

Community Connections



Working Together for a Healthier Detroit



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M.D., CURES Director

We're excited to share our first newsletter and to be able to respond to questions and concerns that we've learned at our outreach events. As Director of the Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors (CURES), I'm proud that Wayne State University is one of only 20 centers nationwide focused on addressing questions about environmental health with the community that those stressors impose upon. We've had a lot of success collaborating with Detroiters in understanding what challenges they face and will continue to help find answers. We hope you'll find the information in this newsletter, and future newsletters, addresses questions you have about stressors in your environment, and that you'll contact us to pose new questions so we can learn more about the types of concerns people have in Detroit.

We hope you'll join us in sharing this information and collaborating with us to build a healthier Detroit!

99%

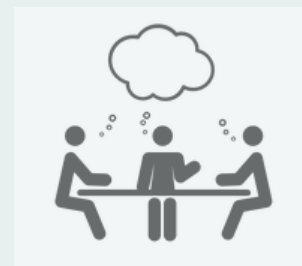
of program attendees said they learned something new

What We Do

Our goal is to increase awareness about environmental health issues. We do this through hosting educational programs that Wayne State University students (pictured setting up) film and produce a video so that we can increase our reach beyond those who were able to attend. Our community outreach coordinator visits smaller venues including churches, clubs and block groups to be able to share the information and resources.



The **CURES COEC** (Community Outreach and Engagement Core) aims to increase dialogue about environmental health issues and facilitate communication between scientists and Detroiters.



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Editor - Carrie Leach

Out & About with Brian

PILOT PROJECTS

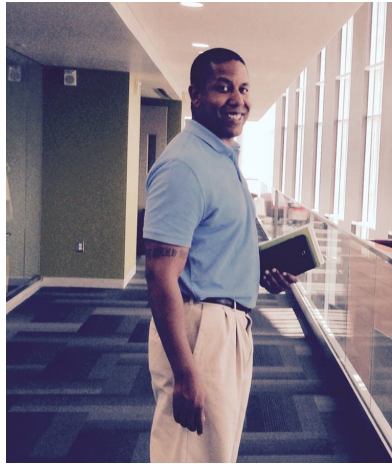
Our center provides funding for researchers to pilot test research ideas aimed at addressing environmental health problems that are of concern to the communities of Detroit.

CURES researchers are paired with community members to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the city. A few examples of what is being studied include:

- Petroleum Coke, known as “Petcoke” is residual material from oil refining piled along the riverfront
- Chemicals found in soil in Detroit neighborhoods such as arsenic
- Neighborhood stressors identified by older African American Detroiters
- Mercury exposure impact on the immune system
- Lead in refugee families
- Heavy metal exposure and antibiotic resistance in urban farms



Please contact Tom Kocarek at t.kocarek@wayne.edu for more information about our pilot projects.



Good Day! I’m Brian, the Community Outreach and Engagement Core coordinator here at CURES, and it’s my job to go “out and about” throughout the city spreading the good word of what we do here!

I’ve been spreading the information from our Environmental Health Chats to community groups and organizations around the city of Detroit. However, it’s

not just my job to tell you about the CURES research that impacts your life. I also find out your concerns as citizens when it comes to your health and the environment and pass them along to the CURES research team.

So far I’ve received great questions dealing with mercury and fish, air quality, and social stressors like the quality of the neighborhoods we live in. These questions will be answered in this newsletter and on our website and Facebook pages, so keep in touch!

Every group that I have met with has been engaged and eager to learn more about how what we do here at CURES impacts our daily lives. My plan is to continue to communicate to Detroiters like you in hopes of building a bridge between the research community and the community at large. Please feel free to contact me at 313-577-5045 or email brian.smith9@wayne.edu.



UNDERSTANDING THE “STRESSOR” IN CENTER FOR URBAN RESPONSES TO ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS

CURES is dedicated to finding how exposure to “stressors” affect our health. Stressors are be chemical or non-chemical factors we come across during every day life that may lead to health problems later on in life. Examples of stressors include air and water pollution, workplace chemicals, bad food, the safety of our neighborhoods, and a number of others.

Food Matters: Making Good Choices Benefits Everyone

Stores make organic, locally grown produce more accessible than ever. The question becomes, what's the difference? What does organic really mean? What's the benefit of buying locally grown produce? With so much information out there, it's hard to know where and what to buy. We were able to get answers to some of these questions at our program entitled *Good Food = Good Health*. We shared this information with smaller venues like your church or group.

Why Buy Organic?

Organic fruits and vegetables have more nutrients. A study published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine* found that on average, organically grown foods provide 21% more iron, 27% more magnesium, and 14% more phosphorus than traditionally grown produce.

Purchasing organically grown food reduces the amount of chemicals you're ingesting. You're also reducing the amount of chemicals in the air, our water supply, soil, and our bodies. Your friends will thank you.

Why Buy Local?

Local food has more nutrients! Since the food doesn't have to travel far, there is less time for the nutrient value to decrease.

Buying locally grown produce boosts the local economy. Locally situated farmers reinvest their earnings by spending money in the communities they live in.

By purchasing local foods you reduce the environmental impact of transporting food from longer geographic distances.

Remember, the choices you make not only impact your individual health, but also help improve our collective environmental health.

What Can I Do?

- ✓ Learn more about the topic by hosting a community outreach event to share our program with your church, club or group.
- ✓ Support local growers by shopping at farmers' markets or community gardens, or...
- ✓ Head to Eastern Market any Saturday of the year to purchase fresh, locally grown produce. The music, art and fresh baked breads are a bonus!

Purchasing locally grown produce:



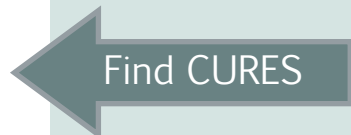
Isn't processed



Reduces resources needed to transport



Supports local jobs



QUESTION CORNER: WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW

Q: *Can you reduce the amount of mercury in fish by cooking it a certain way?*

A: No. No matter how you clean or cook your fish, you can't reduce the amount of mercury. Choosing fish that are low in mercury is the best way to reduce exposure to it.

Q: *Does wild or farm raised fish have more mercury?*

A: Maybe. Farm raised fish are fed a controlled diet and may have been exposed to less mercury than their free range friends. The problem is that most farms are in oceans or near the shoreline, so they can still absorb mercury. For more information visit www.michigan.gov.



Q: *Where does mercury come from?*

A: Coal burning power plants have increased the amount of airborne mercury that eventually ends up in our water. Mercury enters the marine food chain and “bioaccumulates” or builds up from small fish consumed by bigger fish. That’s why bigger fish tend to have more mercury content than smaller ones.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: CADILLAC URBAN GARDENS

Our Community Advisory Board (CAB) plays an important role in the work we do. In this issue we're featuring our partnership with [Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision \(SDEV\)](http://www.sdevweb.org) and their greenspace/community garden, Cadillac Urban Gardens that's been in operation since April of 2012.

What led to the creation of Cadillac Urban Gardens?

In 2011 SDEV and the Ideal Group partnered with local community organizations and residents to create Scarcyny Park, a perennial and recreational garden. The following year, General Motors approached our group to find a reuse for steel containers they were using to ship auto parts in from Asia. We decided to repurpose them into raised planter beds and create a garden on what was a vacant parking lot (formerly the Cadillac Executive Parking lot for the Clark Street Cadillac Plant). Cadillac Urban Gardens is a raised bed fruit and vegetable garden that provides free, fresh produce for the community. SDEV is the lead non-profit partner working with the Ideal Group on this project. Other key partners include GM, Detroit Cristo Rey High School, and neighborhood residents.

Is it open to the public? What days and times?

Growing season is April to November (this year we are testing out a hoop house design to extend the growing season). It is open Monday through Friday 9 am—5 pm, Saturday 9 am—1 pm, or by appointment during off hours/days. To learn more visit www.sdevweb.org.

