Detroit FRESH Reaches out to Residents  
Current economic distress challenges stores  

Big B Market is located in the Woodbridge neighborhood just off campus. Many residents of this neighborhood are WSU students and employees. When we first recruited Big B to Detroit FRESH, owner Nadira Kannu carried no produce but was immediately interested in participating. We put her in touch with Peaches and Greens, our produce distributor for the area. Produce orders averaged $70 monthly (in near-wholesale prices).

A few weeks later, we conducted door-to-door outreach in the neighborhood surrounding the store, to inform residents of the availability of fresh produce nearby. This included a presentation to neighborhood leaders at Perry Funeral Home in September, and door-to-door outreach in a few blocks around the store in October. The owners report that this has resulted in more people asking for and buying fresh produce at the store. Indeed, orders for September and October averaged $80, a 14% increase over previous months, although we expect this to go down over the winter months.

A key premise underlying Detroit FRESH’s neighborhood outreach is that as residents learn about the availability of produce in their neighborhoods, their purchases will increase, and stores in turn will buy more produce. However, data from five other stores whose neighborhoods have received similar outreach have yet to show increases in orders.

What might explain this? We can think of a few reasons: One, not enough time has passed for the outreach to take effect (perhaps, also, outreach needs to happen multiple times and with diverse media); two, incomplete data (receipts) from stores; three, the advent of cooler weather, which tends to restrict trips outside the home to those that are absolutely necessary and perhaps also leads to a consolidation of food purchases made at larger and more distant grocery stores; four, a lower likelihood as the weather cools, that shoppers hankering for a quick snack would reach for a fresh apple; and, five, continued neighborhood downturn reducing the total dollars spent at the store. Store owners have noted that produce sales tend to be lower in winter months.

Almost all neighborhoods in which Detroit FRESH stores are located continue to experience distress in the form of loss of residents and boarded-up homes, and stores here find it hard just to stay in business, let alone increase their produce sales. As it turns out, Woodbridge is the only area shoppers hankering for a quick snack would reach for a fresh apple; and, five, continued neighborhood downturn reducing the total dollars spent at the store. Store owners have noted that produce sales tend to be lower in winter months.

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Activist Profile: Every year, SEEDLING profiles an individual with a connection to WSU—student, employee, or alum—whose daily commitment to sustainability is an inspiration to us at SEED Wayne. This commitment is enacted in routine, often quiet, ways, small and big, in how they live their life, and the time they devote to making our community more sustainable. For a profile of Barry Neal Johnson, veteran tree planter, turn to page 4.
canvassed so far that has experienced growth
over the last few years.
Nonetheless, we report several silver
linings in these grey economic and seasonal
clouds. Several stores are holding their own
in produce orders despite the larger economy
and the turning of seasons. The larger
convenience grocery stores (as opposed to
those that are predominantly liquor stores) have
been consistent in their inventories over the
summer and fall months. Additionally,
one participating gas station has increased its
stocks of fruits (they carry no vegetables); for
gas stations, no neighborhood outreach was
conducted as the vast majority of shoppers
drive to the store from further away.
Neighborhood outreach is a labor intensive
activity and poses several logistical
challenges. Because all Detroit FRESH staff
members and volunteers are also students,
matching schedules to canvass neighborhoods
during daylight hours and organizing carpools
are two key challenges. It is Detroit FRESH
policy that a minimum of two members
conduct outreach at any given time so that
they are better equipped to deal with any
contingency that may arise. For each
outreach event, staff delineate a coverage area,
and visit the store prior to canvassing so that
owners are alerted to this activity in support
of their store. If the store does not have fresh
produce at this time, canvassing may be
called off so that residents who may seek
produce in the store immediately following
the outreach are not disappointed. Outreach
involves talking to residents wherever
possible about the goals and operations of the
program, and leaving fliers that encourage
residents to ask for and buy fresh produce at
nearby corner stores. Of course, more
interactions with residents were possible in
the warmer months when more daylight hours
were also available.
Starting around 10 AM, and fortifying
themselves with hot beverages, bagels and
cream cheese, and assorted fruits, the group
finished at 1 PM. Lisee also bought some hay
to help start another round of composting in the
containers behind the Warrior Garden, to
complement the vegetable scraps that will be
added next spring from nearby cafeteria
kitchens. This is part of a plan developed with
AVI, the campus food service provider, to
increase the amount of quality compost on
campus given the challenges faced by volunteers
over the last year to transport wastes from
several campus kitchens.
The leaves covering the beds will insulate the
soil’s microbial life from the winter freeze, and
also provide a valuable carbon supplement,
which should speed up the composting of the
vegetable matter left in the beds. When the beds
are prepped for next spring’s plantings, they
should be teeming with rich microbial and other
beneficial life forms, including earthworms.
SEED Wayne is grateful to the volunteers who
helped maintain the Warrior Demonstration
Garden, as well as to the allotees at St. Andrew’s
Garden who participated actively during the
2010 growing season. Over the next few
months, SEED Wayne will assess the
experiences of gardeners this year and consider
feedback provided by participants and others, in
order to plan for the campus gardens next year.
SEED Wayne will post next
year’s plans in early 2011.
If your group is
interesting in leasing a garden bed in 2011,
please email Kami Pothukuchi at
k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu.
The Warrior Demonstration Garden, the St.
Andrew’s Allotment Garden, and the Parking
Structure 5 Experimental Garden were all put
to bed on a chilly Saturday, Nov 6. Program
Leaders Will Ahee and Charles Lisee led a
group of eight allottees and volunteers to
harvest the remaining produce from the
gardens, chop off stems near the soil, add
compost, cover beds with dry leaves dropped
off by Facilities Management and Planning
staff, plant garlic on selected beds, and
transport remaining plant wastes to the Hope
Takes Root community garden compost pile.
SEED Wayne Partners

Volume 1, Issue 3
On a blustery October 27, the Wayne State Farmers Markets closed yet another successful season! Customers stopped by to get one last taste of the market’s bounty and say good bye to their favorite vendors. This year, we offered two markets: the Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market (June 9 to October 27) and the Wayne State University School of Medicine Farmers Market (Third Thursdays, June-October). The market’s vital statistics are summarized in the table below. To learn more about this season at the WSU Farmers Markets, read SEEDLING’s Fall issue (v3, i2), and an article published by the Michigan Citizen (find “Wayne State Farmers Markets Grow Appreciation for Local Food” by clicking on the ‘Fresh Ideas’ tab at www.michigancitizen.com). More details and pictures are also available at www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne (click on the Farmers Markets tabs on the left). We leave you with some images of the season and thoughts from our friends—and customers—who came by on the last market day.

“The market is delicious as its people are beautiful!”

“One of the best things that WSU has to offer. We’re always sad when it ends.”

“The farmers market helps me as a resident of Detroit by providing me with affordable, quality food close to where I live.”

“(The market) is so great in the middle of the week for lunch or local groceries.”

“What a wonderful way to spend money in Detroit!”

“The market is my favorite thing about Wayne State!”

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**Total market days (June 9—October 27)**  25

**Vendors on a typical Wednesday**  12

**Estimated customers on a typical Wednesday**  1,017

**Estimated total sales for 2010 (both Farmers Markets)**  $250,000

**Total Bridge Card (food stamps) sales for market**  $9,947
Wayne State University’s own Barry Neal Johnson may be the country’s only tri-coastal tree planter! He has planted trees in San Francisco with the Friends of the Urban Forest, and in New York City with Mayor Bloomberg’s Million Trees NYC, and more than 800 trees in the Third Coast—in Detroit—over the course of 20 years!

Why plant trees? “Because you can’t just work at a job and pay taxes—that’s not enough. You have to give back! Trees reduce air pollution, make the city look better, and people can enjoy them by sitting under them and playing cards or whatever!” Johnson also drives a car with a small engine, gardens, and recycles everything possible, thereby greatly reducing his own carbon footprint.

Johnson started planting trees with Greening of Detroit when it was founded in 1989 by Elizabeth Sachs. “I was working downtown then, and I learned that they were going to plant trees nearby. I thought it was a good idea to get involved.” After 20 years, he’s kept at it, and increased his commitment by participating also on Greening’s Trees Committee, which decides what trees to order for the organization’s annual tree sale and local plantings. Whereas previously one or two important species were selected for planting, following the scourges of Dutch Elm disease and more recently the Emerald Ash Borer, they plant to ensure a broader mix of trees in any given area.

On any given tree-planting event, Johnson helps set up equipment and supplies and trains volunteers to correctly dig holes; install trees so as to protect roots and promote the trees’ resilience as they grow; and maintain them by watering, pruning, and mulching. He works with several thousand youth each year, training them while also keeping an eye out for potential leaders who are poised to take on added responsibility with guidance.

Born in the UK, Johnson lives in Troy, MI, with wife Elaine. He joined Wayne State in 1998 for doctoral studies after retiring from the 36th District Court as a senior systems analyst who also ran their recycling program. His dissertation, which he defends December 14, is titled, ‘Wastewater Treatment Comes

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

December 2010
Dec 14, 5-7 PM: Share your talents, Free, Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1264 Meldrum. Contact Lisa, see above.

Jan. and Feb. 2011
TBA: Undoing Racism in the Detroit Food System Gatherings. Contact Lisa Richter at earthlisa@gmail.com for more information.
TBA: Garden Resource Program Collaborative, Education Series. Contact Ashley Atkinson at Ashley@greeningofdetroit.com.

You can’t just work at a job and pay taxes—that’s not enough. You have to give back!

To Detroit: Law, Politics, Technology And Funding.’ “Detroit is the only central city that serves a metro area for water and sewer. What is unique is that, unlike other large metro areas, it is organized according to political boundaries and not as a bioregion,” he explains when asked about the topic.

In the past, he has also worked as a motor cycle and car mechanic, on an assembly line at the Highland Park Ford tractor plant, on the clean up crew at the Dodge Truck Plant, as a systems analyst at Burroughs Corporation, a librarian at Oakland University Library and other things. Even without a Ph. D., Johnson comes with impressive credentials, including those valued by SEED Wayne: he’s a master gardener trained in organic practices and a master composter, and has master’s degrees in Library Science (WSU, 1976) and History (Oakland University, 1996). All this puts him in a unique position to bridge educational activities in community and university settings.

A good friend to SEED Wayne since it was formed in 2008, Johnson has served as an “on-call” volunteer—someone we can depend on to help at short notice—for both the Warrior Garden and St. Andrew’s Garden builds. He helped install beds, move top soil and compost, and maintain the gardens. He also is a familiar sight at the Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market with his green tote bag in tow.

Why did he join SEED Wayne? “SEED Wayne does so many interesting things, it gathers people of all ages and races to do something good for the community. Variety attracts more variety.” What are his plans for the future? “I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up. I don’t have any concrete plans for the future. I’m a jack-of-all-trades, so we’ll see.” We know one thing for sure, however: come Spring—a key tree planting time—you are more likely to see Barry Johnson planting trees than doing anything else! Thank you, Barry, for all that you do for our community!
Cities and Food Class to Host Seminars with Community Food Leaders

UP 5999, Cities and Food, is to be offered once again in winter 2011 at WSU (Rm. 331 State Hall). Open to graduate and advanced undergraduate students, the class focuses on key problems such as hunger and food insecurity, lack of neighborhood-based access to healthy foods, diet-related health problems, and the problems posed by the global food system to local communities and regions. It also reviews more sustainable responses to this global system and ways in which communities may harness local resources to resolve food system problems while also advancing broad community goals in economic development, health, social equity, and neighborhood vitality.

The course features guest lectures by local food leaders and projects designed in collaboration with such community-based organizations as Eastern Market, Earthworks Urban Farm, Gleaners Food Bank, and The Henry Ford. This basic structure will continue in 2011; guest lectures will be open to the public if space allows. Guest speakers in 2010 included Malik Yakini of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, Patrick Crouch of Earthworks Urban Farm, Ashley Atkinson of Greening of Detroit, and Dewayne Wells of Gleaners Community Food Bank.

In the past, the class hosted students from diverse units including Urban Studies and Planning, Political Science, Nutrition and Food Science, and Business Administration.

Construction of Passive Solar Greenhouse at Earthworks Starts

At long last the passive solar greenhouse—a product of SEED Wayne’s partnership with Earthworks Urban Farm—is seeing light of day! This greenhouse was proposed in SEED Wayne’s initial grant to the Ford Motor Company Fund Challenge Grant in 2008. It is being built across the street from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen at 1264 Meldrum, on Detroit’s Eastside.

Initially slated for construction in Spring 2009, the project experienced delays related to gaining requisite permissions from the Capuchins (who own the land), research on design and the right specifications for the targeted space, and seeking permits from the city of Detroit. Then, even as digging for foundations began this Fall, the team hit yet another snag in the form of underground concrete walls belonging to the structure that existed previously at the site.

Thanks, however, to the persistent, patient, and skillful team led by Patrick Crouch and other friends at Earthworks Urban Farm, Michigan State University Student Organic Farm, and others, the greenhouse’s basic frame is now installed and awaiting the heavy-duty plastic sheeting to be draped over. This activity may also require some waiting for temperatures to warm to an optimal 40 degrees F plus.

The greenhouse will advance Earthworks’ many projects including those in partnership with SEED Wayne, especially as they relate to food enterprise development on the Eastside. Specifically, it will offer a space for participants in the Entrepreneurial Agricultural Training (EAT) program to obtain more skills in season extension, crop rotation, and succession planting for high value crops, among other topics.

If you are a WSU student and qualified but experience problems registering for the course, or if you would like more information, please contact the instructor at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu.

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

Readers are invited to submit news on teaching, research, engagement, or operations of interest to SEED Wayne. To learn more, write to Kami Pothukuchi at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu
At this year’s SEED Wayne Harvest Dinner, October 1—its third since 2008—nearly 100 guests from campus and the community celebrated the year’s harvests in food and collaborations! Response from those who wished to attend was so enthusiastic we had to turn some late RSVP’ers away.

Guests represented such community partners as Earthworks Urban Farm, Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, and Greening of Detroit, as well as campus units such as I. D. Reid Honors College, Community and Government Relations, Detroit Orientation Institute, Business Operations, and several departments.

The dinner was sponsored by AVI Foodsystems, Inc., the university’s food service contractor, and a key SEED Wayne partner. Expectedly, the food was delicious! Much of it was locally sourced, including from our own Wednesday Farmers Market! In her welcome, Susan Schmidt, AVI’s director of campus operations, gave us an overview of the local businesses from which the dinner’s materials were sourced and shared her work to get a Midtown consortium of large employers to collaboratively source locally thereby increasing their collective impact on the local economy.

Director Kami Pothukuchi acknowledged the contributions of SEED Wayne’s community and campus partners, staff, and volunteers, without whom our work—let alone successes—would have been impossible. Program Leader Will Ahee made a Powerpoint Presentation highlighting SEED Wayne’s accomplishments over the year. Alas, we also said good bye to Ahee, SEED Wayne’s first staff member, as he prepared to depart for a farm internship in Hawaii.

This year, several SEED Wayne activities became more established and expanded their offerings or participation. The campus gardens, for example, saw more students participating on a regular basis and also added beds to the garden on Parking Structure 5. The farmers markets nearly doubled Bridge Card sales and offered two pilot programs—both, student projects—one to explore a market delivery project on campus and another to test incentive coupons. 

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, enhance food security, urban agriculture, farm-to-institution, and 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, farmers markets, 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.

Above: Campus and community guests get a tour of SEED Wayne’s Warrior Demonstration Garden (above) after they got one at St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden, before student volunteers escorted them to the dining hall for dinner.