Healthy Corner Store Count Now at 11!
Project named Detroit FRESH

Thanks to a major recruitment effort by Program Leader Carolyn Leadley this winter, SEED Wayne’s Healthy Corner Stores Project now has 11 participating stores! The project is also now called Detroit FRESH to focus attention on the fresh fruits and vegetables that are being brought into corner stores in Detroit neighborhoods.

Key Detroit FRESH activities include assessing and recruiting stores in low-income neighborhoods; connecting interested store-owners to a produce distributor who also delivers product to the store despite the smaller quantities that such stores are able to sustain; providing in-store support including tips for displaying and selling produce, baskets, scales, etc.; and informing neighbors about the availability of produce and seeking feedback from them about their needs. Neighborhood organizations, churches, and other institutions are key partners in these outreach efforts.

Detroit FRESH stores are diverse. They range from a tiny 300 sq. ft. mid-block store to a 6,000 sq. ft. one located near a busy intersection. One is a gas station (Robinson Mobil, located at the southwest corner Woodward and Forest); the rest are a combination of liquor and convenience stores. Most of the stores are on Detroit’s Eastside. Several are carrying produce for the first time, or after a long break, or more varieties of produce than just one or two types of fruits. Three stores, including the Mobil, are owned by African-Americans (the others are Corners Party Store at Goethe and Seyburn and Shopper’s Mate at Mt. Elliott and Georgia Streets).

A couple of participating store-owners stated that they used to carry a lot more produce in the past. Unfortunately, shrinking neighborhood populations and the loss of ancillary businesses nearby have resulted in lower levels of traffic and sales in their stores.

Stores that already carry produce are motivated to participate in Detroit FRESH because their produce order is delivered to them. This saves owners trips to discount supermarkets or to wholesale produce markets (where business is typically done in the wee hours of the morning). Owners also welcome the outreach and social marketing the project provides, which promises to bring new business to the store. Thus, each store participates for different reasons and in slightly different ways. Although the immediate focus is on fresh produce, future efforts conceivably could include other categories such as whole grain and low-fat and other foods that neighbors may identify.

SEED Wayne is currently working with a graphic designer to develop a Detroit FRESH brand and marketing materials such as brochures, fliers, and posters. Detroit FRESH is implemented in partnership with the Capuchin Soup Kitchen’s Earth Works Urban Farm, Eastern Market Corporation, and MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy to Enable Strength—a coalition of religious institutions that conducts community organizing and advocacy on basic services).

The project also will implement research to learn more about who is buying produce at these stores, how (Continued on page 2)

Left, top: Midfair Market owner Bill Yaldo is among the latest recruits to the program. Left, bottom: Shopper’s Mate owner David Williams has a deli attached to the convenience store.

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Detroit FRESH seeks to increase Detroit residents’ consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by increasing their availability in neighborhood-based corner stores.
Detroit FRESH, cont’d from Page 1

much they purchase at a time, why, how these purchases fit into meal planning and household grocery shopping patterns, and how the project could better meet their needs for fresh produce.

Detroit FRESH is made possible by the Erb Family Foundation, with an earlier pilot feasibility project supported by WSU’s Research Enhancement Fund. To learn how to volunteer for Detroit FRESH or other SEED Wayne activities, please send an email to k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu.

Eric Toensmeier, manager of Tierra de Oportunidades at Nuestras Raíces, kicked off SEED Wayne’s 2010 Lecture Series on February 2. Toensmeier presented the work of Nuestras Raíces, a community-based organization that works to address many of the challenges faced by the low-income, Puerto Rican community in Holyoke, MA. Activities include an urban farm and numerous food businesses, those developing leadership of youth and women, cultural events and festivals, and environmental justice and health coalitions.

The Undergraduate Library’s Community Room where the event was held was packed with veterans of and newcomers to Detroit’s urban ag. scene. Toensmeier’s presentation stimulated a lively conversation among attendees about the similarities and differences in the Holyoke and Detroit contexts, and lessons from the Holyoke experience relevant to Detroit.

The 2010 “Building a Sustainable Food System in Detroit” seminar series is off to a good start, with lectures by Olga Savic Stella (Detroit Economic Growth Corp.), DeWayne Wells (Gleaners Community Food Bank), and Dan Carmody (Eastern Market Corp.). All speakers showcased their organizations’ activities to increase the number of grocery stores in Detroit; improve access to affordable, healthy food in neighborhoods; and meet needs for food assistance while also developing more sustainable and dignified alternatives to emergency assistance.

As observers of grassroots efforts to build a more just food system in Detroit know, the city is a hotbed of related innovations. The speakers mapped a range of innovations developed to meet the food needs of Detroit’s residents while also making the most of the city’s assets. A couple of these innovations include a ‘traveling’ neighborhood farm stand sponsored by Eastern Market to support neighborhood markets, and the Fresh Food Share. The Fresh Food Share, offered by Eastern Market, Gleaners Community Food Bank, and other partners, is a box of healthy food—produce, whole grains, honey, etc.—that is assembled with regional products purchased from wholesale merchants at Eastern Market and Detroit gardeners, and packed by Gleaners’ volunteers and dropped off, once a month, at pick up points by Gleaners’ delivery trucks. The box is priced at an affordable $17.

To learn about and RSVP to attend upcoming seminars, email Kami Pothukuchi at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu.

Above: The produce shelves at Corners Party Store at Goethe and Seyburn on the Eastside used to carry chips. The chip guy is not happy, but we are!

Below: A.W. Food Center at Mack and Dickerson has moved a shelf close to the checkout counter where produce is more visible than before.

Eric Toensmeier kicks off 2010 Lecture Series; Seminars Illuminate Detroit’s Innovations

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

Readers are invited to submit news on teaching, research, engagement, or operations of interest to SEEDLING readers. To learn more, write to Kami Pothukuchi at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu
Gardens and Farmers Market Coming!

The Warrior Demonstration Garden and the St. Andrews Allotment Garden will be started back up on Saturday, April 24, as part of the university’s Earth Week celebrations. Student Leader Will Ahee is busily updating garden applications for prospective allottees at the St. Andrew’s Garden, assembling volunteer and participant lists, putting finishing touches to a garden manual, and planning the season’s activities.

Planning is also under way for the Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market, which will start on June 9 and go until October 28 (11 AM to 4 PM), on Cass Avenue in front of Prentis Hall. The Wednesday Farmers Market will offer a range of seasonal fruits, vegetables, berries, flowers, honey, baked goods, dessert sauces, and prepared foods.

In 2010, we are excited about the possibility of doubling SNAP benefits at the market. SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, assists low-income families to purchase food with the Michigan Bridge Card. Last year, we tested Mo’Bucks, in which SNAP benefits were doubled on five market days, up to $10 a day per person. This year, we hope to double any amount spent at the market on the Bridge Card. The additional dollars, however, may be spent exclusively on Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables.

As of this writing, current plans do not include a market at the medical campus due to a lack of funding for that location. We will continue to explore options for the medical campus market and keep SEEDLING readers posted on developments.

Research: Testing Air-borne Lead on Plants

Last Fall, engineering senior Roland Bogdani collected several soil and plant samples from SEED Wayne’s campus gardens (Warrior and St. Andrew’s) as well as at the Earth Works Urban Farm and D-Town Farm, to determine the amount of air-borne deposition of lead (Pb). While many, if not most, gardeners in Detroit are aware of the risk associated with lead contaminated soils, atmospheric deposition of lead on plants is also a concern in urban areas.

Overall, the analysis found soil concentrations ranging from below levels naturally occurring in the region’s surface soils (about 17 milligrams of lead per kilogram of soil) to well below 400 mg/kg. The US Environmental Protection Agency identifies 400mg/kg as a level at and above which additional action is required to reduce human exposure in residential properties.

The analysis of the plant matter’s edible portions showed them to contain between 2 to 13 micrograms of Pb per gram of dry plant material (equivalent to 2 to 13 mg/kg). This is within the typical range of concentrations reported for vegetables grown in urban gardens. It is, however, difficult to identify the specific mechanisms responsible for the lead levels observed in this analysis. The mechanism could include uptake through the roots, atmospheric deposition of lead laden dust and soil accumulation on the plant surface due to the splashing of water.

These preliminary results nonetheless inform research aimed to determine the possible risk of gardening in an urban setting and to better understand the diverse ways in which plants can become contaminated by pollutants. This work will be continued during the 2010 growing season by engineering graduate student Mollie Monaghan. Monaghan will conduct experiments to more clearly distinguish lead uptake from soils versus deposition on the plant surface from the atmosphere.

The research is part of a collaboration between SEED Wayne and faculty members Shawn McElmurry (Civil and Environmental Engineering) and Monica White (Sociology), and is supported by the university’s Research Enhancement Fund.

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

**March**

March—April Cities & Food Seminar Series. Schedule on SEED Wayne website, www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne (click on “University Lectures and Seminars” tab on left)

March 26 WSU Humanities Environment Conference, McGregor Conference Center, Rooms B, C

**April**

April 8-11 Permaculture Training with Bill Wilson of Midwest Permaculture. Gleaners Food Bank, 2131 Beaufait, Detroit. To register, contact Kido at Kido@GreeningofDetroit.com or 313-285-1256

April 24 WSU Garden Kick-off. Details will be posted on SEED Wayne’s website

**May-June**


June 9, 11 AM to 4 PM WSU Farmers Market (Every Wed, Cass Ave, in front of Prentis Hall)

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

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SEED Wayne gaining local and national visibility!

SEED Wayne’s activities were presented at four forums —three local and one national—in February 2010. These forums offered an opportunity to showcase to the broader public SEED Wayne’s activities as well as discuss the challenges involved in building sustainable food systems on campus and in the community.

SEED Wayne director Kami Pothukuchi gave keynote presentations at the sixth annual Banquet of the Master Gardeners of Greater Detroit with MSU Extension-Wayne County on February 12, a luncheon at the Detroit First Unitarian Universalist Church on February 17, and the UM-Dearborn Urban Farming Summit on February 19. The national forum was a webinar hosted February 23 by the National Planning and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN), a program of Public Health Law and Policy. These forums were attended by more than eight hundred participants combined.

A number of audience members in the local forums had current or past associations with Wayne State University, including those who were alumni. The webinar’s audience consisted mostly of participants who were interested in farmers markets and the use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at these markets. In Michigan, SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is offered through the Bridge Card. It helps low-income families meet their food needs.

Wayne State University’s Farmers Market is authorized, in partnership with Eastern Market Corporation, to accept the Bridge Card. Eastern Market is the fiduciary for SNAP operations at the WSU farmers market. Last year, during our first full season, the WSU main and medical markets saw just under $5,000 in SNAP sales, which we consider to be an auspicious beginning.

In recognition of the positive community response to the farmers market, gardens, and community activities sponsored by SEED Wayne, the WSU Alumni Association awarded Pothukuchi with the Alumni Faculty Service Award for 2010. This award is yours as well, SEED Wayne friends! Come by and help Pothukuchi celebrate you at the university’s faculty recognition program on Tuesday, April 27!

SEED Wayne is dedicated to 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 engaged promoting food security, urban agriculture, farm-to-institution, and food 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, healthy corner stores (Detroit FRESH), farm-to-cafeteria, and cafeteria composting

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