Detroit Food Summit Educates, Energizes!
Detroit Food Policy Council is successfully launched

More than a dozen Wayne State students and several recent alumni participated in the Detroit Food Summit, “Powering Up the Local Food System” held at Eastern Market’s Shed 3, May 19-20. Nearly 250 people attended on one or both days. The Summit was organized by the Detroit Food Policy Council (DFPC).

The goals for the event were manifold: to publicly launch the DFPC since it first convened in November 2009; raise awareness of the city’s food system; engage community members, including youth, in dialogues about food system issues; and inspire participants to become involved in building a just and sustainable food system in Detroit. Accordingly, the event featured music, spoken word offerings, research presentations, plenary and small group conversations, delectable varieties of food, and equally delightful networking, all ably coordinated by Summit Chair, Chef Phil Jones, also vice chair of the DFPC.

On day one of the Summit, participants were welcomed to the spacious market shed with music, and after an invocation and brief introductions of DFPC members, were presented with highlights of the Detroit Food System Report by SEED Wayne’s Kami Pothukuchi, who is also a member of the DFPC. For more than 40 minutes after the presentation, participants asked questions, offered suggestions and (Continued on page 2)

Campus Gardens Rise Again

St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden and Warrior Demonstration Garden kicked off April 23, with more than thirty new and returning gardeners participating in cleaning and preparing beds and sowing seeds and planting transplants. Teams of WSU students and/or employees leased one or two beds each at St. Andrew’s Garden. A few St. Andrew’s gardeners, along with others who simply wish to volunteer, maintain the Warrior Demonstration Garden where low tunnels built over two long beds have to date supplied more than fifty pounds of salad greens, radishes, and turnips.

St. Andrew’s gardeners planted a variety of cold-tolerant crops: kale, collards, pac choi, salad greens, cabbage, and others. Maintenance of gardens was eased early on by frequent rainfall although cold nights have also challenged us. Summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers, egg plants, ground cherries, and herbs were distributed week of May 23. As seeds sprout, the gardens are slowly coming back to life and hold out the promise of the coming bounty of harvests.

At Warrior Garden, meanwhile, the low tunnels were slowly opened up as the weather warmed, and dismantled entirely the third week of May. Following Earth Week taste tests at Warrior and Towers dining halls, several batches of salad greens harvested from this garden were donated to the COTS shelter not far from campus, enjoyed by participants, shared with friends and SEED Wayne partners, and prepared in special meals for VIP campus guests by AVI chefs. The greens were also a key attraction at a garden potluck—held indoors because of rain—May 23.

The experimental rooftop garden beds on Parking Structure #5 are also prepped and planted; they are irrigated by a sprinkler system connected to barrels that bulge from the abundant rainfall channeled by the beds’ polycarbonate roofs. We hope to continue tests started last year of soil as well as plant surfaces to monitor movement of chemicals through atmospheric and soil pathways in these rooftop beds. Nonetheless, this garden has answered definitively in the affirmative over two seasons the question: is it even possible for a rooftop garden to survive the intense heat of Detroit’s summers radiated back to it from the concrete structure?

(Continued on page 2)
Detroit Food Summit, cont’d

reflections, and shared information in the plenary session. Locally-based small food businesses provided lunch.

On day two, briefer presentations were supplemented by a keynote address by DFPC chair Malik Yakini and four breakout Work Group sessions. Work Groups addressed one of four themes: healthy food access, urban agriculture, food justice, and schools and institutions. Groups shared findings from four community forums organized prior to the Summit, identified policy and other opportunities, elicited ideas for relevant actions, and enlisted new members for future activities.

WSU had a leadership presence at the Summit. Alumna Cheryl Simon played a key role as DFPC coordinator. SEED Wayne director Pothukuchi compiled and presented the Detroit Food System 2009-10 Report. A couple of students also helped with important tasks such as note-taking, registering participants, and set up and take down.

WSU participants offered generally positive feedback on the event. Monica Lee, a nutrition and food science major, appreciated the opportunities to learn about Detroit’s food system, meet local food advocates, and also contribute to small group discussions. “I learned a lot from the Summit’s different elements,” she said, “but also felt like I was able to share my thoughts on a particular topic in the small group.”

A few highlights from the Detroit Food System Report follow. Clearly, Detroit faces many needs and challenges related to food:

- One in three Detroit households had incomes below the poverty line in 2009.
- Three out of ten Detroit households are food insecure; one in three relies on food stamps (also called SNAP or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).
- Annually, Detroiters spend $200 million on groceries in stores located outside the city.
- Metro area households spend 13% of their after-tax income on food, higher than in other areas. SNAP benefit levels are also typically insufficient to allow households to maintain consistently healthy diets.
- One in five Detroit high school students is considered obese.
- Only one Black-owned grocery store exists in a city in which four out of five residents are African-American.
- Detroit also has strengths and resources to build a sustainable and just food system:
  - Food continues to be an important part of the local economy. 30% of all retail sales and 35% of all wholesale sales are in food. More than a third of retail jobs and a quarter of wholesale jobs are in food.
  - In 2010, the Garden Resource Program engaged 15,000 youth and adults in 1,200 vegetable gardens, including 300 community, 60 school, and 40 market gardens.
  - In 2010, Detroit had 8 neighborhood farmers’ markets, 2 mobile markets, 40 farm stands and 18 healthy corner stores.
  - Detroit can meet 42% of its fruit and 76% of its vegetable consumption on less than half of publicly-owned vacant land.
  - Diverting suitable city wastes toward composting can save the city nearly $1.25 million annually.
  - Detroit is a hotbed of analysis and dialogues on race in the food system. More than 200 participants were engaged in Undoing Racism in the Food System dialogues since 2009.

The Detroit Food Policy Council was established in 2009 by unanimous approval of the Detroit City Council. The DFPC consists of twenty-one members, including 12 members with expertise in various sectors of the food system, six “at-large” representatives, and three governmental representatives, each representing the mayor, City Council, and the Department of Health and Wellness Promotion. The DFPC is committed to nurturing the development and maintenance of a sustainable, localized food system and food-secure city of Detroit in which all of its residents are hunger-free, healthy and benefit economically from the food system. For more information, browse www.detroitfoodpolicycouncil.net.

Below: Urban Studies major Olivia Dobbs plants a seedling at the St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden. This picture was the page 2 spread of the DFPC Report!

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

SEED Wayne Partners

Volume 4, Issue 1

Campus Gardens, continued from page 1

This year, we will host activities to link campus gardeners to participants in the passive solar greenhouse built collaboratively by SEED Wayne and Earthworks Urban Farm across from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen at Meldrum and St. Paul on Detroit’s Eastside. In addition to being a site for increased production over an extended season, the greenhouse also hosts activities for the Earthworks’ entrepreneurial agricultural training (EAT) program as well as Youth Growing Detroit participants. As readers of this newsletter will know, Earthworks Urban Farm is a key SEED Wayne community partner and collaborates in many activities, including campus gardens, the WSU Farmers Market, and Detroit FRESH. This year, we hope to welcome once again Youth Growing Detroit participants at our campus farmers market.
Detroit FRESH Update

Detroit FRESH has ramped up its activities after a winter lull when stores sell less fresh produce as snow piles up on sidewalks, daylight is scant, and households perhaps make better-planned food shopping trips that are less reliant on corner stores. During these slow months, we conducted mail outreach to community-based organizations to alert them about the program, and seek their partnership and help in identifying stores in their neighborhoods to recruit to Detroit FRESH.

Since our last Detroit FRESH report in this newsletter six months ago, a couple of participating stores experienced ownership changes, one closed, and three stopped participating because of the inconvenience of carrying and managing produce given their business primarily in liquor, tobacco, lottery, and processed foods. The reality of neighborhood shrinkage around stores was a key factor in their decision to stop participating. The owner of the closed store reportedly returned to his home country of Iraq, unable to make a go of the corner store business in a downsizing neighborhood.

Given the lack of pre-existing produce distribution networks serving neighborhood corner stores citywide, we have focused our store recruitment efforts in areas where existing and convenient distribution exists, either through mobile markets or due to proximity to Eastern Market wholesalers. This strategy has been encouraging; three additional stores have agreed to participate. Two accept WIC benefits and wish to continue participating.

They had indicated an interest in participating if their situations improved or they were able to satisfy themselves about the value of participating in Detroit FRESH. We found no takers from this list of stores. Finally, several stores were identified by partners who received mail outreach. We are still following up with these stores to assess their interest in participating in Detroit FRESH.

Another encouraging development is one corner store’s interest in developing a community garden in a vacant lot next door, in collaboration with neighbors. We are working with the store owner to help establish ownership of the nearby parcel and plan for soil tests and clean up before the land can be prepped for gardens. We are also planning health fairs this summer at a couple of stores that have participated consistently. These fairs will combine basic health screening, cooking demonstrations by the Growing Healthy Kids program of Earthworks Urban Farm, nutrition education, and other fun and educational activities for kids and adults.

It is clear that a reliable produce distribution system that regularly reaches out to corner stores, store owners’ commitment to their neighborhoods, and neighborhood outreach that connects residents to stores in new ways are three legs of a successful healthy corner store program in Detroit. We are exploring ways to strengthen these foundations into the future, with the help of community partners.

With continued loss of population and wealth, however, the outlook is bleak for many neighborhoods in which Detroit FRESH stores are located. Food stamp benefit cuts threatened in federal budget discussions are sure to cause more hardships for Detroit households. These cuts will also hurt corner stores whose business relies on food stamps.

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Farmers Market, cont’d from p4
change is that Michigan’s Project FRESH program, which hitherto combined the federal Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program is splitting up into its component parts, and will be administered separately by different state government agencies. This and other developments will make market operations more labor intensive than before. However, we are committed to providing campus and community members with as many opportunities to buy fresh, healthy food as we can.

We are grateful to community partner Eastern Market Corporation for providing financial services related to the electronic benefits transfer for the Bridge Card program at the market. This partnership makes our farmers market accessible to shoppers who buy food with food stamps and keeps more of our tax dollars in our region by benefiting local farmers.

This spring’s extreme rainfall and cold days and nights in May have challenged our region’s farmers, who have fallen a few weeks behind schedule in preparing their fields and planting, thereby also delaying harvests. Our plea to our customers is that they take the time to engage our vendors about their experiences this season and be patient with delayed or smaller harvests. Given the bleak economy, it is more important than ever to continue to support our region’s producers.

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

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<td>For Garden Resource Program trainings, click on Calendar at: <a href="http://www.detroitagriculture.org/">http://www.detroitagriculture.org/</a></td>
<td>See June column for information on GRPC’s Educational Workshops.</td>
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<td><strong>June 8:</strong> WSU Farmers Market Opens!</td>
<td><strong>July 2, 1 PM,</strong> Undoing Racism in Detroit’s Food System, MSU Center, 3408 Woodward.</td>
<td><strong>Aug 6, 1 PM,</strong> Undoing Racism in Detroit’s Food System, MSU Center, 3408 Woodward.</td>
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<td>11 AM to 4 PM, 5201 Cass Ave, in front of Prentis Hall, across from DPL.</td>
<td><strong>Detroit Food Policy Council (DFPC) Work Groups,</strong> MSU Center, 3408 Woodward: <strong>July 7</strong> (Healthy Food Access), 7/14 (Food Justice), 7/21 (Schools and Institutions), 7/28 (Urban Agriculture), call 833-0396 for details.</td>
<td><strong>DFPC Work Groups,</strong> MSU Center, 3408 Woodward: <strong>Aug 4</strong> (Healthy Food Access), 8/11 (Food Justice), 8/18 (Schools and Institutions), 8/25 (Urban Agriculture), call 833-0396 for details.</td>
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A newsletter of SEED Wayne,
Sustainable Food Systems Education &
Engagement in Detroit & Wayne State University

SEED Wayne
Director: Kami Pothukuchi, Ph. D., Associate Professor
Program Leaders: Charles Lisee, Christa Powell, Jazmine Wilson
3207 Faculty Administration Building
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: 313-577-4296
Fax: 313-577-0022
E-mail: k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

WSU Farmers Market Opens June 8. Get lunch; Shop for Dinner!

The Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market kicks off for the fourth consecutive year June 8, 11 am to 4 pm, in front of Prentis Hall and across from the Detroit Public Library. The market accepts cash, Bridge Card, Project Fresh and Senior Project Fresh coupons. Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB), which match Bridge Card spending (up to $20 per card per day) also start on day one of the market! DUFB, offered by the Fair Food Network, may be spent only on regionally grown fruits and vegetables.

The market will feature growers from the city and the surrounding region, including such Detroit favorites as Brother Nature Produce (delicious salad greens), Grown in Detroit Co-Op, D-Town Farm, and “honey guy” Rich Wieske of Greentoe Gardens. Vendors from outside Detroit include Vang and Van Houte Family Farms from Macomb County, and Holtz Family Farm from Monroe County. In June, farmers will offer the season’s early gifts, including lettuce, spinach and other greens, rhubarb, peas, strawberries, flowers, and transplants. One of Detroit’s favorite bakeries, Avalon International Breads, will also maintain a stall as will Russell Street Deli with their wraps and soups, and Sweet Potato Sensations with their to-die-for desserts, so shoppers can enjoy a multi-course lunch even as they shop for dinner and beyond!

We will also feature special events that combine food system education and entertainment. These include cooking demonstrations using market products, and street theater by the Mosaic Youth Theater. SEED Wayne is also working with Eastern Market in the Michigan Apple Trail art project in which markets across Michigan will get to decorate a four-foot tall fiberglass apple. In fall, apples will be entered into a competition at Eastern Market and auctioned off to raise money for participating markets. We have enlisted the help of Mame Jackson, Professor Emerita of Art and Art History, to help make our market’s public art project a success by involving WSU students of art.

The market is also a classroom in other ways. Come visit with school students who will run the Detroit Healthy Food Corps stall (July-Aug), WSU students who will sell peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers early in the season sourced from an Ontario greenhouse and Michigan farmers (June-July), and Youth Growing Detroit kids who will sell at the Grown in Detroit stall.

Because of the high costs of operation relative to its use at the market, the market will not be able to accept the Wayne State One Card this year. Another

SEED Wayne is dedicated to collaboratively building sustainable food systems on campus and in Detroit neighborhoods through activities in teaching, research, engagement, and campus operations.

SEED Wayne works in partnership with community-based organizations to increase access to healthy food, and enhance food security, urban agriculture, farm-to-institution, and community food system planning and policy development.

SEED Wayne embraces core university functions in teaching, research, engagement and operations.

Student leadership is central to SEED Wayne’s success.

SEED Wayne projects include campus gardens, the WSU farmers market, Detroit FRESH: the Healthy Corner Stores Project, farm-to-cafeteria, and cafeteria composting.

SEED Wayne is housed in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne

A newsletter of SEED Wayne, Sustainable Food Systems Education & Engagement in Detroit & Wayne State University

SEED Wayne
Director: Kami Pothukuchi, Ph. D., Associate Professor
Program Leaders: Charles Lisee, Christa Powell, Jazmine Wilson
3207 Faculty Administration Building
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: 313-577-4296
Fax: 313-577-0022
E-mail: k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne