Recent Project Awards

Each issue of the CURA Reporter features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way at CURA. The projects highlighted in this issue were made possible through one of CURA’s community-based research programs, which provide graduate-student assistance for community-based applied research projects, program planning and development, program evaluation, and other short-term projects. These projects represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

■ Scaling Up Local Foods for Institutional Demand in West Central Minnesota. Carol Ford and Chuck Waibel own and operate Garden Goddess Produce, a unique winter community-supported agriculture organization in Milan, Minnesota. They are working with the University of Minnesota West Central Partnership to “scale up” local food production for institutions and retailers in the west central Minnesota region. Produce and commodity farmers need help transitioning to produce and meat production for local markets, as well as assistance with cooperative business models. Sarah Goodspeed, a science, technology, and environmental policy student at the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, will perform an intensive market study of institutions in the region that will provide solid data and aid in the creation of a network of relationships. The results will assist local farmers to find institutional markets for their produce and meat products, and determine the real demand for local food in the region. Program: Community Assistance Program (CAP)

■ Understanding Alcohol Use in the Karen Community. The International Institute of Minnesota (IIM) is an interracial, nonpolitical, nonsectarian social-service agency founded in 1919 to serve both foreign- and native-born clients. Refugee-resettlement staff and caseworkers have identified high alcohol use among the Karen, a community of Burmese immigrants, as negatively impacting the daily stability of their Karen clients. Although alcohol use has been identified as an area of concern for this population, not enough information is available to assess the scope of the problem. Kaela Glass, a joint degree student in the School of Social Work and the Humphrey School, will investigate the scope of alcohol use, the attitudes and beliefs surrounding alcohol, and the problems stemming from overuse in the Karen community, and make recommendations for how to address this issue. IIM will use the results to determine how best to address the problem of alcohol use in the Karen community. Program: Communiversity

■ Somali Legal Asset Assessment. The Legal Rights Center (LRC) has provided community-based criminal and juvenile defense services to low-income Hennepin County residents since 1970. Providers of legal services to Somalis often find themselves unable to locate the best resource referral for a client with a specific need. Specific resources are often hard to track down, and providers need a robust resource guide to help them efficiently locate appropriate services. Leah Entenmann, a public policy student at the Humphrey School, will assess the barriers Somalis face in seeking legal help, conduct surveys and one-on-one interviews, and develop a resource guide. LRC will use the results to better provide high-quality legal services to their Somali clients. Program: Communiversity

■ Cultural Institution Historic Preservation Project. The Center for Communication and Development (CCD)/KMOJ Radio (KMOJ) was established in 1976 to serve as an information and communications vehicle for the African American community in and around north Minneapolis, and to increase the representation of African Americans in the broadcast industry through training and on-the-job experience. CCD/KMOJ has significantly contributed to the rich legacy of African American cultural values and traditions in north Minneapolis. However, many of the station’s stakeholders are aging, and this history is at risk of being lost. Tim Quan, a student in the School of Public Health, will document the history of CCD/KMOJ. The results will allow this history to be preserved and shared, and will aid in the organization’s future development efforts. Program: Northside Seed Grant

■ Social-Media Tools. Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood Association (LBNA) is a nonprofit neighborhood organization established in 1994. LBNA’s mission is to improve and enhance the neighborhood in the areas of housing, business, safety, and community involvement. In today’s busy world, many neighborhood groups are using social media to communicate with residents, but no citywide summary data are available regarding how Minneapolis neighborhoods are using social media. Kristin Cici, a doctoral student in evaluation studies, will research how neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis are using social media to engage residents. The results will help neighborhood organizations such as LBNA learn from their peers and better utilize existing and emerging social-media technologies. Program: Neighborhood Partnerships for Community Research (NPCR)

■ Building a Cooperative Loan Fund. The Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD) is an association of community-development organizations committed to expanding the wealth and resources of neighborhoods through housing and economic-development initiatives. The MCCD has a large, undereutilized loan fund, as well as members that need short-term bridge loans for commercial and housing real-estate projects. However, these loan funds are currently not available to members. An MCCD member-accessible loan fund could help members to achieve their development projects. Justin Eilers, an urban and regional planning student in the Humphrey School, will identify best practices for creating a member-administered loan fund. MCCD will use the results to determine the viability of and approach to setting up a cooperative loan fund. Program: Neighborhood Partnerships for Community Research (NPCR)