

Schools, many Department of English graduates become K–12 teachers. The department also puts many of its undergraduates to work in the community, as it has one of the strongest service-learning programs in the University's College of Liberal Arts. The department's primary goal now in terms of public engagement is to establish an integrated curriculum around engagement from introductory to capstone courses, and to create extracurricular opportunities for teaching and mentoring along the way. Connecting service learning-oriented English courses with the department's public engagement programming (such as the In Da Tradition Institute) will broaden and enhance students' public engagement arc within English.

As more than one of our teacher survey respondents noted, hip hop culture *is* youth culture. Engaging with it engages students who may otherwise be uninterested in reading and writing.

The Institute focuses on the history, significance, pedagogy, and performance of spoken word and hip hop in order to encourage literacy, to inspire core-city high-school students to work toward postsecondary education, and to expand all of our ideas of what is possible both in academic scholarship and in creative writing. As we witness the teachers and students (one now acting as a teaching assistant in her teacher's classroom) bringing knowledge gleaned at the Institute to schools and centers across the Twin Cities metropolitan area, we can see those goals in action. "[W]hat we learn through the course of these workshops, lessons, and discussions," noted one teacher participant, "goes further than what one person takes away." Or in a student's simpler terms, "This is dope."

Geoffrey Sirc is professor of English at the University of Minnesota. His research and teaching interests include the history,

theory, and practice of writing instruction; popular culture; and digital media. **Terri Sutton** is the Informational Representative for the Department of English. She received her MFA from the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English in 2001.

The In Da Tradition Spoken Word and Hip Hop Institute was supported in part through a grant from CURA's New Initiatives program. These grants support projects that are initiated by faculty, community organizations, government agencies, or students and that fall outside CURA's existing program areas. Additional funding was provided by Education Minnesota's Affinity Grant Program, the Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center, and the Department of English. To learn more about the program, visit english.cla.umn.edu/alumni/SummerLiteracyProjects.html or e-mail Terri Sutton at sutt0063@umn.edu.

Update on CURA's Neighborhood Partnership Initiative

During the last two years, CURA has funded 24 innovative neighborhood partnerships through the Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (NPI). Made possible by a two-year grant from the McKnight Foundation, the purpose of NPI is to foster innovative, effective partnerships that increase involvement of immigrant, under-represented, and youth constituencies in solving neighborhood problems in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Response to the program has been impressive, with 61 innovative project proposals received. Many of the organizational partners had not previously worked together, but came together to leverage their program skills and neighborhood connections. Some examples of projects that have been funded include the following:

- ▶ "Sidewalk Saving Lives," a partnership among Hawthorne Community Council, Juxtaposition Arts, Kwanzaa Church, Avenues for Homeless Youth, Northside Arts Collective, and Homewood Studios, organized

a one-day event involving 75 youth painters and 10 adult artists to paint positive HIV/AIDS prevention messages on 10 north Minneapolis sidewalks. The sidewalks, which were painted in September 2008, attracted hundreds of community members and provide continuing education about this important community health issue.

- ▶ Lyndale Neighborhood Association and Youth Farm organized diverse community members to transform two garden sites into safe public spaces in south Minneapolis. Strong connections were made with and between Somali, Latino, and other community members in this project. These relationships also helped identify important community concerns that continue to inform the work of the neighborhood organization.
- ▶ Thomas/Dale District Seven Planning Council and the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT) partnered to create a 10-week pilot program

to engage Hmong youth in neighborhood issues while using their talents as artists. This project has contributed to greater participation of Hmong residents in the neighborhood, and the election of two new Hmong board members to the Planning Council Board of Directors.

The success of NPI underscores the value of seeding partnerships between community organizations to broaden community involvement and leverage the resources and experience of community organizations. Funding is being sought to continue the program for 2010.

On the evening of November 19, 2009, CURA will convene participants from the NPI-funded projects to share their experiences and insights. Future plans for the program will also be discussed. For more information about NPI or the November event, visit www.cura.umn.edu/NPI.php or contact Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu.