

2011 Michigan State University Nominations for the
Outreach Scholarship W. K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
and C. Peter Magrath University/Community Engagement Award
North Central Region

From the Inside Out:

Building Community and an Urban Food System on Lansing's Eastside

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University partners: Department of Anthropology, College of Social Science; Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH); Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement; Organic Farmer Certificate Program, Department of Horticulture, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; Student Organic Farm; Ecological Food and Farming Systems Specialization

Community partners: Allen Neighborhood Center (ANC); Lansing Urban Farm Project; Ingham County Land Bank; Greater Lansing Food Bank Garden Project; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); City of Lansing Department of Planning and Neighborhood Development

1. Significance of the Outreach/Engagement Partnership

1.1. Abstract

“From the Inside Out” uses community collaboration, civic engagement, and the latest Michigan State University research to address food insecurity on Lansing’s Eastside, a quadrant of the city long considered a “food desert.” Since its start in 2002, the project in partnership with the Allen Neighborhood Center has served as a regional and national model for university/community collaboration through its:

- Development of critical food system infrastructure, including the Allen Street Farmer’s Market, the Hunter Park GardenHouse, the Urbandale Farm, and a proposed Food Resource Center;
- Institution of food and place-based programming, including the youth-based “Garden-in-a-Box,” the GardenHouse Community Supported Agriculture program, the Urban Gardening Certificate program, pocket parks and other Eastside commons;
- Generation of key financial capital, including grants of over \$800,000;
- Creation of strong connections among community-based research, development, and student civic engagement in which undergraduate and graduate students, interns, student organizations, academic researchers, and entire classes explore the latest scholarship while engaging with the Eastside;
- Dissemination of community-based research influencing practitioners, scholars, foundations, and national policy makers on the nature of our food system and its relationship to community.

Specifically, the project promotes the notion that connecting food and community must involve “emergent” (shared, values-based, place- and people-powered) processes. This “grow ourselves” ethos has forged an Eastside neighborhood that links food and earth work with civic participation and neighborhood pride.

By re-embedding residents in their neighborhoods, the project has enabled a system of citizen involvement on Lansing’s Eastside that sustains itself culturally, creatively, and equitably, in a way that allows neighborhoods in the urban metropolis to see themselves as unique and powerful.

2. Relationship and Reciprocity Between the University and the Community

Michigan State University, a premier land grant university, and Allen Neighborhood Center, a hub for neighborhood revitalization on Lansing's Eastside, both understand that sustainable development must be place-based and emergent—that it must belong to as well as serve real people. These two institutions have a long track record of working collaboratively with each other, most recently in the area of food security. “From the Inside Out” is an excellent example of this collaboration, one that reflects and takes cues from MSU's 2005 “Boldness by Design” mission to transform lives by advancing research, engagement, and economic development activities to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, at home and around the world.

As a food systems scholar (and former Eastside resident), Laura DeLind initially recognized the absence of markets for small, diversified farmers on the periphery of the city and the absence of fresh, affordable food for many urban residents. In early 2002, she proposed addressing these concerns as related rather than separate problems. She suggested that ANC consider developing a neighborhood-based farmers market that strengthened peri-urban/urban relationships and integrated food system issues into the daily lives of Eastside residents. ANC was receptive but unfamiliar with the agrifood environment. DeLind introduced the staff to critical food systems scholarship (literally dropping off a library of materials), discussed theories, identified areas of needed research, and assisted in writing a major proposal to USDA's Community Food Program (USDA-CFP).

ANC quickly absorbed these ideas and—with DeLind as the organization's food system adviser—made them their own. Now in its 8th season, the Allen Street Farmers Market (ASFM) serves as a community commons as well as a marketplace. It provides fresh food and generates income. It also serves as a venue for sharing resources (healthcare, education, housing, labor, recreation) and building social networks among dozens of farmers, hundreds of volunteers, and thousands of area residents.

ANC has deliberately used the market as a springboard to affirm a culture of place on the Eastside. ASFM was the first market in Michigan to enable Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) sales and as such became a model for markets around the state. Unlike many markets, however, its “neighborhood first” philosophy deliberately engages Eastside residents and showcases Eastside skills. If this means

that there are occasional paint drips, it also means that there is ownership, embedded meaning, and laughter. This is equally true for ANC's subsequent and self-initiated GardenHouse programs, the Urban Gardener Certificate Program, the Garden in a Box (GIAB) program, and Community Soups.

DeLind continues to assist ANC with grant writing, data collection, and qualitative evaluation, activities that have resulted in an investment of over \$800,000 in the Eastside. She recognizes that ANC's ability to embed the food system into neighborhood life contrasts with traditional economic approaches to development. Her popular and scholarly writing reflects ANC's attention to capacity building and grassroots empowerment and to the processes (as well as the outcomes) of a people- and place-centered perspective ([1], [4], [5], [6], [7]).

DeLind and ANC staff regularly share their knowledge and resources. Staff speak in DeLind's RCAH classes and her students volunteer on the Eastside (e.g., ASFM, GardenHouse, GIAB). Many of her civic engagement courses focus on urban agriculture and students are placed with ANC and other Eastside organizations. Recently a Michigan Campus Compact – Pay It Forward grant enabled students to award \$4,500 to several community NGOs.

The same cooperative “give and take” undergirds DeLind's newest project, Urbandale Farm. The farm is the work of the Lansing Urban Farm Project (LUFPP), a Michigan nonprofit that DeLind co-founded in 2010. Its mission is: (a) to raise fresh produce for the Eastside but especially for Urbandale, an economically and socially fragile neighborhood; and (b) to use the farm site and farm work to catalyze neighbor involvement and, ultimately, ownership and entrepreneurship. ANC serves as LUFPP's fiduciary agent and is helping LUFPP manage a \$90,000 USDA Farmers Market Promotion grant. Though operationally distinct, the two organizations are united in their belief that farm planning involves community organizing and communication as much as it does vegetable production and marketing. For this reason, Urbandale and the farm will serve as sites for a RCAH civic engagement/creative workshop course that DeLind will teach with poet Anita Skeen in 2012. The course will focus on the art of story and storytelling as yet another tool for encouraging voice, place-making, and grassroots activism.

3. Impacts

3.1. Impact on Community Partners

A 2004 study undertaken for ANC by Brian Thomas,¹ an MSU sociology graduate student and one of DeLind's mentees, established the Eastside as a food desert—an area whose residents have limited access to a full service grocery. In addition, 1 in 4 surveyed households reported income at or below the poverty line, while 29% reported being food insecure compared with 9% statewide.

These numbers prompted ANC to actively address food security issues in the neighborhood with DeLind as their food systems adviser. The results are significant. The Allen Street Farmers Market (ASFM) has grown from 4 vendors in 2004 to more than 20 today and now provides a diversity of fresh and seasonal vegetables, fruits, grains, breads, meats, flowers, and prepared foods to area residents. Market goers, likewise, have increased from an average of 132/market in 2004 to 544/market in 2010. Rough data suggest that purchases have tripled over the years. More impressive still are the EBT sales, which have risen from \$1,631 in 2005 to \$8,197 in 2010, reflecting a 64% increase in the last two years alone. Dot surveys introduced by DeLind also show that the market is attracting residents from across the Eastside, with more of them purchasing fresh produce on a weekly basis.

The Garden in a Box (GIAB) program, which DeLind and several RCAH students helped to initiate and document in 2008, has placed 47 2' x 2' growing boxes in the yards of Eastside residents, especially those having limited income, mobility, and/or gardening experience. This simple program, run by the ANC Youth Service Corps, has involved dozens of middle school youngsters who check in annually with boxholders to determine whether they will continue to garden. So far, more than 35 residents intend to re-use their boxes. Many of these boxholders took advantage of the Urban Gardener certificate course that DeLind helped design. To date, there have been more than 100 certified graduates, all of whom are required to contribute at least 40 hours of agrifood-related service to the neighborhood.

Both DeLind and ANC recognize that building a sustainable urban food system on the Eastside depends on recognizing (and using) local assets and growing internal capacity. Still, projects have been

¹ *The Relationship Among Household Characteristics, Geographic Space, and Food Security in the Allen Neighborhood.*

catalyzed by external grants, many of which DeLind reviewed or helped to write. In particular, ANC has secured the following:

- \$285,000 from USDA-CPF to support the ASFM.
- \$100,000 from Michigan Cool Cities to build the GreenHouse and restore Hunter Park. This grant leveraged nearly \$1,000,000 from the State of Michigan in additional park improvements.
- \$25,000 from Capital Area Community Foundation and \$30,000 from the City of Lansing for GIAB.
- \$90,000 from USDA-FMP for LUFPP to begin its apprenticeship program and marketing study.

Most recently, a request to USDA-CFP for \$299,775 has been written to initiate a Food Resource Center with a licensed kitchen and a year-round farmers market.

These grants have generated a range of jobs, including youth program leader, greenhouse manager, volunteer coordinator, gardening education programming coordinator, and farmers market manager. The projects they have supported have been replicated in several other Lansing neighborhoods with mentoring support from ANC.

But numbers and grant dollars tell only part of the story. Eastside residents now see the market as a neighborhood treasure and mention it when buying and selling real estate. They admit to spending more time outdoors with eyes on their streets and hands in the soil. They also have voluntarily contributed time, material, and money to create pocket parks and small harvest celebrations. ANC has become a respected leader in Lansing's food system development and is an active partner in the newly established city-wide Let's Garden Lansing consortium and the Food System Working Group, a precursor to a public food policy council.

3.2. Impact on University Partners

DeLind's scholarship, engagement, and teaching draw from many disciplines and cross many conventional boundaries. Trained as an anthropologist, she brings an ethnographic dimension to her work with food systems and civic agriculture. Her writing, informed by her experiences on the Eastside, frequently argues for moving beyond traditional market-based and nutritional assessments of food security ([1], [2], [8], [13]). She asserts that to be sustainable and sustaining, a food system must be an

integral part of a whole, place-based way of life ([1], [8], [9], [11], [12], [13]). Her work—which challenges scholars, local food advocates, and practitioners to consider, as does ANC, the role of shared work, place, citizen participation and equity in the design of a regenerative agrifood system—is frequently cited in journals like *Agriculture and Human Values*, *Culture and Agriculture*, *Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, and *Landscape and Urban Planning*. It also has been recognized by the New Urbanists, the Center for Humans and Nature, Emory College, and the Parsons New School.

Professionally, DeLind has co-authored papers with anthropologists, rural sociologists, political scientists, philosophers, educators, and artists ([2], [3], [10]). She has served as president of Agriculture Food and Human Values and editor of *Agriculture and Human Values* and *Culture and Agriculture*. Her work, likewise, has impacted both graduate and undergraduate students, who come from a range of disciplines—sociology; geography; entomology; community, agriculture, recreation and resource studies; horticulture; and RCAH—as well as anthropology.

DeLind's split appointment between Anthropology and RCAH further adds to the breadth of her work and its multidisciplinary character. Hired to develop the civic engagement curriculum in RCAH, she co-authored the model now used by the College. A recent RCAH 292B course focused on urban agriculture and placed students with several Lansing NGOs. In addition to critically reflecting on the conventional food system and its alternatives, students were required to consider the nature of philanthropy as they awarded Michigan Campus Compact – Pay It Forward grants totaling \$4,500 to community partners. Over the last three years alone, 14 of her students have pursued internships, AmeriCorps placements, graduate programs, employment, and/or volunteer positions with community-based food projects. One student who wrote her senior thesis on the local food movement will be working as a research assistant for the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Hunger, Nutrition, and Family Farms. DeLind received an award for “exemplary curricular service-learning and civic engagement” from MSU in 2010.

DeLind, herself an artist, is comfortable integrating the arts and humanities (as well as the social sciences) into her work. She recognizes a connection among earthwork, artwork, and cultural identity—

all elements of self-determination. Her gardening work with Meskhetian Turk refugees and her collaboration with sociologist Stephanie Nawyn to explore gardening as a site for English language acquisition build on this understanding. In 2012, DeLind and poet Anita Skeen will explore the role of story in neighborhood revitalization, focusing on Urbandale and the Urbandale Farm community.

4. Lessons Learned and Best Practices

“From the Inside Out” has sensitized DeLind to the following aspects of engaged scholarship.

Challenges

1. It takes time, often years, to develop a trusted working relationship with a community partner. Outreach and engaged research do not conform to the academic calendar. Daily life is not organized by semester or 50 minute class sessions. While DeLind and ANC staff established an immediate rapport, it took several years of continual conversation, information sharing, and formal and informal visioning to fully understand what an Eastside food system might look like and how they might work together to achieve it.
2. Engaged work tends to be as much about process—the process of decision-making and capacity building—as about an end product. People and places have personalities, histories, landscapes, cultures, political alliances, and social baggage as well as quantifiable needs. Context, patience, and timing are everything. Knowing *when* to act is as important as knowing *how* to act. DeLind recognized that the Eastside had a need for intensive food production several years before ANC was ready to accept the idea. Early discussions foundered because ANC did not have the resources to own or manage a farm themselves. With the creation of LUF, Urbandale Farm and a new partnership for ANC took shape.
3. Grassroots organizations greatly depend on the goodwill of community members and on volunteered effort. At the same time, they have a clear mission and a small, dedicated, and overworked staff. Accommodating the needs and schedules of researchers or college students who want access or credit is not their purpose. Care needs to be taken to avoid exploiting community partners. DeLind is deliberate about critically assessing this relationship with her partners and her students.

Benefits

1. No one can know a place like those who live there. Partnering with people who live and work in a community is essential for gaining an insider's understanding of a project's processes and outcomes. While such data may be interpretive and subjective, it is organic and wholly in context. It demands that abstract theories and concepts come to grips with real world conditions and sensibilities. DeLind's work depends on engaging residents and being embedded in the Eastside. It has become her home away from home. Her descriptive case studies allow her to investigate more theoretical relationships between food systems and community development. They also, as one native Eastsider put it, "allow us to see ourselves the way others see us."
2. DeLind has offered and provided survey tools, relevant literature, student assistants, the language of grantsmanship, and advice to help jump start many Eastside projects. While none of these resources would have been unavailable to ANC otherwise, they have given shape to a mutually beneficial scholar-community relationship. They also have "sparked" local ideas and opened a connection to food system work well beyond the Eastside.

Lessons

1. There is a need to respect the cautions, pauses, hesitations, and contradictions of partners. These are a natural part of everyone's learning and decision-making process, and they have meaning. Similarly, grant opportunities should not push partners and researchers into premature action or into action that is not suitable for a particular place. It is the latter, not the former, that should take the lead in defining possibilities as well as taking action.
2. The truly engaged researcher/scholar is someone who crosses boundaries, a person with blurry edges. S/he is simultaneously an insider and an outsider, a translator and a storyteller. This is a privileged position, but it also can be a difficult and lonely one. It is wise to see oneself as a "vulnerable observer," to use Ruth Behar's term, and to read the ethnographies and heed the reflections of academics and outsiders who have crossed and re-crossed these social spaces.
3. There is a need for engaged researchers to understand that they will not always be listened to or included in projects or community deliberations. It is not a breach of friendship or the end of a

partnership, but an indication that a project or process now belongs to the community—that it has become their responsibility to manage and use it to generate new creative possibilities. It can be hard for engaged scholars to let go, but they must. They can (and should) continue to have lunch with partners on a regular basis to “catch up.” There is a natural and healthy ebb and flow to all such relationships.

4. There are no experts. Everyone has something to teach and to learn. Give and share credit—always.

5. The Future

“From the Inside Out” is an ongoing study of community development, using the food system as its lens and connective tissue. As Lansing’s urban food system grows deeper and more nuanced, involving more residents and local institutions, so will DeLind’s engaged scholarship. She will continue to provide assistance to ANC and other Eastside organizations interested in growing food security and in embedding food and earthwork into the daily life of urban residents.

To this end, Urbandale Farm is expected to grow to 5 acres and serve as a model for “seeding” new farm projects in other Lansing neighborhoods. Its apprenticeship program will continue, targeting young adults who have limited educational and economic prospects and providing them with the skills and land resources (through the Ingham County Land Bank) to initiate their own food-based enterprises.

DeLind will assist in tracking and writing about the processes and outcomes of food system projects both quantitatively and qualitatively. A Magrath/Kellogg award would help to fund a second and much needed Eastside survey to document changes in food security over the last 10 years. The award also would allow DeLind to hire graduate and undergraduate researchers to monitor—through ethnography, story and the use of the arts and humanities—the impact of food-related projects on social security and place-making. Both sets of data will inform the work of emerging projects like the Food Resource Center and the Food System Working Group as they explore new marketing strategies, institutional networks, and master plans. DeLind’s scholarship will serve to continually remind food system leaders that solutions must fit real places and engage real people in ways that privilege their diversity, local assets, and the processes of grassroots participatory democracy.

Appendix

DeLind Works Cited

- [1] 2010: Are local food and the local food movement taking us where we want to go? Or are we hitching our wagons to the wrong stars? *Journal of Agriculture and Human Values* (Online First).
- [2] 2008: Place and civic culture: Re-thinking the context for local agriculture (with Jim Bingen). *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 21(2): 127-151.
- [3] 2008: Safe at any scale? Food scares, food regulation, and scaled alternatives (with Phillip H. Howard). *Agriculture and Human Values* 25(3): 301-317.
- [4] 2008, November 24: *The Allen Street Farmers Market and ANC's Eastside Urban Ag Program: A Qualitative Evaluation for 2008*. ANC.
- [5] 2008: *Garden in a Box (GIAB)* PowerPoint presentation (with Jesseca Taylor). ANC.
- [6] 2007, November 15: *Qualitative Evaluation of the Allen Street Farmers Market for 2007*. ANC.
- [7] 2007, January 17: 2006 Allen Street Farmers Market (ASFM) Evaluation Report. ANC.
- [8] 2006: Of Bodies, Place, and Culture: Re-Situating Local Food. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 19: 121-146.
- [9] 2004: Why Hold a Symphony in a Cow Barn? *Mosaic* September: pp. 4-5.
- [10] 2004: Place as the Nexus of a Sustainable Future: A Course for All of Us (with Terry Link). Chapter 6 in *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change*, Peggy F. Barlett and Geoffrey W. Chase, eds. MIT Press.
- [11] 2003: Considerably More than Vegetables, a Lot Less than Community: The Dilemma of Community Supported Agriculture. Chapter 11 in *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed*, Jane Adams, ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- [12] 2003 *Community Supported Agriculture 2002: The State of the Art in Michigan*. Research report published by National Farmers Union.
- [13] 2002: Place, Work and Civic Agriculture: Common Fields for Cultivation. *Agriculture and Human Values* 19: 217-224.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

March 16, 2011

Selection Committee
C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington DC 20005

Dear Selection Committee:

Michigan State University faculty, staff, students, and alumni work to advance the common good in uncommon ways. For more than 150 years we have worked to democratize higher education and help bring academic innovation into everyday life. Foremost among our values are quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity.

At MSU, engagement is defined as “a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions.” MSU’s dedicated scholars create and apply knowledge as they work to provide sustainable solutions to the world’s most pressing problems.



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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It is an honor to provide a letter of endorsement to the Selection Committee for the C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award nomination representing Michigan State University. **From the Inside Out: Building Community and an Urban Food System on Lansing’s Eastside** is a project led by Dr. Laura B. DeLind, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities. This project represents an exceptional community-based regional effort that demonstrates MSU’s commitment to collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, and transformative work anchored in scholarship.

Begun in 2002, this project has served as a regional and national model utilizing community collaboration, civic engagement and research to address a geographic area in that has been designated a “food desert” for many years. By growing local assets and social networks, the project expands on traditional market-based approaches to economic development, and enables a system of citizen involvement. The project’s holistic approach to urban agriculture, community development, and place-making has received nationwide recognition.

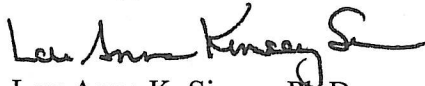
From the Inside Out: Building Community and an Urban Food System on Lansing's Eastside is a stellar project example of scholarship applied to community-based needs in a regional context, designed to demonstrate the disciplinary impact of university-community collaboration.

The longevity of the project, the support and involvement by community participants, and the scholarship make this an outstanding recommendation on behalf of Michigan State University.

I invite you to contemplate the breadth, depth, and impact of the work associated with Dr. DeLind's project. It is an honor to endorse this application for the 2011 C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lou Anna K. Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "S".

Lou Anna K. Simon, Ph.D.
President



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March 14, 2011

Selection Committee
C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
NASULGC
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Selection Committee:

I am delighted to offer a letter of support for Dr. Laura DeLind's nomination for the 2011 Michigan State University Nomination for the Outreach Scholarship W. K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award. There can be no one more deserving than she. Since 2002, Dr. DeLind has played a major role in the development of critical, community-based food system infrastructure on Lansing's Eastside, including the development of a neighborhood-focused Farmers Market, a year-round park-based greenhouse serving as a hub for urban growing initiatives, the first urban farm in mid-Michigan in half a century and a proposed Food Resource Center. Dr. DeLind's work has had a significant impact on the food security of people living in the northeast quadrant of Michigan's Capital City. For a decade, Dr. DeLind has worked closely with Allen Neighborhood Center (ANC) staff, interns, volunteers and people throughout the Eastside to craft a vision of what a food secure and healthy neighborhood can be. Not just a 'big picture' thinker, Dr. DeLind has worked extensively with diverse stakeholders to hammer out the details of our synergistic, interrelated and neighborhood-based food projects. Her leadership in creating emergent and organic programs has made her an invaluable partner these many years.

We met Laura at a 2002 meeting called to discuss a study by MSU's Brian Thomas in which he labeled the Eastside a 'food desert.' It was a sobering report. Our food system work until that time had been limited to a small pantry at the ANC. When Dr. DeLind offered to help us address food insecurity in the neighborhood with thoughtful, evidence-based practice, we had no idea the Eastside would be the beneficiary of a ten-year intensive, generous, comprehensive and, most-importantly, effective tutorial. The next day, Dr. DeLind walked into the Center with boxes of books, manuscripts and studies. So began our study of our food system. Throughout this period of study, creative assessment and planning, Dr. DeLind was a patient guide and open-handed counselor/teacher. Dr. DeLind's concept of an urban-rural partnership, bringing together rural farmers and urban residents to create a neighborhood-based Farmers Market, was the catalyst for what eventually became the Allen Street Farmers Market. But she provided more than a spark, she stayed with it. As a key member of the ANC Food Advisory Committee (2004-2006), she worked with farmers, volunteers and neighbors to create a vision, mission and the core operating principles of our award-winning Market.

Dr. DeLind performed qualitative evaluations of the Allen St. Farmers Market for our annual reports to the USDA Community Food Project. These reports, based on extensive, season-long interviews with market vendors, patrons, volunteers, growers, and staff, provided key insights on market vision,

management and the important and heady work of creating a community ‘commons’. Indeed, every week for four seasons, Dr. DeLind was a friendly welcoming presence at the Market, and patrons often looked forward to sharing their stories, ideas, concerns and complaints with the gifted listener with the clipboard and the warm smile.

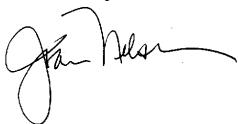
Even after our Market began to hit its stride, Laura strategized with residents, staff, and volunteers to build even greater community self-reliance around food. As founder of Growing In Place, the county’s first community supported agriculture enterprise, she was highly experienced on the topic of civic agriculture. And so we began to plan the Hunter Park Community GardenHouse together. In addition to playing a central role in program planning and development, Laura and several of her students were deeply involved in Garden-in-a-Box (GIAB), a small-scale introduction to yard gardening for seniors, disabled persons, families with kids, and new gardeners. GIAB placed 2’ x 2’ cedar boxes filled with good soil and vegetable seedlings in the yards of willing residents. Laura and her students checked-up on boxes and ‘box-holders’ and developed a public presentation to promote the program.

Indeed, Laura has continued to connect college students to ANC programming. Recently, she brought together MSU students in the Residential College for Arts and Humanities with our Youth Service Corps staff on an innovative project called Edible Hunter Park. In this project, youth are designing edible ornamental gardens in a public park, planting a small orchard, and placing berry bushes along the fence line to ensure that neighbors in the fragile areas abutting the park will have a seasonal, free supply of food. Finally, Laura assisted ANC staff in crafting several successful grant applications over the years, bringing additional funding in excess of \$800,000 to support the expansion of our food projects.

It was Laura, advocating for the development of linkages between various sectors of the food system, who led us to establish the partnership between farmers on the perimeter of Lansing and our urban neighborhood for Allen St. Farmers Market. Her insight and guidance on programming at Hunter Park GardenHouse and wonderful ideas for re-integrating food into community life (‘Put Up’ Harvest Parties and ‘Food for Thought’ Dinners) resulted in a richer, more complex and interlocking set of activities than otherwise would have developed.

Laura DeLind is the best sort of partner --generous, knowledgeable, creative, accessible, inspirational, practical, and passionate about complex food issues. We are grateful for her partnership and her guidance and preparation of MSU students for immersion in meaningful and compelling community-based experiences and activities. We know that over the next few years Laura will continue to advise us on the role of food activities and projects in catalyzing neighborhood-based identity and action. We are so pleased that Dr. DeLind’s enormous contribution to the creation of a critical food infrastructure in this quadrant Lansing has been recognized via her nomination, and we respectfully encourage her selection for the Outreach Scholarship W. K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Nelson', written in a cursive style.

Joan Nelson, Director

“Much more than a physical space; community is an experience” – Ron David