

Compact Magazine

Staying Strong through Service



Going Beyond 'the Classroom by' Growing Green: Livonia Growing Green Community Teaching Garden

Understanding the importance of eating a variety of vegetables, the difference between organic farming and conventional farming, and how the ingredients of a pizza grow are just some of the lessons taught as a part of the Growing Green Community Teaching Garden project in Livonia, Michigan.

The Growing Green Community Teaching Garden was created in an attempt to engage STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) students in learning experiences outside of the classroom. The garden is a collaborative effort between Madonna University, Schoolcraft College, the City of Livonia, and Livonia Public Schools. It gave STEM college students and Livonia residents an opportunity to learn about healthy eating, sustainable agriculture, and the benefits of gardening.



The garden features a "laboratory" where a multitude of colored vegetables are grown; an organic versus conventional garden, where the two are compared; and even a "Pizza Garden" that not only features the vegetables and herbs on a pizza, but is also shaped like one. Take a look at the video at left for a tour of the plots in the garden.

Into the Classroom

As part of the project, 34 Madonna University **Nutrition Network** students went to local elementary schools to teach students about healthy eating and gardening. The program, called "Eating with Color from your Garden," was created by Madonna students based on the theme for **National Nutrition Month 2011**. Through this program, 1600 K-6 youth from Livonia Public Schools received nutrition education, and 300 third grade students visited the garden to plant seedlings that were originally grown in their classrooms. During their visit the students also participated in health-based activities and games.

Teachers of the participating Livonia elementary schools were ecstatic about the project:

- "Madonna students gave a high energy, effective presentation. The hands on presentation kept the youth engaged. The Madonna students had good classroom management skills, as well. Some of the seeds my students planted are growing! Thank you-please come again."
- "Excellent presentation, GREAT preparation and the students LOVED planting! Way to go!"
- "The students were prepared with excellent hands-on materials to involve second graders' participation. Students were excited to have two things to take home. This was helpful for them to explain to their parents what they learned."

Reaching Further

Though the focus of the garden was to "do science" outside of the classroom, the added bonuses were the community benefits.

The project was funded by a grant from **Learn and Serve America** (LSA). Aside from helping to establish and



maintain the project, the grant also enabled the creation of a mentoring program that helped six Schoolcraft College faculty members implement Schoolcraft's STEM department's first service-based courses.

Madonna students, along with other students, also offered a number of community classes on everything from healthy eating to canning and preserving food. To benefit the community further, all of the food grown in the garden was given to two non-profits, Focus Hope and Trinity Park, who distributed the food to many of the food insecure residents of Livonia. "We were able to provide multiple loads of fresh produce to Focus Hope and Trinity Park," explains Laura Freeland Kull, the project director and Madonna University

professor. Cathy Beaudoin, administrator at Trinity Park added, "The tenants [of Trinity Park] were so enthusiastic about this program; many of them were talking about how they were going to be making soups, stews, and fresh salads." Keisha Bolware, of Focus Hope added "This was an added benefit for our seniors, many of whom are unable to afford fresh vegetables on a routine basis. We are thankful for the opportunity to share in this program."

The People Involved

Tricia Bischoff, Madonna University Dietetics student and an MCC 2011 Outstanding Community Impact Award winner, was an assistant director of the project;

she assisted in volunteer coordination. Barbara Bouchard, Madonna University Dietetics student, also an assistant director, produced the website and created the "Eating with Color from Your Garden" curriculum. Amanda Kanter, **College Coaching Corps AmeriCorps member**, trained 34 university students to be "College Positive Volunteers," volunteers that help children begin to visualize a college career. Alexandra Zurkiwskyj, Madonna University Dietetics student and **Michigan Service Scholar** involved herself with the community events by helping prepare for them, as well as, writing about them in her blog.

A Success

Karen Shaumann-Beltran, Schoolcraft's liaison between the school and the garden, expressed her pride in the program: "It feels great to be connected with Madonna, and to our local community; it has assisted in the development of six service-learning courses [at Schoolcraft]," she added "we had wonderful student involvement." Kull agrees, "The project was absolutely a success."

According to Kull, students who participated in the project overwhelmingly indicated their increased interest in food issues and community engagement in their post-project surveys. It's clear that the project was a success and if it continues it will have an even more significant impact on the Livonia community.

If you're interested in starting a project like this, or you simply want to start your own community garden, Laura Freeland Kull suggests www.communitygarden.org or find out more about the Livonia Growing Green Community Garden at <http://www.growinggreen-livonia.com/index.html>. 

Bringing Strength to New Delhi — Michigan Tech

“Using my education to solve a real-world problem—rather than just creating a product for a company—was the greatest opportunity of my life,” says Bryan Plunger, a student at Michigan Technological University (MTU). Plunger played a large role in a 2010 service-learning project at MTU, during which students took their engineering expertise to New Delhi, India.

At MTU, the students in the Mechanical Engineering program are required to complete a design project before the end of their senior year. Most students work with big businesses, helping to make cars faster or snowmobiles cleaner—projects concerned with making money. But the recent increase in global awareness has uprooted a revolution in the interests of college students’ academic goals. Many students have developed a passion for community outreach. Sheryl Sorby—an MTU professor emeriti—and her colleague Tammy Haut Donahue—a current MTU Professor—created that opportunity for their students.

The Project

New Delhi, India sees thousands of polio cases each year. Many of these cases receive little to no treatment; but polio is just one of the issues surrounding the population’s health. India’s hospitals work extremely hard to help as many

people as they can, but with such a large and ever-increasing population, it’s seemingly impossible to keep up. This forced apathy leaves many children immobile due to physical handicaps. They are a population in need of care, and MTU’s Mechanical Engineering students gave them that care.

Students worked for over a year to create two prosthetics: 1) walking calipers (leg brace) that were one-tenth the price of current calipers produced in India and would allow the user to squat and 2) a reciprocating gait orthosis, a device that allows a user who is incapable of walking, to walk on their own. Plunger, who worked on the walking calipers, explained that the old calipers were far too expensive and that “the old leg brace only allowed the knee to bend about 90 degrees, which did not allow the children to sit cross-legged or squat down in the Indian style. Both of these positions are culturally important, and the kids with braces felt alienated for not being able to do them.”

After their designs were finalized, students flew over seven-thousand miles to New Delhi, India to deliver their gifts. When they arrived, they were shocked by New Delhi’s reaction.

Michigan Tech News, MTU’s premier news website, reports that when the students arrived they “were surprised to see a reporter from one of the largest English-language newspapers in India.” The Hindustan’s Times was interested in a story about a child who had used a wheelchair for most of his life; with his new brace, designed by MTU, he stood up and walked across the room. You can read the article titled, “[Look Mom, with These I Can Walk on My Own](#),” on the Hindustan’s Times website.

Plunger explains, “I was exhilarated when I arrived... the kids were so excited to see us that they wanted to run races and sing songs for us.” Donahue explains, “The groups we worked with were so excited that we took interest in their needs and were working with them.” Sorby agrees, “The residents were relieved that an American university was in India to help its residents, rather than to attempt to recruit students.”

In the Future

This first trip laid the groundwork for continued trips to India. Sheryl Sorby predicts that eventually over

10,000 children will be helped by the work of the MTU students. She adds that this project could last for more than a decade, and continue growing. “I’m really proud to have been part of this first group to work on an international outreach program...as engineers we really have a responsibility to help others, and not just those around us, but all over the world,” explains Plunger.

Was it a Success?

“Most definitely,” says Donahue. Sorby adds, “It wasn’t perfect, but we proved that something like this is possible.” Both agree that this project laid the groundwork for continuous expansion.

Financial limitations will not allow this project to expand this year, but plans are being set for future fundraising activities. Donahue and Sorby wanted to be sure to acknowledge William Predebon, Department Chair of Mechanical Engineering-Engineering Mechanics at Michigan Tech, for his support and funding, “we couldn’t have done it without his help,” they agree.

To discuss this project further or ask about doing something like this in your community, contact Dr. Predebon at wwpredeb@mtu.edu.



Have you got a story to tell?

MCC wants to hear it!

If you have a story about a project or course that you want Compact Magazine to tell, submit a brief description of the project to intern@micampuscompact.org.

About Michigan Campus Compact:

Michigan Campus Compact (MCC) is a coalition of college and university presidents who are committed to fulfilling the public purposes of higher education and supporting strong community leadership.

Campus Compact member presidents are joined together in their commitment to the development of personal and social responsibility as integral to the educational mission of their campuses. Currently MCC has 43 member campuses, and Michigan members are part of national Campus Compact, a coalition of nearly 1,100 college and university presidents, representing some 6 million students.

As the only national organization committed to fulfilling the public purpose of higher education, Campus Compact is a leader in building civic engagement into campus and academic life. Michigan Campus Compact is a state office of the national organization. MCC's membership unites public, private, two- and four-year institutions. Michigan Campus Compact is affiliated with Campus Compact and Michigan Nonprofit Association and is supported by the ConnectMichigan Alliance Endowment.



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