

# University of Michigan Cool Cities Fellows

Cool Cities Pilot Internship Program 2009

Urban Revitalization Division, Michigan State Housing Development  
Authority

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# Rebecca Deck



Rebecca Deck is a junior pursuing her BBA at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan with a minor in Spanish. She is from Perry, Michigan, a small rural town near East Lansing. Her future goals are to work in the finance industry and then to work for a non-profit. Outside of class, Rebecca is a volunteer mentor for Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association (PALMA) and a member of Michigan Business Women.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** Eastern Market Corporation, Detroit, MI

**Supervisor:** Dan Carmody

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** Craft Mall and Flea Market Research at Eastern Market in Detroit

**Research Abstract:** Market research on local craft malls and flea markets was done to provide insight to Eastern Market Corporation's developing work with craft and flea markets. EMC is a non-profit organization that manages all aspects of Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan. The information collected will be used to develop an Artisan Village on Saturdays alongside the traditional farmer's market and a flea market on Sundays. These business developments will bring more visitors and income to the area and provide a venue through which local artisans can sell their wares. The Artisan Village and the flea market will also host incubator businesses for budding entrepreneurs.

**AFP Proposal & Funds Received:** Artisan Village: \$4000-Cool Cities Intern Rebecca Deck and Eastern Market Corporation wish to create an Artisan Village in which artisans and crafters sell their unique merchandise at Detroit Eastern Market. The development of the Artisan Village will create employment opportunities, attract more people to Eastern Market, and solve legal issues regarding street vending.

"Being a part of Eastern Market Corporation I have learned that there is a lot of hope and effort for the future of Detroit. Actually, my image of Detroit has changed a lot.

It has such a bad reputation that outsiders never want to venture to the area, but I have learned that any problem in Detroit is really just an opportunity for change. The renovation of Eastern Market has helped draw a lot of people (and income) to the area, and people are working really hard to make it a nice place to live. EMC has also taught me how easy it can be to be green. Most people think to "be green" you have to have a lot of money so that you are able to shop at Whole Foods, or travel to some far away location to make a positive impact on our environment, but I have learned that just shopping at your local farmers market helps out a lot. I mean think about it, most of the produce is organic but still sold at cheap prices, the food is all local so it hasn't been shipped all over the world, and any money you spend at a farmer's market helps Michigan's troubled economy and gives local people a chance to earn an honest living. I have also learned a lot about non-profits and also how to work with people in a business environment."



Christine is a senior in Political Science at the University of Michigan with an interest in urban/rural issues and population studies. Having attended a small private school and lived in northern Alabama for first eighteen years of her life, she decided to attend the University of Michigan because she wanted to step outside of her comfort zone. During her freshman year, she fell in love with Ann Arbor and Detroit and has pursued these loves by working in schools, low-income housing sites, and

homeless ministries. Currently, she is the External Coordinator for the Detroit Partnership as well as the Finance Chair for the UM Chapter of Relay for Life, the Executive Editor of the Michigan Review, and involved in social justice missions at New Life Church.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** Eastern Market Corporation, Detroit, MI

**Supervisor:** Dan Carmody

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** AM Market Fresh Farm Stands In Detroit

**Research Abstract:** The AM Market Fresh Farm Stands Project distributes fresh food from Eastern Market's AM Market Fresh Wholesale Market to select locations throughout Detroit. Eastern Market sets up small farmers' markets at these select locations once a week in order to provide this produce. The aims of the AM Market Fresh Farm Stands Project are to stimulate the local economy and to improve fresh, nutritious food to neighborhoods in Detroit. It is a part of the movement to create a new, creative, and local economy in Detroit that helps small business and slowly removes the city's economy from relying on a few large corporations. The most successful businesses in Detroit are familiar with the Detroit community. In order to make the AM Market Fresh Farm Stands successful, it is important that research data be reviewed. Therefore, a survey was created in order to gather data on how to maximize the farm stands' accessibility in each of the project's targeted neighborhoods.

**AFP Proposal & Funds Received:** AM Market Fresh Project: \$3250- The AM Market Fresh Project is to set up small farmers markets throughout the city of Detroit. The intended goals for AM Market Fresh is to bring fresh produce to different areas of Detroit, provide affordable food, and support the local economy.

"As stated before, I came into this job knowing I have a love and vision for Detroit, but what I didn't realize is that I would start to care deeply about the issues Eastern Market tries to solve. Let's just say, Rebecca and I feel good about eating in Detroit instead of Ann Arbor to support the economy in Detroit and I went on my first entirely organic foods shopping trip today. I really care about buying local, and, to be quite blatant, I care more about doing it in Michigan than most places because I have a special heart for Michigan and want to support its economy. I love knowing that there are things I can do to make change.

Maybe I'm idealistic, but think how much people can do if everyone realized that buying local and organic supports AND strengthens the infrastructure of the local economy, plus helps the environment. Think about if you buy your groceries from one farmer at a stand one day. You're putting money straight into that farmer's pocket. Some of it will go to farming, but maybe some of it will go to putting a kid through college during tough economic times."



Sara grew up in Macomb County, Michigan and now resides in Ann Arbor as a U of M student. She is in her junior year specializing in Sociology with a social inequality. Always involved in campus activities, she is an active member of the Michigan Dance Music Association, Michigan Hellenic Society, SHEI Magazine, WOLV-TV, and College Democrats. In her free time she enjoys yoga, bike riding, modeling, attending cultural events, and spending time with her friends and family. In the future she plans on volunteering for AmeriCorps, getting her Masters in Social Work, and obtaining full time employment at a community oriented organization.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** Focus: HOPE Detroit, MI

**Supervisor:** Debbie Fisher

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** Central Woodward/North End Safety Project

**Research Abstract:** Focus: HOPE is a local non-profit civil and human rights organization in Detroit, Michigan. The mission of Focus: HOPE pledges intelligent and practical action to overcome racism, poverty, and injustice in the metropolitan area. This research project is within the Focus:HOPE Community and Economic Development department and addresses the issue of housing, crime abatement, wealth creation, and development of social capital in the target area of Central Woodward/North End. Exploratory research was conducted to investigate existing resources, safety concerns, and social demographics of the community. This research project assisted in analyzing data for the federally funded Safe Routes to School Program and the Weed and Seed Application set up by the department of justice

**AFP Proposal & Funds Received:** Cool Corner Park Concert & Movie Series: \$4500-Creation of local film and music event on a weekly basis in the summer at the Cool Cities Park

“I find that learning from my Detroit community of Central Woodward/North End is about listening. In fact, the first few weeks of my community based research, I have taken the position of an active observer. Entering my site supplied with some background information about my organization, Focus: HOPE and the City of Detroit, I felt prepared for my research assignments. Yet, within minutes of my arrival I immediately realized how little I knew about the organization, my colleagues, community partners, and residents. Through careful and conscious listening, I have learned that the community as a whole is resilient and powerful force.

During planning sessions with my colleagues and community partners, I have been exposed to a work ethic that is unfaltering and determined to help the Detroit area succeed. For example, just by attending a discussion at the monthly stakeholder meeting with Focus: HOPE, New Center Council, Vanguard, Family Place, and Central Detroit Christian, I began to understand the array of activities that are happening in the city. On a wider scale, current work taking place involves improvements in childhood education, utilization of new safety technology, internet access, acquisition of abandoned homes, community policing, maintenance of neighborhood green space, workforce development, and revitalizing the economic market. Absorbing this information from the leaders is an important source of knowledge and empowerment because I am able to recognize how the needs of the community fit in with my research questions.”

# Alex Ocampo



Alex is an Ann Arbor native and sophomore considering a degree in Statistics, the Environment, or Sociology. He is undecided about his future and has considered becoming a teacher, a social worker, a community organizer, or a farmer. Alex enjoys playing basketball, participating in activities through the Ginsberg Center

and being part of the Michigan Community Scholar's Program, a living learning community. This summer Alex has realized how unequal, profit-driven, and unhealthy our food system is and how individual people can strive to improve the system (and also that fresh food tastes so much better!). In his spare time Alex enjoys playing guitar, eating (quality food), playing sports, and doing yoga.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** Grandmont/Rosedale Development Corporation, Detroit, MI

**Supervisor:** Pam Weinstein

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** Food Justice in Northwest Detroit

**Research Abstract:** Detroit is a city plagued with food issues. Fifty percent of the city is a "food desert." Food deserts are "large geographic areas with no or distant mainstream grocery stores" and limited access to nutritious food. Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) is a neighborhood non-profit organization combating these issues through its weekly Farmers' Market and community garden. The objective of this research is to evaluate GRDC's program success, improve upon existing initiatives, and provide helpful information to those in similar situations. Research was conducted through tracking customer activity, a customer survey, literature reviews, and community forums. We found that not only do farmers' markets like ours allow people of all income levels to eat healthier, they are also great places to build community. This research suggests that an urban farmers' market is a great asset to any community with food availability issues as it provides social, health, and economic benefits.

**AFP Proposal & Funds Received:** Grandmont Rosedale Youth Garden Program: \$1000-Establish the Youth Garden Program at the Community Garden. Youth in the neighborhood will manage raised garden beds and sell the produce at the local farmers' market. This project is important because it empowers young people through gardening, marketing, and social skills instruction while simultaneously enabling young people to combat food insecurity in their neighborhood.

"For me, most of what I have learned has been through word of mouth from staff at my site and community members. Their collective perceptions of this community have shaped mine.

I have learned mostly about the problems people in this neighborhood have with their neighborhood. My job is unlike some others, where you are working hand in hand with the community all the time. I tend to do more organizing from the office except for on certain days such as Farmer's Market Days. I have heard about the problems people have with foreclosure, crime, Detroit politics, and education.

The perception that I have heard the most though, is that people are proud to be living in this community despite the problems that they may or may not acknowledge. Perhaps this is because I work with mostly volunteers that are trying to make this community better. However, most people I have talked to feel a connection to this community. Whether it is the entirely volunteer run little league games, or doing something with their neighborhood association many people here have something more going on that just a job. This community seems organized together to do things, which I think is often rare in our often individualistic nation".

# Nisha Sheth



Nisha is originally from St. Joseph, Missouri. She is a junior in the Ross School of Business, pursuing a Bachelor in Business Administration. She is involved in Service Core for the Indian American Student Association, a multicultural sorority, and Michigan Business Women. She likes to keep busy whether it is doing activities for different organizations, hanging out with her friends, or doing work. She also loves to play tennis and cook. After she graduates, Nisha hopes to work for a couple years and then pursue a graduate degree in Business or Law.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** City of Dearborn, Dearborn, MI

**Supervisor:** Cynthia Grimwade

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** City of Dearborn Green Initiative Community Gardens

**Research Abstract:** This summer I interned at the Economic and Community Development Department for the City of Dearborn. For my community based research project, I worked to create a community garden on a city-owned vacant lot. Although the city has not had a community garden in the past, due to the collaboration between the community members and city officials, and the in depth research that went in to the creation of the garden, this project had a successful outcome that is benefiting the community of Dearborn.

Research shows that community gardens have made positive impacts all over the world, and that the creation of community gardens on vacant lots have additional benefits. The City of Dearborn is very diverse; over 80 different ethnicities reside in this city. The goal of the garden is to create community cohesiveness between the many cultures, generations, and neighborhoods that exist in Dearborn. We hope to see future collaborations among schools, churches, neighborhood associations, and the City Hall. Other benefits include the access to fresh organic produce, beautification of a vacant lot, and exercise. There has also been research that shows that community gardens in vacant lots can raise the property value of surrounding homes.

“Friday us Cool Cities'ers took a road trip to Grand Rapids, and it turned out to be pretty fun! I know all of us UofM students got closer, and we are starting to meet the students from other schools. What's cool about our seminars for Cool Cities is that we get to visit a new city and we get to learn about other students' organizations via their supervisors! One of the ladies who spoke on Friday was very touching and she did a great job talking about her organization. They are also open to talking about the problems that their organization faces. It's true, community based research is not all fine and dandy! So it is nice to hear about others' stories and learn from it.

I feel that our connection through being a Cool Cities project brings us together to help each other individually grow, personally and with our projects. Although I felt that my overall experience was a rollercoaster, I think with the end result, I can say that I did make an impact. A couple gardens were organized from start to finish, and the City has a new initiative they can trust will not be a complete fail like a lot of new “going green” programs. I've noticed it requires a lot of cooperation between all involved, including bystanders who are not involved.”

# Jack Temple



Jack, originally from Livonia, Michigan, is a senior majoring in political science. Outside of class he works with the undergraduate chapter of the ACLU and volunteers with the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County. Jack enjoys swimming, hiking, and traveling, all of which can be accomplished with a visit to his favorite place in the world, his family's cottage in Bellaire, Michigan. Jack is currently applying to doctoral programs in political science and plans to do research in political theory.

**Cool Cities Project Site:** Grandmont/Rosedale Development Corporation, Detroit, MI

**Supervisor:** Cathy Marshall

**Cool Cities Summer Research Project:** Measuring the Impact of the Foreclosure Crisis

**Research Abstract:** Vacant homes are a multi-headed threat. They can become the site of illegal waste disposal, forcing homeowners to become neighbors with a dump. Criminal activity also festers in vacant homes, endangering children and families throughout the neighborhood. As a result, property values decline, robbing innocent homeowners of their assets. The deleterious effects of widespread home foreclosure, however, are not inevitable, as coordinated community action can help to maintain the appearance of vacant properties. In order for this to happen, a systematic knowledge of the distribution of vacant homes is needed. In order to produce this information, door-to-door surveying was conducted throughout all of the Grandmont-Rosedale neighborhoods. When a property was determined to be vacant, a profile of the exterior qualities of that property was generated in order to determine what type of action would be needed (lawn mowing, porch repair, etc). Once the information was recorded, it was determined that slightly less than ten percent of homes throughout the Grandmont-Rosedale neighborhoods are vacant, yet just over half of these homes are in need of some kind of exterior improvement.

**AFP Proposal & Funds Received:** Stahelin Street Vacant Lot Clean-Up & Tree Nursery: \$2650-Implement tree nurseries in vacant lots in Northwest Detroit

“My internship with GRDC has taught me a great deal about the intricacies of foreclosure proceedings in Detroit and the difficulties that families endure when they are facing foreclosure (or, just as important, when their neighbors are facing foreclosure). I never realized that foreclosure is something that can be understood as a community-wide crisis: while losing a home is obviously devastating for the family that must relocate, the vacant home that they leave behind can become a haven for illegal dumping and criminal activity that threatens the neighborhood as a whole. I received a report from one of our residents last week who expressed concern over a vacant home that was across the street from his house where squatters have been living for the past few months. In short, my understanding of the problems of home foreclosure has been broadened from an isolated problem affecting one family to a community-wide, institutionalized problem with many different groups involved.”