Healthy Food Fairs Engage Neighbors of Two Detroit FRESH Stores

This summer, Detroit FRESH ramped up its involvement in two Eastside neighborhoods by offering Healthy Food Fairs in collaboration with participating corner stores and our campus and community partners. The fairs were held next door to A&W Food Store located at Mack and Dickerson, and Harding Market at Warren and St. Clair.

The fairs sought to reinforce Detroit FRESH activities by engaging neighborhood residents in interactive educational activities about affordable and conveniently assembled healthy diets—especially those with more fruits and vegetables, encouraging residents to seek healthier options for meals and snacks from their neighborhood stores, and conducting a basic survey of participants’ perceptions about neighborhood corner stores as sources of fruits and vegetables.

The fairs offered games and other opportunities for interactive learning about healthy diets and the importance of physical activity. They also showcased cooking demonstrations with tasty recipes featuring commonly available vegetables that are also convenient and quick to prepare.

Approximately 65 individuals, roughly one-third of them children, attended each fair despite heavy rains on August 6, and the threat of a storm during the second event. They came away with tote bags containing booklets of kid-tested recipes, a thermometer to help keep refrigerator temperatures at the ideal range of 40°-42° F, a jump rope, a set of measuring cups and spoons, a cutting board, an apple and a bottle of water, and other materials to help them shop for and prepare healthy foods.

Volunteers from Wayne State University staffed several stations. These included Julie Fromm, R.D., a dietician at the Mort Harris Recreation Center, who showed participants cards with pictures of different foods and challenged them to identify healthier options for meals and snacks. While many participants correctly picked oatmeal over fried strips of bacon, a

(Continued on page 2)

Editor’s note: Every fall, SEEDLING contains a supplement in which SEED Wayne participants tell us why they choose to give time to the program and what they get out of it. We hope that their stories will inspire more readers to volunteer for SEED Wayne and other sustainability initiatives on campus and in the city.

Below: Healthy Food Fairs near A&W Food Store, Aug. 6 (left), and Harding Market, Aug. 13 (right). Hands-on educational activities were led by WSU’s Julie Fromm, R.D., (holding paper) and Pediatrics Research Assistants Tanya Troy and Jessica Walker (at the table). In the background are cooking demos led by Sarah Stephison, R.D., and Tamara Landazuri of Gleaners Community Food Bank (picture on left), and youth from Earthworks Urban Farm’s Youth Farm Stand Project, who were accompanied by Community Outreach Coordinator, Shane Bernardo (picture on right).

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WSU Farmers Market open until Oct. 26
Wednesdays, 11 AM to 4 PM
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boiled egg over a fried one for breakfast, and an apple over a bag of chips for a snack, several were surprised to learn that baked potatoes and chicken were healthier than their fried counterparts. These exchanges were also marked by good-natured howls of protest at the seeming deprivation that healthy choices signified to some participants.

In a partnership with the WSU Pediatrics Prevention Center, research assistants Tanya Troy and Jessica Walker staffed a station at which kids played a game where they moved to the next level as they correctly answered basic questions about healthy diets. They also discussed the new food guide “My Plate” recently released by the federal government, to urge people to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Cooking demos were also a hit with the fair’s participants. At the first fair, Sarah Stephison, R.D., a WSU alumna and Cooking Matters Program Manager at Gleaners Community Food Bank, and co-worker Tamara Landazuri cooked up tasty vegetarian quesadillas filled with beans, grated carrots and cheese. Participants crowded around the demo table to get a slice. At the second event, Youth Farm Stand Project participants from the Earthworks Urban Farm cut up tomatoes, onions and chili peppers to assemble a tasty salsa which was offered to participants along with baked corn chips. Participants, young and old, pointed to the salsa and heaped lavish praise on the concoction and its creators, while waiting around for second helpings. The young chefs, aged 12 to 17 and no novices to such demonstrations, nonetheless soaked up the adulation.

The fairs would not be possible without the help of our campus and community partners. In addition to contributions noted previously, participating corner stores provided water and ice and Eastern Market’s Dan Carmody ferried chairs and the cooking demo table to and from the fair sites. In a wonderful spirit of hospitality, A&W Food Store also dropped off bags of vegetables—zucchini, squash, and cucumbers—to distribute to fair participants. Additionally, we obtained tote bags with the thermometer, jump rope, measuring cups, recipe booklets, and other nutrition pamphlets from the Michigan Fitness Foundation, with related materials supplemented by Gleaners Community Food Bank.

Flash surveys revealed that several participants did purchase fruits and vegetables at the corner stores; most, however, shopped at larger grocery stores to get better prices and more variety. A few men confessed that they did not buy fresh fruits and vegetables anywhere, getting their meals from fast food places.

Evaluations at both fairs were highly positive. Questions related to cooking demonstrations, nutrition information and tips, resources received, and satisfaction with the event, all received the highest scores on a four point scale. As he wrote his kudos on the evaluation, one middle-aged gentleman who accompanied his mother to our Harding Market fair said, “I’ve lived here all my life, and there’s never been anything like this fair before, to show people how to eat healthier and live better. Thank you.”

Jerry Kaufman Visits Detroit, Offers Seminars

University of Wisconsin Emeritus Professor Jerry Kaufman toured Detroit food sites, August 24-25. A leading scholar in food systems planning, Kaufman also gave seminars in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) and Eastern Market to audiences made up of students, faculty members, and community food leaders. His visit was sponsored by SEED Wayne, DUSP, and the Detroit Food Policy Council.

Accompanied by his wife and writer-poet, Judith Zukerman, Kaufman toured the D-Town Farm, Earthworks Urban Farm, Lafayette Greens, and SEED Wayne’s campus gardens, where the couple had a chance to get to know the area’s food leaders one-on-one. Dan Carmody gave them a tour of Eastern Market which was followed by a lunch at Russell Street Deli, while SEED Wayne director Kami Pothukuchi introduced them to the many wonders of the Wayne State University Farmers Market, where they sampled ice cream from Sweet Potato Sensations.

Kaufman’s Wednesday seminar reflected on an academic career spanning nearly three decades, including his contributions to such wide-ranging topics as strategic planning, planning ethics, alternative dispute resolution, and, of course, food system planning. “Of all these, my work in food systems has been personally the most meaningful and rewarding,” Kaufman concluded to a rapt audience made up largely of alums and prospective students of DUSP’s Planning Theory and Cities and Food classes.

In his community seminar, Thursday, Kaufman focused mostly on his academic and community collaborations related to food systems, drawing extensively on his experiences since 2000 as a member and then chair of the board of Growing Power, a leading urban agriculture organization based in Detroit.

Below: Jerry Kaufman and Judy Zukerman Kaufman were given a tour of Lafayette Greens in downtown Detroit by Gwen Meyer, Garden Manager at Compuware (left).
Volunteering with SEED Wayne has been a great way to see first hand what the urban gardening scene is like in Detroit...  Sara Cole, student in the College of Education.

I am a student in the College of Education where I am studying to become a K-8 science teacher. I am also working towards reconnecting children and nature with the use of the "outdoor classroom" -- green areas around our schools and neighborhoods that function as powerful learning spaces (see National Wildlife Federation's 2011 report, "Back to School: Back Outside", to read up on some recent research supporting this notion!).

A community garden (like the D-Town Farm or the garden at Catherine Ferguson Academy) would be one example of this kind of learning space. Not only can a community garden teach about life cycles, water, soil, seasons, and plants and animals, but it can turn students into engaged citizens and environmental stewards. For many people, being in nature -- growing, nurturing, harvesting, and bearing witness to the regenerative processes of life -- can also be healing. For sure, growth and regeneration are themes that many people in Detroit can relate to. I love to envision a future where every school or neighborhood in Detroit has a garden of their own.

Volunteering with SEED Wayne has been a great way to see first hand what the urban gardening scene is like in Detroit, something I am very interested in as a strong proponent of schools gardens. SEED Wayne has also opened my eyes to the lack of fresh food in Detroit’s neighborhood stores, and the social issues that underpin that (as well as problems that come from undernutrition or malnutrition in childhood).

My favorite part of volunteering with SEED Wayne is doing outreach with Detroit FRESH, the program in which we encourage corner stores to carry fresh produce by connecting them with a produce distributor and offering in-store technical assistance related to stocking and merchandising fresh produce. In our outreach, we inform neighbors about the availability of fruits and vegetables in the corner store nearby and encourage them to ask for items they wish to see. SEED Wayne is making a real difference in the lives of people in Detroit. If you are interested in urban agriculture, food justice, or just getting to know some of the amazing people and neighborhoods of our city, I highly recommend volunteering with SEED Wayne.

Imagine a bustling market filled with breads, sandwiches, soups, and sweet treats. Vibrant flowers peak out from behind heads of lettuce. In fact, produce of all varieties stare you down as you walk to class. Right here on Wayne State’s campus you can get a pint of fresh strawberries or pick a peck of peppers.

As a volunteer for SEED Wayne I participated in both, the WSU Farmers Market and Detroit FRESH outreach. Though the programs are very different they both contribute to the greater good of society, and make you feel awesome helping bring healthy, fresh, affordable food into neighborhoods in different ways.

At the farmers market I met many good friends. It was not long before my classmates were coming up to me as well, asking about market activities and products. The volunteer hours are flexible, which is great because I am a full-time honors student as well as work full time elsewhere. I was worried that the time commitment would take away from my scholastics, but actually it has created a richer schooling experience.

Outreach for Detroit FRESH gave me a great sense of accomplishment. A couple hours a week, some of the other volunteers and I go to the neighborhoods surrounding a participating store, and let residents know about the program. The program helps ensure that affordable fresh produce is available even where grocery stores are not. As a 17-year resident of Detroit city proper, this is an important issue to me. The amazement on the faces of the residents that a change is being made is gratifying. The fact that you are helping to bring about that change is priceless.

CALLING ALL WSU 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 was worried that the time commitment would take away from my scholastics, but actually it has created a richer schooling experience. Sara Lynn Farmer is a student in the Irvin D. Reid Honors College.
People are beginning to realize that one person alone cannot make a big difference, but many individuals working together can be a force for good...

Robin Darling is a student of Library and Information Science.

I got involved with SEED Wayne’s campus gardens in the Spring of 2010. A friend and fellow classmate, Ian Hardy, told me about the group after discussing our desire to get involved with more community-oriented programs and projects in the area. I shared a plot in the Saint Andrew’s Garden with three other gardeners, and learned a great deal about gardening that first year.

The ongoing workshops hosted by fellow gardeners and community members provide a venue for interactive learning. Having the workshops at the gardens helps us directly reference the issues and topics of the workshops with some of our own plants. Another great thing about this group is the diversity of its membership. People of different ages, ethnicities, educational backgrounds, etc., collaborate and learn from one another. Garden potlucks also help foster community among members and gardeners from neighborhoods around the city. It is great to be able to work with like-minded individuals who possess a shared interest in gardening, and see the social benefits that result from this kind of community involvement. Gardening brings people together; it’s edifying and entertaining; it’s also physically stimulating and healthy. SEED Wayne’s gardens and those around the city are setting the tone for the numerous changes happening all around us. People are beginning to realize that one person alone cannot make a big difference, but many individuals working together can be a force for good and for change.

This year, I’ve started volunteering more through the program. For example, I also help out with the farmers market on Wayne State’s campus. This is a great opportunity to learn about the vendors and the community that shops here. I’ve met many interesting people by volunteering at the market. It’s also encouraging to see people support local vendors. My experience with SEED Wayne is something that I value. Although I intend to graduate in May, I hope to participate with SEED Wayne next year because it is a program that I truly believe in. It has motivated me to continue to volunteer and seek new opportunities to make a difference.

I believe that altering our food system at Wayne State University and throughout the Detroit area can help both become more sustainable. Julia Sosin is a Biology student majoring in Environmental Science.

I volunteer for SEED Wayne because I agree with many of the ideas the organization promotes and would like to see them implemented on campus. As an undergraduate studying environmental science, I believe that altering our food system at Wayne State University and throughout the Detroit area can help both become more sustainable.

I began volunteering with SEED Wayne as a freshman in 2009, helping to fill the newly built raised beds with compost. I was proud to be part of a new movement on campus, and experienced a leadership opportunity when I taught a workshop on worm composting that year. Over the years, I’ve enjoyed the community of the Wednesday Farmers Markets, purchasing fresh vegetables for the week and watching fellow market-goers become excited about local, fresh and accessible produce. While volunteering at the market, I’ve had great discussions with many of the farmers and artisans, and even had the chance to sell my own produce through the Grown In Detroit stand.

There is something quite amazing about being able to step out of the library and walk only a few hundred feet to the green, vibrant gardens that SEED Wayne maintains. This summer, I co-leased a plot at SEED Wayne’s St. Andrew’s garden with some friends, where I not only appreciated a place to grow food and enjoy the outdoors, but interacted with other gardeners on campus, each of whom had unique lessons to share about gardening, as well as delicious recipes to pass out at the seasonal garden potlucks. SEED Wayne provides many educational opportunities, such as the amazing annual farm tour it offers to its volunteers and community partners at the end of the summer. Helping with their Detroit FRESH outreach programs is also a great way to broaden one’s view of the city.

Jerry Kaufman, cont’d from p. 2

Milwaukee. Among its many claims to fame, Growing Power’s CEO, Will Allen, received a 2008 “Genius Award” from the MacArthur Foundation. Conversations with Kaufman during the seminars and meals with community leaders surfaced interesting possibilities for Detroit’s food system, such as a land trust and gardening inside abandoned warehouses.

Jerry Kaufman played a key role in the development of SEED Wayne’s Pothukuchi as a food system planner since her stint as a visiting faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996-98. They continue their collaboration on American Planning Association’s Food Interest Group Steering Committee. In this, his first visit to SEED Wayne’s many projects, Kaufman was able to see the development of the food planning ideas on which they collaborated more than a decade ago, and the ideas’ application to Detroit. We at SEED Wayne are grateful to the Kaufmans for sharing their time and thoughts with us.
3rd Annual Farm Tour Goes South!

On a mild Sunday morning, August 28, 33 campus and community members got on a bus to visit four farms in the area, including three in Monroe County, which is southwest to our home county of Wayne. Two farms participate in the Wayne State Farmers Market. The tour featured D-Town Farm, a four-acre operation on Rouge Park on Detroit’s far Westside managed by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network; Garden to Go CSA, a community supported agriculture farm that is run by 15-year old Alexandra Reau; Holtz Farm where Norm Holtz and his family keep hens for eggs and grow a variety of heirloom potatoes, tomatoes and other vegetables on land that was in their family since the 1880s; and Calder Dairy, a small dairy farm consisting of 142 cows.

At D-Town farm, we saw field and hoop house production of vegetables, bee hives, a mushroom operation, and a brand new passive solar greenhouse that can move backward and forward on tracks. This allows the production of diverse crops over a greatly extended season by moving the greenhouse as crops from earlier in the season become ready for field growth. D-Town also has a large compost operation for which plans are being developed to collect food wastes from different sources in the area.

Alex Reau and her parents welcomed us with farm-fresh refreshments and gave us a tour of the garden with more than twenty different types of vegetables, flowers, and herbs, and a 110 cage rabbitry. Having gotten its start three years ago with $300 prize money in a contest, the 9-week CSA now has 15 families who purchase half or full shares at $135 and $210, respectively. Reau runs the operation solo with mom Brenda writing weekly newsletters with recipes included, and dad Mark helping with planting and harvesting. Biggest lessons from the farm: patience—you can’t speed up the growing process, and persistence—you have to keep at it to make it work!

WSU Farmers Market, cont’d. from p. 6

benefits and matches them with DUFB.

Other exciting goings on at the market include monthly cooking demonstrations featuring Executive Chefs Giulio Fattore and Phil Jones, respectively, of WSU and Colors of Detroit restaurant. We also supported two performances by the Mosaic Youth Theater and sponsored a design competition for the ‘MI Apple’ public art at the market. The winning design for the apple by Cathy Sanders, WSU student of industrial design, and Robert Taormina, art studio supervisor, has spurred many an animated conversation at the market.

Have you visited your WSU Farmers Market lately? Come by the SEED Wayne tent and say hello to the staff and volunteers when you’re there next Wednesday! 🌼

Readers are invited to submit news on teaching, research, engagement, or operations of interest to SEED Wayne. To learn more, write to k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

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<td>September 17, 5 to 8 PM: Earthworks Urban Farm Annual Harvest Dinner. Reserve your seat soon; for details, call 313-579-2100, x204, or browse <a href="http://www.cskdetroit.org/EWG">www.cskdetroit.org/EWG</a></td>
<td>October 3, 8 AM to 4 PM: Fighting Hunger: A United Effort. Gleaners Community Food Bank, 2131 Beaufait. Email <a href="mailto:Giancarlo.guzman@liveunitedsem.org">Giancarlo.guzman@liveunitedsem.org</a></td>
<td>Date TBD: Putting the gardens to bed, Warrior Demonstration Garden and St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden. For details (forthcoming), browse <a href="http://www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne">www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne</a></td>
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The first 14 weeks of the Wayne State Farmers Market saw more than 1,000 customers on average weekly, each spending about $10-$12, which is comparable to data for the same period last year. What is exciting, though, is that our average daily count for SNAP participants has gone up from 35 at this time in 2010, to 50. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which helps impoverished households buy food, with funds delivered electronically to a debit card called the Bridge Card. Consequently, average SNAP sales at the market have risen from $374 per day at this time last year to nearly $600 per day.

This spurt in customers came mid-July—at which point we were averaging just over $400 a day in SNAP sales—when the Fair Food Network (FFN) sent out mailers to area SNAP recipients with information about markets that accept SNAP dollars. FFN sponsors Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB), which matches SNAP spending one to one, up to $20 per person per day. Thus, DUFB supports additional spending by low-income customers on Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables. For more information, browse www.doubleupfoodbucks.org. Our biggest SNAP sales day so far, July 13, racked up nearly $1,000 in sales, compared with $833 at the peak of the market in mid-September last year. Vendors also earned nearly $16,000 in SNAP and DUFB to date this season.

Relatively, SNAP users’ profiles have shifted this year. Last year, most of our SNAP customers throughout the season were WSU students; by contrast, so far this year, the majority are unaffiliated with the university. We expect to see more student Bridge Card users now that school has started again; indeed, this expectation was borne out for the two market days since classes started.

Worryingly, however, earlier this year, many of the 18,000 to 20,000 students statewide were thrown off the SNAP rolls. We also worry that, as more SNAP households reach their benefit limits in this bleak economy, their numbers at our market will dwindle.

Although SNAP sales at the WSU Farmers Market are modest compared to total sales, they represent an important benefit—convenient access to fresh, affordable, local food—to our customers, many of whom go to WSU or live nearby. They also benefit area farmers through sales that would not have happened but for the fact that the market accepts SNAP.