Student Leaders Shine at Area Conferences!

Student leaders presented aspects of their work with SEED Wayne at two area conferences this Fall. These were the Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference (October 16-18 at Marygrove College) and the Undergraduate Research Conference (November 13 at WSU). Together, the students painted a picture of how SEED Wayne integrates activities in teaching and learning, research, and community service.

Both sets of presentations were received well by audience members who included educators, community leaders and activists, and a number of students from other colleges and universities in Southeastern Michigan. Student presenters representing SEED Wayne reported having conversations with their peers at University of Detroit Mercy and University of Michigan Dearborn, who asked for more information about the activities and also asked how they themselves could be involved.

Student Leaders who presented papers included Will Ahee (senior majoring in Spanish), Roland Bogdani (senior majoring in Civil Engineering), Jordan Sinclair (doctoral student in Biology), and Katherine Bryant (graduate student in Library and Information Science). In these presentations, they described and reflected on the activities in which they were involved with SEED Wayne.

On October 17 and 18, SEED Wayne Student Leader Will Ahee and Director Kami Pothukuchi led two workshops at the Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference. These workshops, titled “Sustainable Food at Universities and the Role of Students” discussed how students participate in SEED Wayne and the importance of greater student participation in building sustainable food systems on campus and in the community.

The Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit (GLBD) Conference came into being in 2004 as a satellite site for the national Bioneers Conference that is hosted in California since 1990. Bioneers offers “practical environmental solutions and innovative social strategies for restoring Earth’s imperiled ecosystems and healing our human communities.” The GLBD Conference started out by telecasting locally selected keynote addresses made by speakers at the national conference. These telecasts were complemented with local presentations and tours. The conference provides a great opportunity for young people and more experienced activists from Michigan and surrounding states to learn more about and connect on a variety of environmental justice issues in the region. SEED Wayne’s goals overlap well with those of the GLBD.

At the 2009 WSU Undergraduate Research Conference, four student leaders—Ahee, Bogdani, Sinclair, and Bryant—discussed their respective action research projects in a panel on SEED Wayne. The panel discussion was moderated by Pothukuchi. She provided a (Continued on page 2)
backdrop to the student presentations by outlining SEED Wayne’s activities, and then turned it over to students who each spoke for a few minutes before taking questions.

Will Ahee discussed the benefits of and challenges involved in engaging students in campus gardens. Roland Bogdani presented several designs for a prototype of a rooftop garden bed and discussed features of the final one built atop Parking Structure 5. Jordan Sinclair described a successful workshop in which she demonstrated building a rain barrel, which required overcoming challenges at practically every stage. Rain barrels help harvest rain water for use in gardens and prevent problems associated with runoffs. Katherine Bryant discussed her immersion as a market volunteer and design of an outreach program for SEED Wayne.

The activities presented by the students were designed and implemented to a greater or lesser extent by them. The presenters were therefore able to reflect first hand on the insights and challenges of the activities in building sustainable food systems, and communicate these lessons to others. In addition, they were able to reflect upon the importance of SEED Wayne to various campus functions—whether or not these functions relate to food systems—and the important role that students can play on campus beyond taking classes.

As winter approaches, SEED Wayne’s student leaders will help evaluate the summer’s activities, and develop new projects. SEED Wayne will also seek more student leaders who will be integral to our operations and who will continue to educate other students at WSU and outside. To learn how to participate in SEED Wayne, visit our website: www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne.

SEED Wayne Student Leader Will Ahee (above), works with garden volunteer Luisa Quintero (below) and Program Leader Carolyn Leadley (not pictured) to put the Warrior Garden to bed.
The WSU Farmers Market had a successful first season with 23 market days on Cass Ave. and two on the medical campus, between June 3 and October 28. The market drew in diverse customers including WSU students and employees and community members shopping for an equally diverse array of breads, fruits, vegetables, flowers, grains, honey, dessert toppings, and prepared foods. We were pleased to make market more accessible to community members by accepting the Bridge Card, Project Fresh coupons, and also doubling Bridge Card benefits (on a pilot basis) with the Mo’ Bucks program. For more information on the market, please browse: [www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne](http://www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne).

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Above: Dan Carmody, President of Eastern Market and SEED Wayne partner, visits with Megan Kohn at the Grown in Detroit stall (July). Below: Chef Alison Costello of SEED Wayne partner Capuchin Soup Kitchen, demonstrates cooking with market products (August).

Above: The October harvest at the market included flowers, dry bouquets, and pumpkins and gourds.

Below: Customers crowd the WSU Medical Campus Pilot Farmers Market (August).

Below: Students from schools in the neighborhood visit the market on several occasions (September-October).

**Farmers Market Friends say Good Bye for 2009!**

**Muchas Gracias! I look forward to it every week! I’m going to miss it!! Wonderful experience for the university community**  
—WSU staff member Maria Sepulveda, Ph. D.

**Best idea in my 45 years at WSU!**  
—WSU Department of Art and Art History professor Stanley Rosenthal.
Wayne State Alumnus Dwight Thomas started gardening as a way to cope with a debilitating accident that doctors said would disable him for life.

In 1982, Mr. D., as he is affectionately known by fellow gardeners, was struck by a power line and partially paralyzed, ending his career as an industrial engineer. He spent the next six years managing two restaurants and a record shop which he opened, and attending physical therapy regularly. However, after six years, doctors told him that there was nothing more they could do for him: he would never walk without a limp nor regain the use of his right hand.

A long-held family tradition, gardening offered both therapy and solace. It didn’t take long for gardening to also provide a cure for Mr. D.’s paralyzed right side, and great satisfaction at the amounts of food he was growing. However, this was not the last of the challenges he was to face. In 2003, doctors gave him three months before he would go completely blind, exacerbating blindness in one eye since 1967. At this point, he made a promise to God that if he were allowed to use his eye, he’d make good with it. Returning to WSU in 2003, and still able to see, Mr. D. graduated in 2006 and again in 2008 with degrees in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Meanwhile, gardening preoccupied his life. Mr. D. developed the first of Eden Gardens in the vacant lot next to his house and a second across the street. Every year he adopts a senior citizen who receives produce, free of cost, from his gardens.

In addition to feeding seniors in the neighborhood, Mr. D. sells excess produce through the Grown in Detroit Cooperative, a network of local market gardeners. He encourages other community residents to join the Detroit Garden Resource Program Collaborative, which offers seeds, transplants, compost, tilling, and technical assistance to gardeners throughout Detroit, Highland Park, and Hamtramck. He calls gardening his ministry to “encourage healthy food, community collaboration, and the elimination of blight in the city.”

Market gardening also has kept him connected to his alma mater, albeit in a different relationship from his student days. Mr. D. feels good about bringing fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce to the institution that educated him. At the WSU Farmers Market, he learned about SEED Wayne. In an interview, he said “We should have a program like SEED Wayne in every school in Detroit from elementary to graduate school. (Gardening is among) the basic skills that every human should possess… I would have participated in SEED Wayne had it been around when I was here.”

Mr. D. promises to become more involved with SEED Wayne’s campus gardens next year. He envisions the many communities in which he participates becoming healthier, more active, and more tightly knit with a giant network of gardens throughout the city. SEED Wayne is grateful to have such a wonderful friend among university alumni.

The most fulfilling emotion I have in life is to plant a seed and watch it grow, whether it’s a seed planted in the mind of a person or in the earth. A fully mature idea or a plant is a testament to the love that was put into it at its inception.

In this class, students implement small-group projects designed in collaboration with community-based organizations; the course also features regular seminars with local food experts. Last year, guests included Dan Carmody of Eastern Market, Patrick Crouch of Earthworks Urban Farm, Malik Yakini of Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, Ashley Atkinson of Greening of Detroit, and Dewayne Wells of Gleaners Community Food Bank.

In 2009, student projects reviewed best practices in healthy corner stores, researched ways to increase participation in the Summer Food Program, explored options for a biodigester to heat local hoop houses, and surveyed residents and stores in Southwest Detroit about their use of Eastern Market.
Second Annual Harvest Dinner Celebrates Partnerships

The Second Annual SEED Wayne Harvest Dinner hosted more than 70 campus and community guests on September 25, to celebrate the partnerships that enabled SEED Wayne’s successes throughout the season. Included in this group were fifteen members of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, with whom SEED Wayne has partnered in several activities this year.

Since the first harvest dinner last year, SEED Wayne’s activities both on and off campus have grown significantly. In 2009, the farmers market was offered weekly, plus two pilot days at the WSU Medical Campus. The St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden was built, and a prototype bed atop Parking Structure 5 is just completed. The Eastside Healthy Corner Stores Pilot Project has added stores, improving healthy food access in several neighborhoods.

The evening featured several speakers; the line up started with John Coker, Executive Vice President of AVI Foodsystems Inc., and included CLAS Dean Robert Thomas who stood in for WSU President Jay Noren who was unable to make it at the last minute, and DBCFSN Chair Malik Yakini. Partners renewed their commitment to sustainable food systems, and affirmed their partnership with SEED Wayne. Dean Roberts, speaking for Dr. Noren, praised student volunteers for their dedicated participation in SEED Wayne’s various activities.

Guests were treated to guided tours of both campus gardens and a delicious, locally sourced dinner prepared by Executive Chef Giulio Fattore and Dan Kahn of AVI Foodsystems Inc.. SEED Wayne is grateful to all our campus and community partners, and thanks AVI for sponsoring the dinner.

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

December 2009

January 2010
January—April: Cities & Food Seminar Series, schedule will be posted on SEED Wayne website.

February 2010
2010 Urban Roots Training Course (starts Feb. 6): browse www.detroitagriculture.org for more information and to register.

For information on events, please browse SEED Wayne’s events listing at the bottom of the home page: www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne

Healthy Corner Stores Being Recruited

The Detroit Healthy Corner Stores Project is offered by SEED Wayne, in collaboration with Eastern Market Corporation and Capuchin Soup Kitchen, to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in corner stores primarily on Detroit’s Eastside. A previous issue of SEEDLING (vol. 1, issue 4) provides more information on the project’s background and approach. Currently two stores participate actively in the project with an additional two or three in advanced deliberations. The two include Corner’s Party Store, a store that has participated for several months, and Harding Market, both on the Eastside. Two other outlets discontinued participation this Fall, one because the store changed hands and the new owner did not wish to continue with the project, and the other because the owner decided against offering fresh produce among the store’s inventory.

Tyrone and Jackie Barden, owners of Corner’s Party Store, make their produce orders weekly and track amounts they discard due to low sales. SEED Wayne Program Leader Carolyn Leadley checks in on them weekly to discuss emerging needs or issues, and record waste and product prices. She is currently planning to begin another round of social marketing to neighborhood residents. As an outlet that accepts the Bridge Card and WIC, Harding Market already had some produce; SEED Wayne made their life easier by connecting them to a distributor that is willing to work with low volumes, and even delivers produce to the store. Social marketing in this store’s neighborhood will begin in the coming weeks, as well as the in-store posting of marketing materials indicating the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Leadley will also expand the area for store recruitment, having already covered the area from Woodward to Conner and I-94 to Jefferson, or approximately 39 square miles. Within that area, 47 stores were visited producing five stores interested in participating in the project. She is also documenting the challenges in getting corner stores to carry new products at a time when both retailers as well as residents are facing tough economic times.
First Rooftop Garden Prototype Built

SEEDLING’s last issue described SEED Wayne’s rooftop garden proposed in collaboration with Engineering faculty member Shawn McElmurry. A first prototype bed (4’x8’) of the garden is now in place on the roof of Parking Structure #5. All that remains is to build the drip-irrigation system and plant cold-loving plants as the season allows.

Designed and built by Student Leader Roland Bogdani, this prototype will be tested for its effectiveness in delivering on the following specifications: a) grow vegetables on top of a parking structure (and especially withstand the summer heat magnified by the concrete structure); b) harvest rainwater that falls on the bed and irrigate it in a controlled way; and c) do the above with cost-effective, durable, and lightweight materials.

The roof of the bed is composed of two polycarbonate wings that drain rainwater into a central gutter, which is dumped into a rain barrel. A drip irrigation system will distribute water in a controlled way to the bed from a faucet at the base of the barrel.

Several unexpected difficulties presented themselves during the construction process. What materials to use that are safe for growing food, can withstand extreme heat and cold and maintain their structural and chemical integrity, and also are affordable, became a key question. For each of the materials considered, we studied its MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet); finding these sheets for some materials was yet another challenge.

We decided to use pressure-treated wood for the bed and line it with a polyethylene sheet, to prevent contact by the roots with the treated lumber. More recent versions of pressure-treated wood are safer than older types because they do not contain arsenic. Nevertheless, without technical literature that demonstrates their safety for growing food, we decided to play it safe.

Next spring, we plan to develop tests to assess the safety of a bed developed from pressure-treated lumber for growing edible plants. Other ideas being considered for prototypes include a bed whose roof can be manipulated to create a glass box (a mini-greenhouse), and a vertical garden system that can take advantage of the parking structure’s walls.