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Spark

THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING (CCEL)

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Fall 2023 Newsletter

Claudia May Dr.

Sarah Disher

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THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING (CCEL)

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

A Message from the Executive Director of the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL)

WHEN RONDO COLLARD GREENS TELL STORIES AND INSPIRE CONNECTIONS ACROSS CULTURES

In the summer of 2023, during the annual National Night Out held on a street in Rondo, one of the community partners of the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance handed me enormous bushels of organic leafy collard greens. As I carried this bounty of richly green collards home, I thought a lot about the generosity of the incredible community members I have had the privilege to meet in the Frogtown, Summit-University, Rondo, South and North Minneapolis, East St. Paul neighborhoods, and beyond. In juggling a sometimes over-packed schedule, it is easier for me to order take-out or microwave-ready-made food than cook a meal for myself from scratch. But the gift of free collard greens prompted me to cook a meal for myself with a main ingredient grown by those who loved the land, loved producing organic vegetables, loved the people of Rondo, loved partnership, and loved the humanity of all.



TWIN CITIES EVENTS COMING SOON:

URBAN FARM AND GARDEN ALLIANCE ANNUAL GREENS CELEBRATION

Saturday, December 2nd
1:30-3:30 PM

Pilgrim Baptist Church
732 Central Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN, 55104
To RSVP Email

urbanfarmandgardenalliance@gmail.com

THE URBAN VILLAGE GALA

Wednesday, December 6th, 6-8 pm
Bethel University Underground
3900 Bethel Drive
Arden Hills, MN, 55112
Register [here](#)

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER 41ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Wednesday, December 13th, 4-8 pm
Dispute Resolution Center
844 Selby Ave
Saint Paul, MN, 55104

UNION GOSPEL MISSION TWIN CITIES CHRISTMAS MEAL DELIVERY

Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities will be hosting a Christmas Day Meal and also delivering meals.
To volunteer or with questions, email speterka@ugmtc.org.





I devoured the delicious organic collard greens within days. I could not get enough of those greens. When I ate my last bowl of greens from this batch, I felt a little sad. Eager to relive this experience of savoring the gift of food love, I purchased organic collards from a local mainline grocery store and cooked them, but they did not taste the same to me. I discovered that meeting the people who grow the food I eat impacts my appreciation of the produce I cook.

Connecting with others, hearing and sharing our stories, valuing our experiences, and learning from each other, can enrich our appreciation of those we encounter. Nurturing such humane connections enables us to be enriched by, and enrich, the lives of those whom we meet. These interactions and peoples are as diverse and unique as each one-of-a-kind collard green leaf.

May the stories, insights, and experiences shared in this newsletter be like the collard greens I received in summer of 2023. Savor these observations, delight in them, be inspired by them, and don't hesitate to go back for a second round of extra helpings — or more!

Warmly,

Dr. Claudia May
Executive Director of the Center for Community Engaged Learning



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DR. CLAUDIA MAY



Partner Spotlight- Urban Homeworks

EMILY LASSITER- SENIOR DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Urban Homeworks has been fighting for housing justice in North Minneapolis and beyond for decades. The mission of Urban Homeworks is “to lead the fight for housing justice so that all people have a safe, stable, and dignified place to live.” Bethel has partnered with this powerful organization for three years now, since they took on Kassidy Rouse, a Bethel student, as a community work-study intern. Emily, her supervisor, met with us to share what it’s been like to work with Bethel students.



“We hired Kassidy in the summer of 2021, and she’s been with us ever since doing a lot of our administrative database work, helping with event preparation and event support, basically freeing up a lot of my capacity to focus on really important things I wasn’t able to do before because I was always in the database. Being able to bring in a student to support those tasks freed up my time to focus more on meaningful relationship-building with supporters. It’s been a HUGE resource knowing we have someone who can take on the administrative tasks!”

“In nonprofit organizations we’re always operating understaffed with so much that we have to do and so much that we WANT to do. I would tell another organization to think about the things on your wishlist that you want to get to-- think about the tasks taking up your time, and if there are regular things you do that you can hand off, or maybe one of those wishlist items is a project that you can hand off and give an intern to take over. It’s super easy as a nonprofit to receive this support. Even the onboarding piece has been really smooth: Dr. May is great as you know; I’ve always felt supported and gotten answers to questions. Also I LOVE that we’ve been able to keep Kassidy here for years [because now] there’s a level of trust that goes both ways.”

We love that the CCEL can support the work of phenomenal organizations like Urban Homeworks, all while they provide incredible learning experiences for our students like Kassidy, for which we are deeply grateful to our generous partners!

“Being able to bring in a student to support those tasks freed up my time to focus more on meaningful relationship-building with supporters. It’s been a HUGE resource knowing we have someone who can take on the administrative tasks!”

EMILY LASSITER





Student Testimony

KASSIDY ROUSE- COMMUNITY WORK-STUDY AT URBAN HOMEWORKS

Kassidy has been doing community work-study at Urban Homeworks since her freshman year (she is now a junior at Bethel). She wanted a job, was open to working off campus, and the mission of Urban Homeworks was deeply personal to her. “[This job] is so close to my heart, and it matters so much to me. Knowing what I’m doing is impacting people’s lives and it matters-- I could do something that I feel like didn’t matter. But I know that even if I’m just updating lists and spreadsheets and stuff, I am doing something that is impacting lives and giving people hope and an ability to support their families, and that matters so much.”



“It’s not pity: we’re not just giving people houses, it’s affordable housing-- so they’re still doing it on their own, they’re paying their way, just with a little bit of help, and it’s something they can take pride in, and that’s so cool!”

“[Urban Homeworks does] this thing where they have volunteers come in and help with building houses and redoing houses, and it’s always so cool to see. There’s a bunch of old people that come every time and they’re so excited to build things and do things. There was one point when a bunch of houses got flooded, and so many people came and helped and were so happy to do so. In big cities, you hear that people aren’t willing to do stuff like that, but I was struck by how many people showed up and genuinely wanted to help.”

“[Working at Urban Homeworks], I’ve learned so much about systemic racism, how much hasn’t changed because of redlining, and how inequities persist to this day as a result of redlining and racism.”

When asked what she would say to other students considering community work-study, Kassidy said, “Community work-study is definitely something you should consider. People get anxious about things, but it’s fun and not scary at all! People talk about the “Bethel bubble,” and if you want to get out of the bubble, this is a GREAT way to do it! You should do community work-study!”

“It’s not pity: we’re not just giving people houses, it’s affordable housing-- so they’re still doing it on their own, they’re paying their way, just with a little bit of help, and it’s something they can take pride in, and that’s so cool!”

KASSIDY ROUSE





Business Spotlight

CHENG HENG CAMBODIAN RESTAURANT

In their own words, “Cheng Heng is more than just a restaurant; it’s a manifestation of the love we have for our culture, community, and cuisine. Our dishes are crafted with care, using time-honored recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation. With every meal, we strive to transport you to the bustling markets of Phnom Penh, the tranquil temples of Siem Reap, and the warm gatherings of families and friends in Cambodian homes.” This woman-owned business, a bustling neighborhood staple on University Avenue, serves up an excellent experience each time guests walk in the door. With an expansive menu of delicious meals, snacks, and drinks, and phenomenal family-style service, every experience at Cheng Heng is one that makes you want to come back again for more! Plus, this business shares hundreds of meals each week with families experiencing food insecurity through the Feeding Frogtown initiative, so you know that you’re not just supporting a business when you eat at Cheng Heng; you’re supporting a community.



*Images and text taken from the Cheng Heng website, with owner's consent.

CHENG HENG CAMBODIAN RESTAURANT

**448 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN, 55103**

Visit their [website](#)

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

9:30 AM-9:30 PM

A Final Message from the CCEL Executive Director

I want to thank the community partners who make up the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC), our Frogtown, Summit-University, Rondo neighbors, and other collaborators across the Twin Cities, for their commitment to fostering meaningful and mutually honoring relationships across cultures and social backgrounds.

I am thankful for the co-chairs of the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC), Melvin Giles (Co-Director of the Urban Farm & Garden Alliance) and Dr. Elisabeth Lefebvre (Associate Professor of Education, Bethel University), Julie Finnern, Ed.D. (Associate Provost for the College of Arts and Sciences, Bethel University), the Office of Academic Affairs (Bethel University), and Barrett Fisher II, Ph.D. (Dean of Academic Programs for the College of Arts and Sciences, Bethel University), for supporting the work of the CCEL.

I want to especially acknowledge Good Helps Inc., and its President Jack Mordh, for generously funding aspects of the CCEL's work.

I want to give a special shout-out to the program coordinator of the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) — Sarah Disher — for her invaluable help in producing our first CCEL newsletter. Please also check out the new CCEL website via the following link: <https://fsu052.wixsite.com/ccel>

In Gratitude,

Dr. Claudia May

CONTACT US

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Claudia May, Ph.D.



Sarah Disher

