Tackling Wicked Food Issues

LIB322 students

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LIB322 students would like to thank:

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Fresh Start — LIB322, Fall 2013  
Food Mavericks — LIB322, Fall 2013  
The Liberal Studies Department

Grand Valley State University  
Liberal Studies

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Fall 2014  
LIB322 (02) in Honors 218  
Wednesdays from 6:00-8:50 pm

Winter 2015  
LIB 322 (01) in AuSable 1115  
Mondays from 6:00-8:50 pm

Contact LakeDa@gvsu.edu with questions.

LIB322 students present  
Tackling Wicked Food Issues

April 2, 2014  
6:00-8:00 pm
Fresher Start

In attempting to address the problem of healthy, local, sustainable and tasty foods for school-age children a group of students, calling themselves “Fresh Start,” began the work necessary for creating an afterschool program centered on teaching middle school students healthy eating habits. In the fall of 2013. The values and initiatives demonstrated by “Fresh Start” persuaded us to move their initial efforts forward. By creating “Fresher Start” we hope to develop and refine an interactive afterschool program for elementary school children within the community. We imagine this twelve-week, afterschool program would focus closely on the importance of healthy, sustainable living and present these topics through the use of collaborative lessons on a variety of subjects ranging from cooking, to gardening, as well as the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Supporting our initial plan, research shows children possess the ability to develop healthy eating habits that last a lifetime if presented with this knowledge in an exciting and hands-on manner.¹

Revising the initial plan, we’ve decided an after-school program could be held immediately after school lets out, making the program an inexpensive substitute for traditional daycare. This revision also makes transportation concerns for school-age kids a non-issue. Our current plan also suggests participating students would benefit from receiving a unique diploma along with a personalized twelve-month calendar that includes healthy recipes, fun facts, and pictures commemorating their hard work and dedication.

¹ http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/expert-blog/school-nutrition/bgp-20056196

Student Presenters

Anna Kathryn Sluka is a senior at GVSU, majoring in Liberal Studies with an emphasis on Leadership and Community Organizing. She lives in Muskegon Heights, and works with various organizations to combat poverty and institutional dependence by teaching self-sufficiency skills centered around food and socio-economic justice to vulnerable populations. These beliefs drive her to reject consumerism while growing and processing the bulk of her own food, as well as producing hygiene and household cleaning products.

Kyle Ramsey is a senior studying Liberal studies with an emphasis in Environmental studies. He plans on interning at a fine wood working company that incorporates sustainability in their work. Loves hunting, fishing, pretty much anything outdoors.

Tyler Wiewiora is a highly motivated Film major here at Grand Valley State. His tagline for his films is ”Educate through entertainment”. He is very skilled in communication with clients, creative thinking, and problem solving. Filming for the sake of the environment is a huge interest of his. He has experienced dealing with waste management working with clean up crews and has witnessed the desolation of a food desert in his hometown.

My name is Josh Lorenz. Nutrition has long been a driving force in my life, and I have been passionate about spreading this information to others. As a biomedical sciences’ student I have had a unique opportunity to learn about the molecular intricacies of human physiology and health, allowing me to bring this approach to Team Medley’s efforts. Through research and exposure to neo-ways of problem solving, my goal is to instigate change not only in others but in myself.
Team Medley was born out of Grand Valley State University’s class, “Wicked Problems in Sustainability.” Centered on food justice, they have been challenged to engage with community stakeholders in order to begin the process of implementing social change. The alarming reality of the United States’ food system and its relation to human health has been highlighted in many recent studies, for instance overweight kindergarten children are four times more likely to be obese in 8th grade than normal weight kindergarteners within the normal weight recommendations.¹

Using their collective passions and skills, Team Medley has committed to providing promotional media services to successful organizations centered around food justice in the West Michigan area who work directly with vulnerable populations in order to encourage others to act upon the issue. Currently, the team is gathering information about various stakeholders, their projects, and their communities’ needs in regards to food justice; moreover, they are also interested in exploring how film as a medium can influence a multitude of audiences. Research is being conducted through interviews, physical experiences, and peer reviewed studies. Making use of this information, their current action plan involves meeting and filming interviews with stakeholders in order to document how sustainability has impacted their communities and how others can participate. The goal is that this film will provide insight into the tremendous amount of work required for addressing wicked problems through social change while highlighting people dedicated to this cause.

Student Presenters

My name is Katie Richter. I was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, however, I have lived all over the continental United States. I spent the past four years serving as a Paratrooper and Intelligence Analyst in the United States Army and I am now back at GVSU finishing up my B.S. in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in Environmental Studies and Sustainability. My time outside of school is spent training for two marathons I’ll be running this year, completing my yoga instructor certification, and playing “Mom” to my 3 year old son, Levi. I am an avid snowboarder, fitness nut, and environmentalist. Passing down these passions to my son and teaching him the importance of healthy living, eating, as well as showing him the significance in nurturing our relationship with Mother Nature is my greatest work in life.

My name is Andrijka Macko. I value creativity, others opinions and ideas. I am able to look at problems as individual pieces of a puzzle and as components of a bigger picture. I seek to make connections in order to create solutions. I am interested in humanity connecting back with nature, committing to cleaning up our messes and taking good care of our planet. I plan to focus on both the local community, and big corporations to reach my goal of a healthier Earth.

My name is Michael Carlson and I'm a writing major and psychology minor at GVSU. I highly value efficiency and practicality. I enjoy writing in a coherent, accessible way in order to communicate any knowledge I might have and I'd enjoy the challenge of expressing other people's ideas in a way that makes them more understandable to outside audiences. I don't have experience in this field, but I would be remiss if I ignored a chance to improve the lives of fellow human beings.
Curriculum Artisans

As a team, we agree that a lack of education and a lack of motivation results in inaction when confronting our “wicked” food issues. Collectively, we wish to address this aspect of the problem by using our diverse backgrounds to create The Sprout Society, a K-12 elective course. This course will engage students through the integration of guest speakers, community service outreach, interactive technology, and art-making activities. We will establish a learning experience that encourages young adults to be aware, motivated, and involved in sustainability and food issues. The curriculum will focus on empowering students to make educated choices about food. Once our young people are consistently involved in these discussions, society will see future and continuous changes.

Through community partnerships we have begun working with our local schools and teachers. This cooperation allows further insight into filling the existing void in food education. We have met with teachers and school leaders to start forging a way, but we are actively seeking other voices throughout the community to incorporate additional perspectives. Our ultimate goal is to establish an effective way to impact our youth, motivating and empowering them to care about food justice.

Student Presenters

Jamie Groendyk is a Liberal Studies major with an emphasis in human and environmental relationships. She currently works for Wyoming Public Schools in the Office of Adult Education, and has spent several years working with at-risk students. This position has afforded her the opportunity to build many relationships within the community. Jamie is passionate about connecting people with the resources and tools need to better their lives.

Michelle Haapala is a visual arts educator, documenter and creative problem solver. Arts Education has taught her to integrate larger concepts of sustainability, relationships and food into her teaching. Michelle works to promote community outreach and service learning as the main source of communicating knowledge. When not teaching, Michelle finds herself working at the Grand Rapids Art Museum Education Studio, thrifting, or collecting found objects.

Craig Coolman is a senior Computer Science major from Grand Rapids. He currently works for Gordon Food Service as a Software Engineer while he finishes up his bachelors degree at Grand Valley. Craig is interested in continuing to discover how food issues and this wicked problem impacts communities and people in a variety of ways.