Project Updates

To keep our readers up-to-date about recent CURA projects, each issue of the CURA Reporter features capsule descriptions of several newly completed projects. The projects highlighted in this issue were made possible through the University of Minnesota at Duluth (UMD)’s Sustainable Development Research Opportunity Program (SDROP), which was created in spring 2010 to provide students an opportunity to work closely with community partners in northeast Minnesota on sustainable development projects. In the program’s first year, 10 students were awarded SDROP stipends for community service projects. The program receives financial support from UMD’s College of Liberal Arts, the University of Minnesota’s Northeast Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership, and CURA.

- **Kevin Pexa** worked with Stark Enterprises, a small, locally owned company that develops and installs sustainable energy and water conservation systems. Pexa worked on the design, permitting, and installation of rainwater-capture systems that have the potential to replace conventional wells in portions of northeast Minnesota.

- **Allison Dallum** worked with Duluth’s SHARE Program, a nonprofit, volunteer-run food-buying club and distribution network that delivers meat and fresh produce at 30 to 50% savings to anyone in the community, regardless of income, age, or residency. Dallum’s project involved preparing and freezing complete meals for network clients, and producing a cooking show video designed to teach families how to make healthy, home-cooked “fast food.”

- **Stacey Gerths** worked with UMD’s Office of Sustainable Development on the creation of a revolving fund designed to capture a portion of energy-efficiency/conservation project savings for reinvestment in future energy-savings projects on campus. Her project included establishing and promoting the fund, as well as quantifying and tracking project savings.

- **Adriane Norgaard** worked with Chelsea Morning Farm, an organic community-supported agriculture farm. These farms provide farmers with a fixed income from local family shareholders to cover their operational costs throughout the growing season. Norgaard worked on all aspects of the farm operation, from marketing shares to growing and distributing food.

- **Justin Gramenz** worked with the Institute for a Sustainable Future, a Duluth-based nonprofit, researching the City of Duluth’s zoning and planning regulations to identify barriers to urban farming. Gramenz also prepared and presented a proposal to the Duluth City Council outlining how the city could use zoning and planning to promote food security and urban farming.

- **Jessica Welch** worked with the Legal Aid Service of Northeastern Minnesota, a nonprofit law firm that provides low-income residents with civil legal services. Welch helped individuals and families obtain or retain safe and affordable housing. She handled cases from start to finish, from initial meetings with clients to representing clients at informal hearings with local-property management firms that had denied access to affordable housing.

- **Tristin Hafner** worked with the Duluth Grill Restaurant, which has a local reputation as a supporter and server of healthy and regionally grown foods. Hafner assisted with the construction and upkeep of several raised-bed gardens around the restaurant and parking lot. These gardens provide a unique and beautiful landscaping service, as well as locally grown produce that is harvested and served at the restaurant.

- **John Beaton** worked with Duluth’s Seeds of Success program, which is dedicated to promoting urban gardens within the city of Duluth. Beaton built and maintained numerous gardens around town, and assisted with program administrative and promotional work.

- **Linea Smith** worked with UMD’s Sustainable Agriculture Project (SAP), which was developed to institute education, research, and community engagement around local food systems and food security in the western Lake Superior region. Smith helped to develop SAP’s volunteer base and planned a one-acre market garden, the harvest from which will be distributed to UMD facilities and made available to student and staff directly.

- **Brian Downing** worked with the Northeast Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership, a University of Minnesota program that provides seed money and University expertise to help regional communities achieve their sustainable development goals. Downing researched energy-efficiency options for the renovation and expansion of Moose Lake’s ice arena to serve as a community center.