

Flint Currents

Flint Currents is a publication of Discovering PLACE (Place-based Learning and Community Experiences), a regional hub of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative facilitated by the University of Michigan-Flint

Inside This Issue:

Conference Recap	1
Press Release How To	2
Community Corner	3
Dinner/Dialogue Recap	3
Teacher Feature	4
Upcoming Events	4
Teacher Resources	5
Advisory Group	6
GLSI Information	6

*Articles contributed by
discovering place staff*

Discovering P.L.A.C.E

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Our Cities, Our Classroom conference attracts more than 100 educators

On August 19, 2010, more than 100 educators from the SE region of Michigan came to the University of Michigan-Flint's campus for *Our Cities, Our Classroom*. The goal of this regional conference was to bring together educators from the region's urban centers to discuss and discover best practices for conducting place-based education.

non-profit staff provide a wealth of information on topics ranging from place-based education 101 to student authentic assessment and urban agriculture to green buildings. Over a delicious barbecue lunch, attendees listened intently to Dr. Matt Wyneken, Interim Chair of UM-Flint's Department of Education, explain the role of place in numeracy.



Place-based education immerses students in what is local – the environment, culture, heritage and art of a specific place – and uses those unique characteristics of a community as the basis for the study of language arts, social studies, science and mathematics. Turning our schoolyards, communities, and cities into classrooms provides students with hands-on, real-world experiences for learning while also allowing them to make a positive impact on the places they call home.

Community organizations and teachers alike found *Our Cities, Our Classroom* beneficial to their work. The morning started out with introductions from the University's new Provost, Dr. Gerard Volland, as well as the Dean of the School of Education and Human Services, Dr. Mary Jo Finney. Malik Yakini, Director of the Nsoroma Institute, provided the keynote speech: "Fostering Community Food Security and Food Justice".

Presenters for the morning and afternoon breakout sessions came from around the State of Michigan to share their knowledge and expertise. Program officers, UM-Flint faculty members, private sector representatives, and

Our Cities, Our Classroom closed with a networking event where attendees enjoyed ice cream while browsing information booths of regional educational organizations whose missions align with that of place-based education. All in all, many good connections were forged between attendees and we look forward to the next summer conference!

Our Cities, Our Classroom was facilitated by University Outreach at the University of Michigan-Flint and was made possible through generous support from the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative and the Great Lakes Fishery Trust.



*Top: Over 100 educators from the region gathered on UM-Flint's campus for *Our Cities, Our Classroom*, a one-day conference on urban place-based education.*

Right: Breakout sessions on topics ranging from building community partnerships to urban agriculture created ample opportunities for networking among conference attendees.

Everything you ever wanted to know about writing a press release and more...

With everything else busy teachers have going on in classrooms, writing a press release can seem pretty daunting. Not to worry - they're easier than you think. I promise. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- A press release is a great way to get your story out to the public. What you and your students are doing is exciting and new - tell someone about it!
- Media folks are busy! Aren't we all? So tell a good story! Make it short, action packed and detail oriented.
- You will need to include some standard language about GLSI and UM-Flint. It is included in the example to the right.
- Make sure to send a draft to a Discovering PLACE staff member prior to sending your release to the press.

Feel free to contact Discovering PLACE staff for any assistance you might need. We want to help you celebrate your work!

Here is what a standard format for a press release looks like:

School Name and Address

Contact:

For Immediate Release

Telephone:

Email:

TITLE GOES HERE - IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS!
A Subtitle may go here - in upper and lower case letters.

Tell your story here. Include the following: What is happening? Where and When is it going to happen? Who will be doing what? Keep this all on one page!

Please include the following information in the press release: Discovering PLACE (Place-based Learning And Community Experiences), a program of the University of Michigan-Flint's University Outreach, provides resources and support to K-12 students, teachers, school administrators, and community partners to come together and create positive change in Flint and the surrounding area. By providing knowledge about their local community and environment, students are encouraged to use that knowledge to address local stewardship needs.

At the bottom of the page, let the reader know who to contact for an interview. If they should call you at school and need to call the main office, put that contact information down as well as yours.

If you would like more information about this event, or to schedule an interview with name of contact, please call name of contact at ph# xxx-xxx-xxxx or email@address.edu.

Now, you might like to know what to do with your press release once it's written. Send it out of course!

List of media contacts:

The Flint Journal

www.flintjournal.com

Fax press releases: 810.767.7518

Attn: Marjory Raymer, Flint Community Editor; She will assign reporter; mraymer@flintjournal.com

email: news@flintjournal.com

Contact Flint Journal reporters directly:

Elizabeth Shaw (Outdoors, Recreation, Health, Environment): 810.766.6311

David Harris (Mt. Morris): 810.766.6315, dharris@flintjournal.com

The Genesee County Herald/ Mt. Morris-Clio Herald

www.myherald.net

Phone: 810-686-3840

Fax: 810-686-9181

Email press releases or news stories to Craig: editor@myherald.net
news@myherald.net (also goes through Craig)

What happens when the press contacts you for a visit?!

Get Prepared! Again, press folks are usually, yes, you guessed it, pressed for time! You will want to be ready for their visit - here are a few things to think about:

- Let your principal know when and why the press is coming to school. Make sure to update your principal about your project and the story you want to tell.
- Talk to your students. Have them practice their presentations. Ask them what they like about the project you are doing. What have they learned? Why are they doing what they are doing? These are probably the kinds of questions a reporter will ask them.
- Practice what you want to say...think about the story you want to tell, practice it a few times so that you can stick to key points.

- On the day of the visit alert school security, administrative staff and students that the press will be visiting your class. If you cannot receive phone calls in class, make sure someone can meet them at the door and help them find your classroom.
- Don't forget to let Danielle know they are coming so we can support you!
- Enjoy their visit!



Students are thrilled by the opportunity to tell of their experiences working on exciting school projects.

Community Corner

For each edition of *Flint Currents*, *Discovering PLACE* features one of our community partners.

“The Michigan Nature Association is committed to educating youth around the state about our special natural places.”
– Jeremy Emmi, Executive Director of the Michigan Nature Association (MNA)

MNA is a land preservation organization that acquires and maintains natural areas across Michigan and offers nature education opportunities and trainings in natural resources protection. MNA has three nature sanctuaries in Genesee County and one on the Flint River in Lapeer County that are available for place-based education opportunities.

Jeremy Emmi, Executive Director of MNA says, “I am very much interested in expanding opportunities for children to learn about the natural environment, but also their own local environment, and understanding the interactions between the human-built environment and natural ones. I grew up outside of metro Detroit and feel it is very valuable for children to experience a wide variety of experiences they may not normally have access to.”

MNA is an invaluable partner of *Discovering PLACE*. Just recently, Regional Stewardship Coordinator at MNA, Katherine Hollins, facilitated a conversation with teachers on lessons learned and ways to avoid catastrophe when taking students off campus.



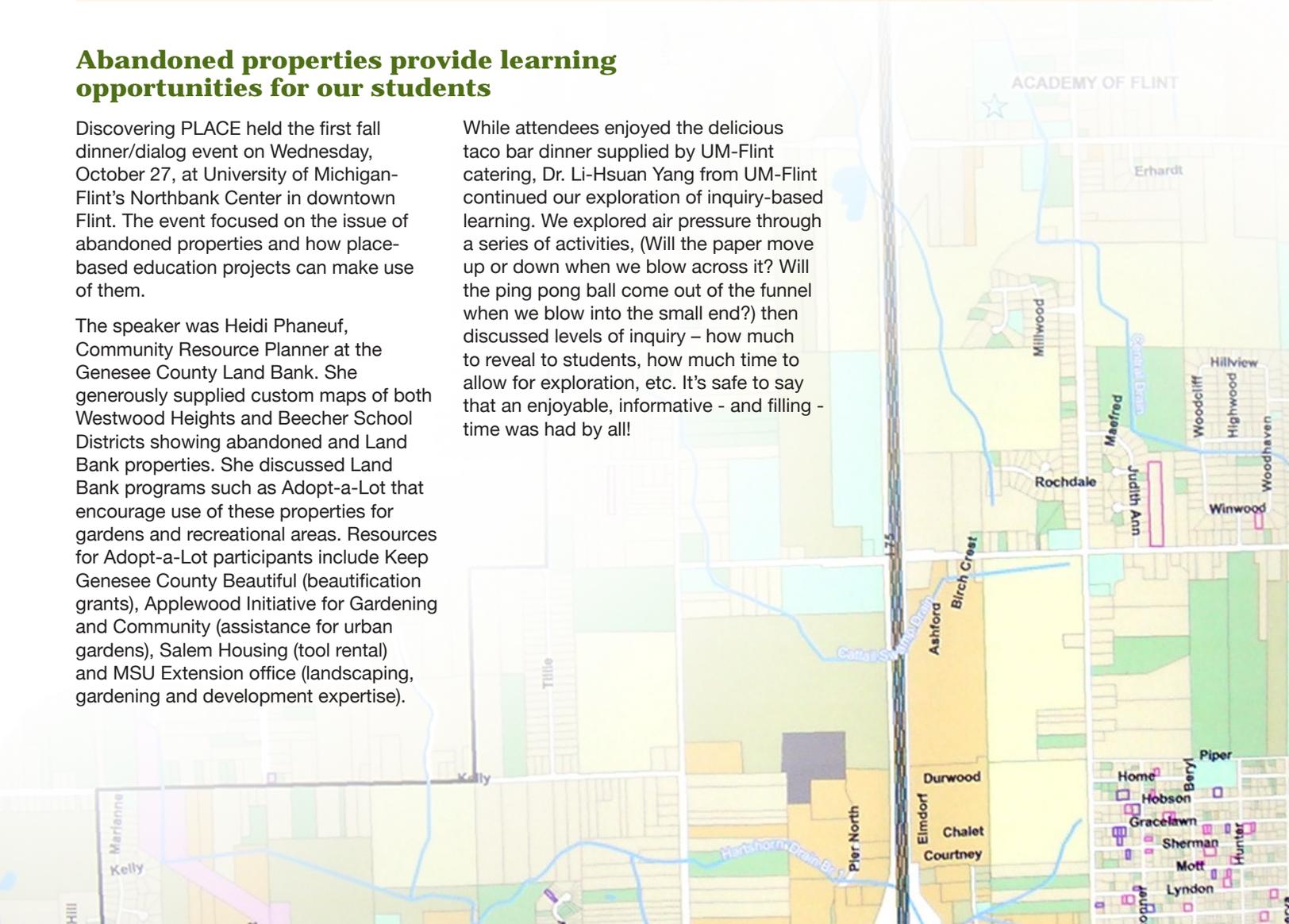
This tree, located in MNA's Dauner-Martin Nature Sanctuary, is centuries old. This sanctuary can be used to show students how natural areas can exist in the middle of development (the sanctuary is in the city limits of Fenton and borders strip malls and homes).

Abandoned properties provide learning opportunities for our students

Discovering PLACE held the first fall dinner/dialog event on Wednesday, October 27, at University of Michigan-Flint's Northbank Center in downtown Flint. The event focused on the issue of abandoned properties and how place-based education projects can make use of them.

The speaker was Heidi Phaneuf, Community Resource Planner at the Genesee County Land Bank. She generously supplied custom maps of both Westwood Heights and Beecher School Districts showing abandoned and Land Bank properties. She discussed Land Bank programs such as Adopt-a-Lot that encourage use of these properties for gardens and recreational areas. Resources for Adopt-a-Lot participants include Keep Genesee County Beautiful (beautification grants), Applewood Initiative for Gardening and Community (assistance for urban gardens), Salem Housing (tool rental) and MSU Extension office (landscaping, gardening and development expertise).

While attendees enjoyed the delicious taco bar dinner supplied by UM-Flint catering, Dr. Li-Hsuan Yang from UM-Flint continued our exploration of inquiry-based learning. We explored air pressure through a series of activities, (Will the paper move up or down when we blow across it? Will the ping pong ball come out of the funnel when we blow into the small end?) then discussed levels of inquiry – how much to reveal to students, how much time to allow for exploration, etc. It's safe to say that an enjoyable, informative - and filling - time was had by all!



This map of abandoned properties in Westwood Heights was created by Heidi Phaneuf and was explored at the Dinner and Dialogue session.

Teacher Feature

For each edition of *Flint Currents*, *Discovering PLACE* features one of our member teachers.

My name is Dawn Knapp and I'm a 2nd grade teacher at McMonagle Elementary, in the Westwood Heights School District. I have a passion for educating students about their world, through place-based education. With place-based education, we can use our local community, its environment, culture, and history, as a basis to enhance our students' curriculum. Our students will gain hands-on, real-life experiences for learning, when we turn our school courtyard into a garden and visit places in our community, which become live-event classrooms. Students will be empowered when they learn that they can make a positive impact in their world.

Why did you become involved in place-based education?

I became involved in place-based education when I learned of the opportunity to receive funding for a school garden and funding for exciting



Dawn Knapp is a 2nd grade teacher at McMonagle Elementary in the Westwood Heights School District. She is joined in this photo by her son, Joshua Knapp.

field trips that would engage my students and enrich their education and understanding of the environment and the world they live in. One of the most memorable experiences for me, growing up in the Battle Creek School District, was planting and harvesting vegetables from our school farm. It was so exciting taking the vegetables home for my family to enjoy. I also remember the nature centers and camps that we attended, and how we learned about bogs, milking goats, trees, birds, camping in the snow, and making ice cream using snow. These programs greatly enriched my education, and I wanted to bring the same opportunities to my students.

Can you tell us a little about your current project and why you chose it?

With my team at McMonagle Elementary, we chose to plant a school garden in our courtyard where our students will be engaged in a dynamic hands-on project. The garden will become our student's classroom, where textbook lessons will come to life as our students plant, grow, and harvest their own organic vegetables, fruits, and flowers. They will learn how to use rain water to make their garden grow, record the growth of their plants, put together their own compost bin, learn about healthy food choices, watch butterflies metamorphose, and create beautiful writing pieces such as poetry and stories. Students will observe, experiment, discover, nurture, and learn. Our students will become active participants and responsible caretakers in this living laboratory, where they will gain real-life experiences that they will remember for a lifetime. We will also go on field trips to other school and community gardens to gain knowledge and experience, so that we can improve and expand our own garden and

curriculum. Our students will embark on many outdoor adventures that they will remember and utilize in their future. We have decided to plant a salsa garden. It will have tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, cilantro, and maybe a few other easy to grow veggies/fruits, like potatoes and raspberries. We are also learning about Hydroponics, and are so excited to have our Hydroponic system in place and growing peppers and tomatoes already! We plan on growing herbs and strawberries as well.

What is your favorite thing about being a teacher?

My favorite thing about teaching is seeing learning come alive for my students, and watching the excitement on their faces as these real-world experiences inspire and motivate them to learn! What concerns me the most about children today, is that they don't get enough of these rich and rewarding experiences. We need to move beyond the traditional paper and pencil classroom and engage our students in real-world connections. Our students will then have the opportunity to make a difference in their community, establishing a sense of pride and accomplishment!

What gives you the most hope for your students?

What gives me the most hope for my students is that they want to learn and are so excited to be a part of these engaging projects. They look forward to coming to school, because they know that they are a team that is making a difference in their world, and that is rewarding to them!

Upcoming Events

Event	Date/Time	Location	Audience
Community Partner "Thank You" Dinner	January 13, 2011 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	501 Bar and Grill Downtown Flint, MI	Community Partners
Project Check-in and Report Out	March 2011 Exact details to be determined by schools	Individual involved schools	Discovering PLACE K-12 teachers, students, parents, community partners

MAKE A POCKET BOOK OF GARDEN PLANTS

Ask students to think about plants that can be grown in a school garden. List these on chart paper, on an overhead, etc. (Examples might include: asparagus, bean, beet, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, okra, onion, peas, pepper, parsley, pumpkin, radish, spinach, squash, sweet potato, strawberry, rhubarb, tomato, turnip, yam, etc.)

Then have students name the different parts of a plant - (root/bulb, stem, flower, leaf, seed/pod, fruit). Ask them to look at the suggested list of plants and think about what part of each plant is eaten for food. (Examples: What part of a carrot plant do we eat? (root) What part of a bean plant do we eat? (seed, etc.)

After the discussion have students make a *Pocket Book of Garden Plants*.

NOTE: Before completing the Pocket Book you might also share and discuss the book: *Tops and Bottoms* by Jan Stevens.



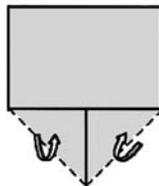
Created by Edna C. Stephens - EDCO Publishing,
for GLSI Discovering P.L.A.C.E.

POCKET BOOK DIRECTIONS

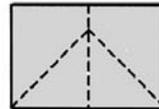
1. Fold 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper into fourths. Open.



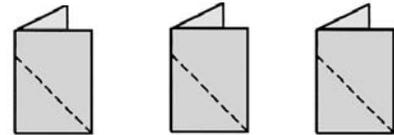
2. Fold the bottom corners up to form a point.



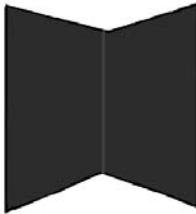
3. Fold the point up to the top of the paper to make two "pockets".



4. Fold pockets back along the middle crease. Repeat with two additional pages to make a total of three pages with six "pockets".



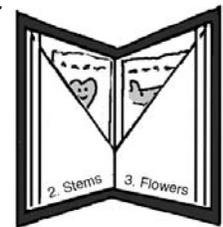
5. Fold a 9" x 6" piece of construction paper in half to make a cover for the Pocket Book.



6. STACK the three pocket pages on top of each other with open edge placed inside the crease of the folded cover. Staple. Have students write the title and their name on the cover and add illustrations.

7. Label the pocket pages with the following:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| 1. Roots/bulbs | 2. Stems |
| 3. Flowers | 4. Leaves |
| 5. Seeds/Pods | 6. Fruit |



8. Ask students to find pictures of at least three fruits and vegetables in magazines or draw pictures to put in each of the six labeled pockets. For example, a picture of cauliflower would go in the pocket labeled "FLOWER", a picture of a tomato would go in the pocket labeled, "FRUIT", etc.

OTHER USES FOR THE POCKET BOOK:

- Label pockets with pictures of vegetables. Write adjectives or other related words and phrases to put in the pockets. (Example: TOMATO: red, fruit, contains lycopene, used in ketchup, eaten on a hot dog, can be grown in a greenhouse, etc.)
- Label pockets with vegetable names. Write the name of a dish/recipe in which they might be used. (Example: LETTUCE: in a salad, on a sandwich, on tacos, in spaghetti sauce, etc.)

FOR OLDER STUDENTS

- Label pockets with vegetables/fruits. List interesting facts about each one - (Example - country of origin, different varieties, uses in different countries, how grown and preserved, vitamins and minerals, etc.) After completing, students can take all facts out of the pockets and switch with a classmate to sort into correct pockets. Facts can be also be used to create a Jeopardy game.



OTHER RESOURCES

- Websites:** • Edible Schoolyard - <http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/video>
• The Greening of Detroit - www.greeningofdetroit.com
- Book:** • *How To Teach Nutrition to Kids* - Connie Liakos Evers, MS, RD

Advisory group works to identify new role for itself

On Wednesday, November 17, 2010, Discovering PLACE held its fall semester Advisory Meeting at Dailey Elementary. We were pleased to welcome Carolyn Turner, Dailey principal, who shared information on this Beecher District elementary school. One of the positive reinforcements she has instituted is a behavior-based reward that takes the form of a school-wide parade and party for students who don't receive any referrals. She feels it is important to acknowledge good behavior regardless of academic achievement. We also heard from Annette Scott, Director of the Beecher Early Childhood Program. The academic, social and family support offered through the Early Childhood Program has benefited multiple generations in the community.

Attendees also received updates from our teachers on their projects, including

existing opportunities and challenges they face. The group discussed ways to help meet the challenges. Ideas for involving parents and the community included building relationships at sporting events and making positive phone calls home.

This meeting marked a new beginning for our hub as we begin to redefine the role of our advisory group. In the past, the advisory group helped get our hub up and running by assisting in administrative details such as constructing our hub name and mission statement. The new advisory group will focus on fundraising, advocacy and publicity as well as providing expertise in areas such as place-based education, environmental justice and school-community partnerships. The attendees shared some good ideas on people and organizations that could help fulfill the group's new functions.



Don Hammond, teacher at Beecher High School, provided an update on his student project, including the initial signage for their school's nature trail.

Do you have a story about place-based education? A tip for how to get students engaged in their community? A success story you want to share?

Consider contributing an article to *Flint Currents*, the newsletter of Discovering PLACE. Please contact Danielle Gartner at danyg@umflint.edu for further information.

Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI)

Protecting the Great Lakes through hands-on learning in the community.

The GLSI was established and is funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, with additional support from the Wege Foundation. Other funders include Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Community Foundation for Muskegon County, Fremont Area Community Foundation, and Frey Foundation.

The goal of the GLSI is to develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the Great Lakes. The GLSI funds eight regional hubs that provide leadership, expertise, materials, and financial resources to support the collaborative, community-based work of K-12 teachers, their students, and local organizations.

