



Photo: PitE Concentrator Kathleen Elmquist fulfilling her Practical Experience requirement on a class trip while on the EcoQuest Applied Field Studies Program in New Zealand

## What's Inside:

Director's Letter p.2  
Minor in Sustainability p.3  
New Faculty and Staff p.3  
Alumni Creating Change p. 4  
Creating Change 101 p.6  
Honors Students p.7

## Director's Letter



Perhaps my most exciting reward as Director of PitE is seeing the amazing energy and enthusiasm of our students as they seek to make changes to improve the environment for all to sustain our earth's bounty and wonder for future generations. This newsletter describes some of the many ways our students are agents for such change.

We have used our speaker series a little differently this year, bringing to campus role models and ways to foster change, choosing this year to emphasize the importance of the arts. Arts and humanities have a long tradition as vehicles of cultural change, often being the starting place for legislative action and prioritizing science. Wendy Abrams started the globe rolling as a "mom who cares about the planet." She established *Cool Globes, Inc.*, a nonprofit organization raising awareness of global warming using the venue of public art. Ms. Abrams' presentation was an inspiration to our students. Joe Reilly, local songwriter and singer introduced us to the power of music as a medium to love, celebrate, and protect the world around us. He was joined by Evan Chambers, Chair of Composition in the music school, who debuted three new compositions, putting to music natural history poems by Keith Taylor, coordinator of the Undergraduate Creative Writing program. Our final event, made possible by the contributions of the Goldring Family Foundation, illustrated the power of film. *Grown in Detroit* by filmmakers Mascha and Manfred Poppenk was the center piece. This film beautifully captures the innovative and highly successful Detroit school, formerly a public school, now the Catherine Ferguson Academy, addressing linked environmental and social challenges in the city. The public school students in the film are predominantly pregnant girls and teenage mothers, and they run a farm in the midst of a green food desert.

Our students dream great dreams and are persistent in finding ways to realize their dreams. For many, the internship option in the program's Practical Experience requirement is a way to give back to communities, to business, to society at large, and a priority use for gifts we receive. As such, each of you who have contributed to PitE is among our constellation of change agents.

Thank you,

Paul Webb

## Winter Speaker Series Highlights



Wendy Abrams, a world-renowned environmental activist and founder of *Cool Globes, Inc.*, a public art project created to increase awareness of global warming.



Joe Reilly (guitar) and his band spreads a message of caring for the each other and the earth at PitE's Valentines' Day Concert.



Panelists take turns answering audience questions at the April 3rd *Grown in Detroit* event. Left to right: Mary Carol Hunter, former CFA Faculty Paul Weertz, *Grown in Detroit* Filmmakers Mascha Poppenk and Manfred Poppenk, PitE Director Paul Webb.

## Minor in Sustainability



In the fall of 2011, Mary Sue Coleman, President of the University of Michigan, announced the new campus sustainability goals, including the creation of an interdisciplinary sustainability minor. The minor in sustainability was launched in January 2012, and is open to all students across campus. Hear what Megan Biner, a current minor in sustainability student (pictured left), had to say:

**Q:** What kinds of courses make up the minor?

**A:** Right now I'm taking "Sustainability and Society" and "Architecture, Sustainability, and the City." Both are taught by great instructors who are passionate about sustainability, and that's really motivating.

**Q:** How has the minor fit your interests?

**A:** I'm interested in clean energy sources, sustainable business practices, and urban planning. Through this minor, I have been exposed to all of these topics. I have been inspired by these classes to make a difference and to pursue a career related to sustainability.

**Q:** What would you say to prospective students who are considering the minor?

**A:** The sustainability minor is a great way to get to know students with a similar interest, and who are equally as passionate about the environment as you are. The professors are extremely interesting people with fascinating backgrounds. Sustainability is crucial to the future of our planet, so it's a good way to get involved early.



Above: Nate Lash, PitE student, enjoys the view from a wind turbine while interning abroad in Copenhagen.

Below, left: Professor Dorceta Taylor joins the PitE Faculty

## Welcoming New Faculty and Staff

*article by Paul Webb*



I am delighted to welcome Professor Dorceta Taylor as the newest member of the PitE fold.

Professor Taylor's expertise lies in issues of environmental justice. Her recent book, "The Environment and the People in American Cities, 1600s-1900s: Disorder, Inequality, and Social Change," has been widely acclaimed. It outlines the rise of problems like overcrowding, pollution, poverty and epidemics and connecting them to systemic environmental racism and other forms of environmental inequities.

Her course, "Introduction to Environmental Justice, Issues in Race & Ethnicity," addresses environmental concerns from the perspective of peoples of color, from local to global scales. This course is popular among students, and always fills to capacity.

As the links between environment, poverty, justice and sustainability are increasingly recognized as inextricable areas that must be examined simultaneously to address environmental and sustainability issues, we are especially happy to have captured Professor Taylor's brilliance for our program.

*New Faculty & Staff continued on p.6*



Above: Lindsey MacDonald and Katelin Davis help create gardens with the Outdoor Adventures trip program

# PitE Alumni Creating Change

We would like to take a moment to show you how our alumni are creating change, both on campus and in the Ann Arbor community.



On Campus

Lindsey MacDonald

In 2008, I graduated with a concentration in Program in the Environment and a minor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. In school, my interests ranged from growing food on green roofs to building community around environmental issues. PitE allowed me to pursue all of these interests. I had especially powerful and formative experiences when I built simulation green roofs at the UM Matthaei Botanical Gardens for my PitE thesis and when I participated in PitE student government.

Since getting my hands dirty during my green roof thesis, I have dreamed about starting a campus farm at the University. After graduation, while riding my bicycle around New Zealand and scheming about this idea with a fellow PitE grad, I stopped riding every few hundred miles to volunteer on farms as a way of learning the technical details of growing food. Later, when I directed the Outdoor Adventures program at UM, I worked with a group of wonderful PitE students in the course, “Sustainability and the Campus,” to build a garden that now provides food for the program’s trip participants.

This year, with the help of a fantastic group of students, faculty, and staff, my undergraduate dream became a reality. We received a grant from the Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund for the start-up costs for farm implementation at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Now, with a group of master’s students in the School of

*Continued on next page...*

**“You can make a broader change by focusing on your own backyard”**

**-Yousef Rabhi**



In Ann Arbor

Yousef Rabhi

*article by Kristin Kiluk*

While other preschoolers were learning to share their toys, Rabhi was becoming a steward of the natural environment. Yousef Rabhi, a 2010 PitE graduate and current Washtenaw County Commissioner, found his environmental roots earlier than most. Rabhi says he and his classmates at Ann Arbor’s Blossom Home Preschool went outside every single day to learn about nature through experiencing it.

One of his favorite preschool projects involved visiting, testing, and observing Mallett’s Creek in southeast Ann Arbor. In 1996, three years after Rabhi was a student, his preschool’s creek excursions evolved into the Buhr Park Children’s Wet Meadow Project. Today, Blossom Home preschoolers and alumni help design native plant ecosystems in Ann Arbor’s Buhr Park to filter storm runoff and provide animal habitats. Just last year, Rabhi helped expand their first meadow. Yousef says the experience has taught him that, “you can make broader change by focusing on your own backyard.”

Currently 22, Rabhi started in January 2011 as the youngest Washtenaw County Commissioner in recent history. One of his key strategies to win the primary election in August 2010, for which he campaigned during the summer before his senior year at Michigan, was to involve Ann Arbor’s student population. “It’s important for me to continue engaging students,” says Rabhi, “not only as individuals who can influence the political process, but also as citizens of Ann Arbor.”

Still, come election day, he won by only one vote. “Every person I talked to, every flyer I handed out, every sign I put up, every email I sent—that made the difference. To me, that really solidified the importance that one

*Continued on next page...*

Lindsay MacDonald continued...

Natural Resources and Environment, I am creating a UM Sustainable Food Program, which will oversee the campus farm, provide an avenue for formal and informal student learning, build community, and produce food for campus and beyond.

The University of Michigan creates leaders in all different disciplines. Imagine, just for a moment, if these leaders had the tools and motivation to make more sustainable eating choices now and beyond their time at the university. I believe that we can encourage this reality through the implementation of a campus farm and sustainable food program. After all, we all make decisions about what to eat every day.

For current students, here is my advice: **find that one thing that you are so passionate about you want to stay up late at night working on it even when no one is watching. Find a mentor. Build a team of people to help you. Listen. Act. Never give up.**

**Did you know...  
PitE's first graduating  
class was only 2  
students?**

Yousef Rabhi continued...

individual can have in the political process."

Rabhi is currently working at a variety of initiatives. "What I'm doing now is impacting high-level issues that I'm passionate about," says Rabhi. "One of the actions I helped to put through was the creation of a food policy council." Recently, the board approved the creation of a food incubator kitchen for food entrepreneurs in Ypsilanti. It will eventually be situated so it can improve low income populations' access to healthy and local foods and develop local businesses.

Yousef feels that PitE molded him into a versatile and creative problem solver with strong networking skills. Though he wasn't sure of his major entering college, after taking freshman seminar, "Environment, Religions, Spirituality & Sustainability," he was hooked. A final word of advice, Rabhi says, "**pick a place and stick with it for a while—that is how we as young people can get to where we want.**"

## Wendy Abrams Challenge



PitE Concentrator Veronica Kincaid (right) interviews Wendy Abrams (left) following the lecture.

In October, PitE hosted environmental advocate Wendy Abrams to give a lecture on how to create environmental and social change. Mrs. Abrams talked about her own experience in creating *Cool Globes*, a non-profit organization that uses the venue of public art as well as public education to raise awareness among communities. Artists transformed blank globes into an artistic rendition showcasing a solution to climate change. The 100+ "Cool Globes" art exhibit premiered in Chicago in the summer of 2007. Since then, the globes have been displayed in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, and Houston before going abroad to Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Future visits include Monaco, Milan, and Rio.

Following the talk, held in Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, students surrounded Mrs. Abrams, eager to talk to her one on one about her experience with *Cool Globes* and how they might go about creating environmental change. **"Find the people who know more than you do," she offered. "Then find like-minded people and get them**

**involved. Make mistakes and have fun."**

Following her talk, Mrs. Abrams announced the "Abrams Environmental Action Challenge," which encourages students to create an action plan that aims to influence constituencies to promote environmental health and sustainable practices. Students that provide the best action plan will receive \$1,000 in funding from Mrs. Abrams and PitE.

### Challenge Winners

Kill-a-Watt will implement an improved version of the 2011 campus energy saving competition amongst the residence halls. This competition will motivate residents' competitive spirit and leverage development of peer-to-peer networks.

Taking Responsibility for the Earth and Environment (TREES) will improve on-campus indoor air quality by providing air cleaning kits to students in dorms.

Both student groups will be awarded a combined amount of \$1,000 to implement their environmental action.

### PitE's Commencement Speaker

This year, Emily Ernst will represent the Program in the Environment during the SNRE commencement ceremony. Emily is graduating with a bachelor of science in environment, with a specialization in aquatic ecosystems, and a minor in South Asian Studies. This fall, Emily will be attending the University of Texas-Austin in pursuit of a master's in South Asian studies. She hopes to work in U.S. foreign relations with South Asia.



*New Faculty & Staff continued...*

We would also like to welcome Chris Nichols onboard as PitE's new Key Administrator.

Chris arrives on campus after thirteen years with Borders Group, Inc., most recently serving as Director of Store Operations. His wife of two years, Elizabeth, works in Community Mental Health for Washtenaw County in Ann Arbor. He has a daughter, Isabella, who is a 4th grader at nearby Burns Park Elementary. Chris enjoys staying physically active and has completed three marathons and six half-marathons. He plans to run the inaugural Ann Arbor Marathon this coming June.



Chris Nichols, PitE's new Key Administrator

## Creating Change 101: Michigan in Washington

*article by Tracy Baetzel*



The Michigan in Washington (MIW) program admits 45-50 undergraduates from all majors to spend a semester (fall or winter) in Washington, D.C. Students combine coursework with an internship to earn a full semester of credits. Each finds a unique internship in their particular area of interest. Students also produce a major research paper,

attend a weekly speakers course and take electives taught by faculty from other schools sharing the residence hall. Mentors are assigned to each student to help them adjust to life in Washington.

Although the Department of Political Science launched the MIW Program, it is a program for undergraduates in any of the schools and departments. Katie Thudium is a senior majoring in political science and environmental studies who is spending her final semester in D.C. When asked how MIW differs from a traditional classroom experience, Katie replies, "I've been exposed to politically charged debates, controversial hearings, and the intricacies of the government. I've been able to get a perspective on how policy is processed outside of Congress, how arguments are formed for litigation, and how different organizations interact. MIW has solidified everything I learned in class and taught me how to apply my skills to current issues and events."

Many MIW alums go on to law school or graduate school. Others get offers for permanent positions in the organization where they did their internships. Approximately 50 program alums are living and working in Washington D.C. as a result of their MIW experience. Katie originally planned to pursue her interest in environmental matters through the study of law. However, after beginning her internship, she quickly realized that she wanted to pursue her interests on the business side, which also addresses environmental problems.

[Crossroads] 6

Political science and public policy professor Edie N. Goldenberg, who is also the MIW Faculty Director, notes that many people come together to make this experience possible for Michigan students. "The partnership between Michigan alumni, faculty and administration has been vital to the program's success. Our alumni are extraordinarily generous. They identify internships, mentor students, advise and guide program staff, suggest and support enrichment activities, endow scholarships and provide operational support. They share their expertise with our students and open their homes to them too," she notes. For more information on Michigan in Washington, visit:

[lsa.umich.edu/michinwash](http://lsa.umich.edu/michinwash)

*Ms. Baetzel is MIW's Administrative Coordinator*

## PitE Awards 2012

In April, PitE recognized two instructors as well as three students for their achievements in the program.

### Outstanding Instructor:

#### Phil D'Anieri

Commitment to teaching undergraduates and providing students with exceptional learning experiences

### Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor:

#### Amanda Garzio-Hadzick

Commitment to teaching undergraduates, and demonstrable impact through innovation, creativity, and excellence in the classroom and beyond

### PitE Outstanding Students:

#### Robin Czerwinski and Katie Thudium

Graduating PitE seniors who have demonstrated both high academic achievement and dedicated service

### PitE Outstanding Student Service:

#### Carina Easley-Appleyard

Dedicated service to PitE and the greater university community

# Meet PitE's Largest Cohort of Honor Students



Above: The 2012 PitE honors graduates are thrilled to pursue bright futures

The Program in the Environment is always growing and we are very proud to present the largest cohort of honors students that the department has ever had. Aside from maintaining a 3.5 grade point average, honors students also complete a senior thesis, allowing them to pursue their own passions. Learn more about these talented individuals below, pictured by the topic of their thesis.

## Natural Science:



(pictured left to right)

**Michelle Chirby** - Mercury in Gulf of Mexico Fish Species

**Stephanie Fortino** - Invasive Species Removal in Southeast Michigan

**Robin Czerwinski** - Climate Change Effects on Antarctic Ice Shelves

**Matthew Buch** - Thermal Energy Efficiency in U-M Dorms

**Mita Nagarkar** - Invasive Behavior of Native Michigan Plant Species

**Kyle Anderson** - Optimizing Agriculture Systems in China



## Interdisciplinary:



(all names pictured left to right)

**Sul Gi Ye Park** - Assessive Mangrove Management in Southern Vietnam

**Eileen Divringi** - Renewable Energy in Urban Neighborhoods

**Neale Batra** - Proper Diagnosis and Treatment of Malaria in Kenya

...continued

## Social Science:

**Sreya Vempatti** (top left) - Bicycle Sharing Systems in North America

**Danielle Miller** (bottom left) - Environmental Stewardship Among Musical Subcultures

**Katie Knapp** - Smart Devices Influencing Transportation

**Carly Goldberg** - Family Environmental Behavior



not pictured: **Julia Petty** - Local Food in School Cafeterias



As we approach our 10th year as an academic program at the University of Michigan, we would like to recognize that we could not have made it to where we are today without the generosity of our donors.

From the students, faculty, and staff, thank you!

To learn more about PitE, including how you can help support our community, visit our website:

[lsa.umich.edu/PitE](http://lsa.umich.edu/PitE)



PitE students James Green and Buck Castillo embark on a twilight voyage into Barclay Lake in the Upper Peninsula