

COMMUNITY WRITING NEWSLETTER

Official Newsletter of English 3020, Community & Writing,
Wayne State University



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COMMUNITY WRITING@WSU

RYAN FLAHERTY, LECTURER, DEPT. OF ENGLISH

Welcome to fall edition of Wayne State University's Community Writing Program Newsletter! Community Writing-- or ENG 3020--is part of the Composition and Rhetoric Program within WSU's English Department, pairing academic research practices with community engagement and service. In this issue, we discuss our new partnerships with community based organizations, reflect upon our work with enduring partners, introduce other community organizations doing amazing work in Detroit, and share perspectives from students. As Covid-19 continues to disrupt our communities, it's as important as ever to celebrate what community organizations (and Wayne State students!) are doing to persist and thrive. Thank you for reading!

COMMUNITY WRITING @ WSU

Our Course

ENG 3020: Community and Writing: Service IRL and URL

Zero Waste Detroit, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, *D-Town Farms*, *Freedom House Detroit*, and *Michigan Urban Farming Institute*.

Ryan Flaherty, Lecturer

This semester, students in Ryan Flaherty's three sections of English 3020 courses logged more than 600 hours of volunteering and community engagement with a number of community-based organizations in Detroit! Starting in September, more than 60 English 3020 students began branching out among about 7 different community partners-- 2 of whom are new to the Wayne State English 3020 community (Zero Waste Detroit and Detroit Phoenix Center)!

In the classroom, students are studied and wrote about the impact of neoliberal economic policies on community needs, the communication practices of community-based organizations, and ethics in community-oriented research. As the semester progressed, they applied academic research to community-focused writing and advocacy, composing research-based proposals to address enduring challenges like environmental justice, food insecurity, educational inequality, voter disenfranchisement, and the perils of mis- and dis-information campaigns.

In these unprecedented times, we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with organizations doing the meaningful work that is, in many cases, both more important *and* more necessary than ever.

Furthermore, I am proud of this semester's English 3020 students for their research and inquiry into substantive topics while fulfilling the course's rigorous service learning standard.

To better understand the organizations our students worked with this semester, visit the links provided below:

[D-Town Farms/ Detroit Black Food Security Network](#)

[Zero Waste Detroit -or- Southeast Michigan Environmental Council](#)

[St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center](#)

[Freedom House Detroit](#)

[Michigan Urban Farming Institute](#)

[Detroit Phoenix Center](#)

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Students-in-Service



Over the last 6 months, two CWEND members-- Kayla Guillen and Armen Jacobs-- have volunteered their time and talents to Freedom House Detroit's annual "Voices of Freedom Festival. The event-- which raises funds for Freedom House Detroit (a full-service facility for asylum seekers) sold out, helping Freedom House meet its funding goals

Pictures taken outside of the "Voices of Freedom" Festival Venue. (Photographs by Kayla Guillen).



Above: Pictures of the first visit to the venue for the Voice of Freedom Festival for Freedom House Detroit, located at the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation.

Kayla Guillen is currently studying Global Studies and French at Wayne State University. She is currently a member of CWEND. She hopes to bring a helping hand and a positive attitude to those around her and beyond.

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Our Work in the Community



Detroit Phoenix Center: 20 Community Writing students participated in Detroit Phoenix Center's "Night Without a Bed" Campaign.



Zero Waste Detroit: Some students worked on infographics and social media posts for Zero Waste Detroit



Saint Vincent Sarah Fisher Center: Community Writing students participated in more than 300 hours of virtual tutoring of K-12 and Adult GED students.



This is America's first urban "agrihood" in Detroit. It feeds 2,000 households for free from this three-acre garden and a fruit orchard with 200 trees. It also has a sensory garden for kids.

Michigan Urban Farming Initiative: The caption says it all... Community Writing students contributed more than 100 hours to MUFI's inspiring food security mission.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Each semester, English 3020 students in Professor Ryan Flaherty's sections are tasked with writing a Community Organization Profile Essays (COPE) on an organization that does work in the Detroit community. The essay featured in this edition is by former 3020 student, Christopher Ramus, and profiles HUDA Clinic.

HUDA Clinic: Healing the wounds of healthcare inequality

By Christopher Ramus

For the past several decades, the city of Detroit has been a primary example of one of the many American cities afflicted by extreme economic disparities. This inequality of wealth results in large swaths of the Detroit community left without access to proper medical care. In the wake of this crisis, a community organization, known as the HUDA Clinic, began serving uninsured members of the Detroit community. The clinic is a small but powerful nonprofit organization that works tirelessly to remedy the ever-increasing need for accessible healthcare.

In 2004, the Muslim community of Detroit recognized the collective need for affordable medical care and began to collect funds to establish a community clinic. In May of that year, the HUDA Clinic was opened by the Muslim Center in Detroit. After moving from its original location at the Muslim Center, a facility was obtained for the clinic on Woodrow Wilson Street downtown. Here, the clinic has been successfully integrated in the surrounding neighborhoods, providing quality care that the community needs. Since its foundation, the clinic's services have expanded to include dental, vision, and mental health services (1).

In order to continue providing the quality services boasted by the clinic, numerous organizations and individuals are key to its continued development. The HUDA Clinic depends on a combination of state grants and private donations to maintain its budget for medical equipment and medications. For four consecutive years, HUDA has been the recipient of the Blue Cross Blue Shield "Strengthening the Safety Net Grant." The clinic is also a recipient of the "Brighter Futures Community Grant" from Delta Dental for the past three years (2). As an organization that relies heavily on volunteer effort, the HUDA Clinic is frequently run by interns who are beginning their medical aspirations. While still gaining valuable experience for future medical careers, the volunteers serve with a deep desire for social change in healthcare. HUDA's mission is to not only to address the healthcare of a community in need, but to also develop healthcare leaders with an understanding of the barriers their patients face. The clinic has created an excellent environment for service learning by providing volunteers with insight of their role in this mission through training and outreach. There is a strong culture of passion for devoted community service among HUDA's numerous volunteers, and this culture fuels the successful efforts of healthcare providers and interns to provide quality care to the local community.

HUDA CLINIC...

In Action



These images highlight the diverse range of activities and services the HUDA Clinic regularly performs for the community.



HUDA CLINIC

(CONTINUED FROM PG. 5)

Issues-Actions-Collaborations

The HUDA Clinic addresses many of the issues that the Detroit community faces as a result of wealth inequality. HUDA's overarching goal is to provide improved quality of life to Detroit residents. HUDA confronts the lack of health education, high cost of patient care and medications, the increase in hunger, and need for basic goods within Detroit's poorer regions. Poorer neighborhoods in Detroit tend to also experience a shortage of other basic necessities such as access to healthy food. HUDA wishes to combat the prevalence of food insecurity in the local community. The clinic undertakes these healthcare barriers with volunteers who have a humanitarian calling. According to Frank Bauer, a former intern, the HUDA Clinic is a prime example of an organization that fulfills the need "to help our fellow mankind"(3). The clinic aims to take an immediate healthcare need to the community and expand upon that need to improve the future healthcare experiences of their patients. HUDA works to not only treat patients, but to foster a trusting relationship between the medical community and patients from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many of these patients have been seemingly forgotten by the healthcare system, and HUDA is working to bring that trust back between healthcare professionals and Detroit patients. HUDA is vested in making going to the doctor less daunting and more inclusive for patients, with the goal of getting patients comfortable with self-advocating for their health.

The HUDA Clinic has taken numerous steps to mitigate many of the issues that have afflicted the wider community. Free medical services and checkups are provided by the clinic, as well as certain medications. If the clinic cannot provide a specific medication for free, it directs patients to the cheapest pharmacy to reduce the medical cost barrier. In order to reduce hunger in the community, the HUDA Clinic started a community garden in 2014, which annually provides free fruits and vegetables to the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the HUDA Clinic recently partnered with Matrix Health to provide free fresh food to community residents.

Many community partners provide services for the clinic. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital of Oakland has provided HUDA patients with free laboratory services. HUDA is a community partner of the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and College of Osteopathic Medicine, both of which recruit teams of medical students and physicians to volunteer at the HUDA Clinic. Many students from Wayne State University also volunteer at the clinic.

With every community-based organization, success does not come without challenges. The clinic's biggest operational barrier is funding. Each year, the state evaluates the services provided by the clinic and makes determinations on funding based on the number of patients served in a fiscal year. In order to combat the overarching challenges faced by HUDA, volunteer outreach is required. Writing and communication through social media is essential in attracting donors to the clinic. Multiple fundraisers are held annually on social media platforms, working to collect donations to keep the clinic running. Higher education and universities are some of the most important partners to the clinic. It is here, volunteers and providers are recruited to assist in clinic operations. The mutual benefits of gaining valuable experience while serving the community is a major factor driving volunteer interest to the clinic.

HUDA CLINIC

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Closing Thoughts

CWEND Student Organization: Community Writing & Engagement in Detroit

Over the past year, three past English 3020 students decided to take their commitment to community engagement and writing to the next level. Armen Jacobs, Kayla Guillen, and Christopher Ramus are the initiating members of the newly-formed student organization CWEND, or "Community Writing & Engagement (i)N Detroit." Armen and Kayla played integral roles in the content and design of our newsletter, and both were significant contributors to Freedom House Detroit's Voices of Freedom festival in November (see Kayla's photography of the event, above). Chris wrote this edition's featured article on the HUDA Clinic, where he continues to serve as a volunteer. Marina Johnson, who just transferred to Wayne State in the fall semester, has also joined in our meetings and will be contributing a guest column soon.

While the newsletter is the central task of CWEND's work this semester, CWEND members are also currently involved in volunteering with Freedom House Detroit as part of the event planning committee for the refugee house's annual fundraiser.

Please read more about CWEND, our goals, our vision, and how you can become involved by visiting our Dean of Student's Office webpage:
<https://getinvolved.wayne.edu/organization/cwend>.

If you have any trouble with the page, please feel free to e-mail one of us directly:
 Kayla Guillen: gy3885@wayne.edu
 Armen Jacobs: gw2437@wayne.edu
 Christopher Ramus: go8975@wayne.edu
 Ryan Flaherty: fn0268@wayne.edu

Want to get involved??

Below is a short list of some of the community organizations mentioned in the different sections of this letter. Many of these organizations would gladly accept dedicated volunteers!!

D-Town Farms: Malik Yakini, Director; malikyakini@gmail.com
 • Volunteer page: <https://www.dbcfsn.org/volunteer>

Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUFI): contact Kaitlyn support@miufi.org
 Website: <https://www.miufi.org/>

Forgotten Harvest: <https://www.forgottenharvest.org/volunteer/>

St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center (Volunteer Registration Page):
<https://www.svsfcenter.org/how-to-help/volunteer/>

Auntie Na's Village: Marcella (Chella) Bluth-Rosenberg;
mbluth@detroitphoenixcenter.org; <https://www.detroitphoenixcenter.org/volunteer>