Customers at the Wayne State University Farmers Market value three things most about the market: its convenient location, affordability of products, and their freshness.

Since the market opened three months ago, it has seen a steady stream of customers—averaging about 1,000 weekly—many of whom have now made this their household’s main source of produce during summer.

Fifteen vendors, a few selling only occasionally, offer a variety of fruits, vegetables, potted and cut herbs and flowers, dry beans and grains, honey, syrups, baked goods, eggs, and other farm fresh products. Several offer organically grown and heirloom products, including varieties of tomatoes, potatoes, and greens rarely found in supermarkets.

The market is authorized to accept government nutrition program benefits such as the Michigan Bridge Card (food stamps) and Project Fresh (farmers market WIC). Each market day, about 20 Bridge Card customers visit, each spending on average just under $10.

Additionally, the market accepts the WSU One Card, for the convenience of students and employees who use their One Card to do business on and near campus.

While most shoppers are WSU employees and students, a good number are employees of the Detroit Public Library or residents in the midtown neighborhood. The availability of free 15 minute customer parking on Cass Avenue has also brought in market shoppers from further away. Frequent shoppers also have particular times during which they visit, so much so that when the appointed hour passes without sight of them, we wonder if they are out of town or perhaps unwell!

In response to three rounds of customer surveys since the market started and one rapid assessment, the market has added more vendors offering a greater variety of fruits and vegetables, honey, syrup, and eggs. SEED Wayne, the market’s sponsor, is in the process of identifying suitable lunch vendors who fit the market’s theme of local and sustainable, so that shoppers can also take lunch while gathering items for dinner.

(Continued on page 2)
Two cooking demonstrations at the market by Chef Alison Costello of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, a SEED Wayne community partner, showcased less familiar market products such as bok choi, purslane, adzuki beans, squash blossoms, pumpkin tips, and basil and sage. These demonstrations showed attendees—about 20 at each event—how to make tasty, affordable, and nutritious meals from Michigan farm products.

To further underscore the health and fitness message of the market, free five-minute massages were also offered to market customers, who lined up to receive them. Massages were sponsored by the Mort Harris Fitness Center nearby.

This year, SEED Wayne offered two additional market days on the WSU-DMC medical campus. The first, on August 27, was attended by more than 1,100 customers from the WSU School of Medicine, Detroit Medical Center, Karmanos Cancer Institute, and Veterans Administration Medical Center. The second market day is on September 17; these market days provide valuable data that will inform future plans, if any, for organizing a regular market at that location next year.

Speaking of which, we are pretty sure that we will continue to offer the Wednesday Farmers Market on Cass Avenue in 2010. Organizing the weekly market week in and week out for more than three months now has given us at SEED Wayne great insight into the effort, skills, collaboration, and coordination that goes into bringing a farmers market to a community. And it makes us doubly grateful to all our campus and community partners, friends, volunteers, and market shoppers who have made these markets such a great success!

Get Mo’ Bucks September 9, 16, 23 and October 7, 14 at Wednesday market

The Michigan Mo’ Bucks Program doubles Bridge Card benefits (up to a maximum of $10 per person per day), when used at the WSU Farmers Market and other Detroit farmers markets. The program seeks to leverage federal nutrition dollars to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption by low-income residents, while also supporting Michigan growers. The Michigan Mo’Bucks Program is made possible by the Fair Food Network.

Medical Campus Farmers Market

When: Thursday, September 17, 11 AM to 4 PM
Where: In front of Scott Hall, between Scott Hall and Detroit Receiving Hospital
Market accepts cash, Bridge Card, and Project Fresh

On July 18, thirty members of SEED Wayne and the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network went on a tour of sustainable agriculture and food system sites in and around Lansing. The itinerary included the MSU Student Organic Farm, Allen St. Neighborhood Center, and the Giving Tree Farm. The sites each differed in their objectives but were joined in their commitment to sustainable agriculture.

The Student Organic Farm offers hands-on experiences in sustainable agriculture and season extension practices. At the Allen St Neighborhood Center, participants had a glimpse of a neighborhood-scale production that brought residents together in a 4,000 square foot greenhouse on a public park. The Giving Tree Farm offers therapeutic horticulture to mentally and physically disabled individuals, thus helping them heal through simple agricultural activities.

The tour also helped WSU-based participants and DBCFSN members get acquainted with each other during the ride and over lunch. Partly as a result of this experience, SEED Wayne and DBCFSN are exploring the possibility of collaboratively offering similar educational experiences in the classroom and field on an annual basis.

Lansing-area Farm Tour Paints a Larger Picture

SEED Wayne Partners

The Eastern Market Corporation

City Connect Detroit
Avalon International Bank
DEGC
food system economic partnership
Henry Ford
My involvement with SEED Wayne began when my supervisor Mike Bowen, Director of the Student Center, asked me to help transport tents, carts, and other materials to be used by volunteers to build garden beds at the St. Andrews Garden, and put up tents in preparation for the garden-build during Earth Week 2009. After raising the tents, I was drawn into assembling beds and moving top soil to them along with the other volunteers. A conversation during lunch with Kami Pothukuchi about SEED Wayne was enough for me to join.

I have worked with communities around the world on a wide range of issues, including horticulture. In fact, in my previous job, I knew a thing or two about urban agriculture as a means to reducing urban poverty and food insecurity. Before I joined SEED Wayne a few months ago, campus was boring and most of my days were idle. So, becoming aware of SEED Wayne constituted sensational joy that I could again be involved with issues I care about.

Mike Bowen encouraged my involvement, and Nabelah Ghareeb (Associate VP for Business Operations and Auxiliary Affairs) sought me out to help maintain a bed for our division. The gardening is fun and has given me something useful to do between classes. I have learned about crops I have never seen before and have made friends I would not have met without this encounter with SEED Wayne.

My passion is not merely for gardening, but for the socio-environmental culture it represents and encourages. The communities that are built around gardens are immensely useful for a variety of reasons, but mainly for shared learning and being part of a community that does useful things. This aspect of agriculture excites me because around the world, gardens are not simply places to produce food or gain income, but also institutions that promote healthy livelihoods and knit together communities.

This notion of community is especially important in a university setting, where usually the only thing folks seem to have in common is academic work and studies. It is particularly important for me as an international student to be part of a thriving community such as SEED Wayne. Going forward, we will have to bring out the non-food aspects of gardening so that we can boost and sustain interest in SEED Wayne in our university and larger community.

The first time I heard about SEED Wayne, I was hooked. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the project’s growth through my work here at the university. The experience and knowledge gained as a volunteer, however, exceeded any and all expectations. I have gained much more than gardening skills (although these have improved tremendously this year!).

I know, from first-hand experience, how difficult it is to find good produce in the city. But it wasn’t until I listened to community discussions at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen (part of SEED Wayne’s Healthy Corner Store Project), that I began to understand this food scarcity to be a social justice issue, not just a geographic or economic one.

I not only learned why it’s important to buy local but have been given the opportunity to do so every week at the Wednesday Farmers Market.

I am proud to be a part of SEED Wayne. I hope this testimonial gets you thinking about what you can give; what you’ll get in return is well worth it.

I began to understand scarcity of good produce in the city to be a social justice issue, not just a geographic or economic one. —Julie Osburn is Assistant Director for Corporate and Foundation Relations; she volunteers when she can for several SEED Wayne activities.

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, farmers market, or other activities, please contact Kami Pothukuchi at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu

—Alieu Darboe is a WSU student and employee and SEED Wayne’s Garden Volunteer Coordinator. Alieu is originally from the Gambia.
SEED Wayne helps coincide my interest in ecological anthropology with an opportunity to become involved in my own community. —Chelsey Wilt

I am a WSU student who volunteers at the WSU Farmers Market and Warrior Garden.

Hello, my name is Chelsey Wilt, and I am a new member of SEED Wayne. I enjoy studying ecological anthropology, and have been trying to incorporate more environmentally friendly practices into my life over the past few years. I am particularly fascinated with Amazon rainforest-based indigenous groups’ use of local plants for food and medicine and with their resource management skills, and this catalyzed my aspiration to learn more about and become involved with sustainable practices in my own community.  

SEED Wayne seemed like the ideal group to coincide with my interest in ecological anthropology as well as to provide an opportunity to gain knowledge so that I can begin one of the Amazon village practices at my home: A vegetable garden.

About a month ago, I began volunteering during garden work hours and the farmers markets, including the pilot market on the WSU medical campus, and I also attended the SEED Wayne potluck a couple weeks ago. At the gardens, I have prepared soil for planting new crops, harvested crops, trellised the tomatoes, sprayed all the plants with natural soap water to shield against aphids, and weeded the beds quite a bit; I even learned from Will (Ahee, SEED Wayne Student Leader) that the leaves of one of these weeds can be eaten in salads. At the markets, I have implemented customer surveys, tallied customer counts, and supported the farmers by purchasing fruits and vegetables.

The food prepared by Kami (Pothukuchi, SEED Wayne Coordinator) from Wayne State’s and her own gardens and local farms that I have sampled as a market volunteer is exceptionally fresh and delicious. I have tried several new foods in the past month: Edible flowers, ground cherries, green heirloom tomatoes, purple Fingerling potatoes, and the enormous Italian squash.

It feels rewarding to be involved in local food production and consumption as a volunteer, and I’m glad to have met some people who lead and contribute to this organization. Next year I will be more active in this lifestyle that benefits the Detroit community and the earth: My mom and I will be adding to the tomatoes, strawberries, raspberries, and basil that we grow now and will plant a vegetable garden with greater variety! 🌽

I feel that growing my own food has strengthened my connection to our food source. —Jasmine Ligenza-Posante

My name is Jasmine Ligenza-Posante and I volunteer at the Warrior Garden. There are many reasons why I decided to become involved, including the love of growing plants, the desire to help others, the ability to access healthy food and become more connected to our food source.

I enjoy growing plants but have lived in too many apartments where outdoor gardening was impossible. I was thrilled to learn about the opportunity to participate in a local community garden. Since becoming a member I’ve learned about different gardening methods. Some of this new information I learned from Will Ahee during work hours, some I learned from my gardening partner Lisa, and I also gained other useful tips from our trip to Lansing.

Another main reason I became involved with SEED Wayne was because they donate most of their food from their garden to local soup kitchens. I feel that I can be a part of a positive movement that is focused on giving people in need access to healthy food. Nutritious food is vital for all forms of life.

I feel that access to healthy food is a problem in Detroit, where I have lived for about 10 years. There are few grocery stores and the ones that do exist either close early, have a limited selection or are overpriced. The Eastern Market is great, but it’s only fully open one day a week. SEED Wayne has a farmers’ market every Wednesday on campus and it’s comforting to know that we can pick up our veggies nearby from local farmers, thus supporting the local economy.

I feel that growing my own food has strengthened my connection to our food source. Everything we grow is organic, so I don’t have to wonder what chemicals may be lurking in my food. I also feel comforted knowing that my food didn’t have to be driven hundreds of miles or flown in from far away places. The amount of pollution that’s released in transporting food is no longer an issue when your food comes from your neighborhood. If more community gardens continue to pop up in urban areas, I think that many of our environmental and community problems could improve.

The last benefit I feel I’ve gained by becoming involved with SEED Wayne is the sense of community. I’ve met many people who also volunteer at Wayne State and others who work with other community gardens and farms in the area. I’ve found it really interesting to learn how other community groups operate and work on outreach programs. For instance, when we took the trip to the Allen St. Neighborhood Center in East Lansing, I was taken aback at how this organization was able to get so many people in the neighborhood involved with learning, growing and community events. So many people are brought together with food and I hope to see this positive impact in the Detroit area. I think that working with SEED Wayne has helped open my eyes to how many others in the area are reaching out for a positive change in this city through food. 🌿
DAN Garden Tour Shows Detroit’s Growth

About seven hundred visitors participated in Detroit Agriculture Network’s 11th Annual Tour of Gardens in the city on August 5. Three bus routes were organized: Westside, Eastside, and Central, plus two bike routes closer to Catherine Ferguson Academy, the tour’s starting point. A high school for pregnant and parenting young women in Detroit, the Catherine Ferguson Academy also has a farm with plants and animals: goats, chickens, rabbits, ducks, and even a horse.

Visitors on the bike tour stopped at WSU’s gardens and were welcomed by Aliou Darboe, SEED Wayne Garden Volunteer Coordinator. After they returned from the tours to the Academy, participants had the opportunity to partake of a meal assembled from produce from several Detroit gardens (including ones on campus) and prepared by local chefs.

The tour showcased a growing sector—neighborhood-scaled agriculture—in a city that has seen sharp declines in practically every other sector. Detroit also has a vibrant network of adult and youth gardeners who annually produce over one hundred tons of fresh food in the city.

Potlucks Fuel Conversations among Gardeners

The two campus gardens are in full bloom, with harvests coming in every day. Garden volunteers and allotees have had small tastes of this harvest on their own, and now have shared some of it, along with their cooking skills, at two SEED Wayne potlucks.

Potlucks allow gardeners a chance to gather together, get acquainted with one another, and discuss concerns, problems, successes, and future goals for the gardens, as well as broader sustainability issues in the city. Potlucks have thus helped form a stronger SEED Wayne, or campus foodie, community as it might be called.

Partly as a result of feedback from the potlucks, garden participants will play a greater role in (and take charge of) SEED Wayne activities such as educational workshops and potential movie nights in the future.

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

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

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<td><strong>17, 11 AM to 4 PM</strong>: WSU Medical Campus Market, in front of Scott Hall, between Scott Hall and Detroit Receiving Hospital (This is the second of two pilots this year).</td>
<td><strong>October 3, 12 noon to 6 PM</strong>: Detroit Black Community Food Security Network Harvest Festival, at D-Town Farm (Outer Dr. between Plymouth and W. Chicago); <a href="http://www.detroitblackfoodsecurity.org">www.detroitblackfoodsecurity.org</a></td>
<td><strong>Date TBD</strong>: 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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<td><strong>25, 5-8 PM</strong>: Second Annual SEED Wayne Harvest Dinner, by invitation only.</td>
<td><strong>October 16-18</strong>: Great Lakes Bioneers Conference, Marygrove College, 8425 McNichols Rd. For more info. and to register, visit <a href="http://www.glbd.org/">http://www.glbd.org/</a></td>
<td>The Garden Resource Program Collaborative offers a variety of workshops related to agriculture, Sept-Dec. For more info., visit: <a href="http://www.detroitagriculture.org">www.detroitagriculture.org</a>.</td>
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The project also includes a community food system assessment of the area around the D-Town Farm in Rouge River Park on Detroit’s Westside. This assessment is being carried out by Professor White and students in her qualitative research methods class this semester. The assessment’s objectives include analyzing the sources of food residents rely on, and exploring interest among them in participating in the farm and a food cooperative sponsored by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network.

A third activity of the project, conducted by Program Associate Carolyn Leadley, is to assess corner stores on the near-Eastside of Detroit for the extent to which they carry fresh fruits and vegetables and recruit interested ones to the Eastside Healthy Corner Stores Pilot Project. SEED Wayne will connect these stores to produce distributors and conduct outreach and social marketing in the participating stores’ neighborhoods.

SEED Wayne was recently awarded a WSU grant entitled “Engineering Sustainable Urban Food Systems,” in collaboration with Professors Shawn McElmurry of Engineering and Monica White of Sociology. One important goal of this grant is to design and test appropriate urban agriculture technologies, including a rooftop demonstration garden planned for the top of Parking Structure 5.

The garden incorporates an integrated system of rainwater capture, drip irrigation, heat mitigation, and potential season extension. Engineering student Roland Bogdani will help create designs that are low-cost and easy to assemble. The hope is that these designs can be easily replicated in parking structure gardens throughout the city. The garden is planned to be installed before the end of this year’s growing season and will be tested in a preliminary way, for its effectiveness.

Parking structures pose unique challenges for garden design. Concrete roofs threaten to scorch plants as they magnify hot summer temperatures, and also necessitate a degree of wind protection and stability which can challenge designers who wish to work with simple, low-cost, and light-weight materials. While a garden atop a parking structure is a somewhat novel idea, rooftop gardens are common throughout the world. Their benefits include lower energy costs, reduced rainwater runoffs and their attendant pollution, habitat for birds, pleasant gathering spaces and, of course, the food grown in them.

Detroit has plenty of parking structures that have become less crowded due to the economic decline. With the extra available space currently unused, turning rooftops and sides into productive and sustainable growing areas just makes simple sense!

Rooftop Demonstration Garden Coming!

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