and plant vegetables, herbs, and flowers. SEED Wayne Director Kami Pothukuchi was so impressed with his commitment that she offered him a job based just on this initial contribution. As the program expanded with the creation of the WSU Farmers Market, composting, and healthy corner store work, his responsibilities grew.

Ahee left in November 2010 to intern at a farm out east, but returned home after a foot injury. Taking the opportunity to complete his undergraduate degree, but unwilling to give up on his search for more just practices, he helped start a group called People Against Racism (PAR), which engages diverse campus and community members in dialogues about how racism benefits and/or hurts us as individuals and as groups. The PAR group has met so far to come to a shared definition of racism and race, and next will take up issues related to internalized racism and its intersection with other forms of discrimination. Ahee also participated in Occupy Detroit, and volunteers at the Sugar Law Center which is dedicated to anti-racism and economic justice.

Ahee is concerned about the implications of higher tuition and policies enacted to increase graduation rates at Wayne State. “It’s important for students to challenge university policies that may lead to the marginalization of students of color, many of whom likely will not be able to attend Wayne State.” He fears that admission standards especially will hurt the mostly African-American students from Detroit high schools relative to suburban students, the latter who tend to come from wealthier families on average. He worries that recent staff cuts may have disproportionately affected employees of color, cuts which taken together with other decisions—such as those related to emergency financial managers for struggling cities—effectively serve to disenfranchise large segments of the state’s African-American population.

What changes has he seen in himself as a result of his community involvement? One of his first insights was to own up to his own privilege as a white, middle-class kid from a prospering suburb. “Encountering my own internalized supremacy was a really important aspect of service for me. Throughout the years of community service, I’ve had to question many things and a lot of the time I find myself asking: am I doing good or am I doing harm? A lot of service may actually just cause good feelings in the person volunteering, and, in fact, create harm,” he adds.

Any messages he wants to share with fellow students? “I would hope that students never blindly accept their teachers’ words for truth. I think education is often structured such that the teacher will give you little shreds of knowledge and students will grasp it and close off their minds without utilizing what they’re getting in the classroom to examine the system that we are all in. If there’s one thing I gained from Occupy Detroit, it’s that when consensus validates everyone’s voice then a wisdom emerges that wasn’t there in any one person in the first place. I would love to see every student bringing their authentic self into the world. Students should open themselves up to experience and question the world around them, in order to develop their own values and paradigms and bring those out into the world.”

SEED Wayne Research Assistant Sam Molnar conducted and transcribed this interview.

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

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<tr>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May-June</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/21, 5:30 pm, Rm 331 State Hall, Catherine Badgley, “Ecological Models for Urban Agriculture.” <em>Seminars at this time, place organized by SEED Wayne. Info: <a href="mailto:k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu">k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu</a></em></td>
<td>4/4, 5:30 pm, Rm 331 State Hall, Susan Schmidt &amp; Jennifer Fike, “Making Local Sourcing Work”</td>
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<td>3/28, Same time, place as above, Ashley Atkinson &amp; Patrick Crouch, “Urban Farming in Detroit: Cultivating Growers and Building Community”</td>
<td>4/7, 1 pm, MSU Detroit Center, 3408 Woodward, Undoing Racism in Detroit’s Food System Dialogue</td>
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<td>4/11, 5:30 pm, Rm 331 State Hall, Malik Yakini, “Food, ‘Race,’ and Justice”</td>
<td>6/6, 11 am to 4 pm, 5201 Cass Ave, Opening, Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market. Market is offered same time/place every Wednesday, until October 31. Independence Day, TBD</td>
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Wayne SEEDLING

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Info: k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

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SEED Wayne Research Assistant Sam Molnar conducted and transcribed this interview.
On June 14, 2012, SEED Wayne will complete four years of existence. We approach our fifth year with many reflections about our work so far, its possibilities and its challenges, and with much excitement about the future. The next few issues will highlight reflections, but given the season’s start, here is a brief outline of plans for the year, based on assets and energy mobilized to date.

Most importantly, work on core activities—campus gardens and composting, farmers market, Detroit FRESH, and classroom and field-based learning and engagement activities will continue as in previous years with only incremental expansions. What follows are plans for newer activities.

One, based on the successful pilots of last year, Detroit FRESH will offer more healthy food fairs in partnership with participating corner stores and community-based organizations. Two, public art will continue to be an important theme for our activities this year, including at our campus farmers market and with Detroit FRESH stores. In fact, a Detroit FRESH participant, A&W Food Center at Mack and Dickerson, has been selected for a mural implemented this spring in partnership with ArtsCorps Detroit. We hope to identify another participant for a mural this year.

Three, we will put more energy into documentation and analysis of SEED Wayne activities to date, including by writing and submitting to various outlets papers analyzing elements of the program. We’re also excited about a new partnership with an experienced videographer, John Kotarski, to produce a documentary of the program which will be released this year. John Kotarski is also a graduate student of instructional technology at WSU. Six videos, each about 15 minutes long, will feature the program’s history; core activities related to urban agriculture, farmers market, and Detroit FRESH; student leadership; and campus and community partnerships. Interviews he conducts with campus and community partners will also inform our reflections of the program.

Four, also in collaboration with Kotarski, we will undertake a digital story-telling pilot project in which participants on campus are encouraged to tell their food stories and trained to capture these on video. Story-telling has proven potential to help people bridge differences, empower themselves and others, and build a community around shared goals.

Finally, we are fortunate to be connected to extremely talented and energetic individuals—

(Continued on page 2)