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Letter from the Director

Yumiko Jakobcic, PhD



Dear Friends.

We are delighted to share our 2023-2024 Annual Report. We have enjoyed celebrating sustainability in all the seasons – welcoming students to campus and kicking off Sustainability Month in the fall, connecting with local growers at the Growing Connections Food Summer over the winter, seeding in the greenhouse this spring, and starting to harvest this summer.

This year, we were fortunate to have Isak Davis join our team as the Farm Manager & Educator. Under their leadership, the Sustainable Agriculture Project has been flourishing. We fed a lot of people, hosted several classes and research projects at the farm, supported interns and grew community at our volunteer hours.

On a personal note, 2024 marked my 10th year working in the Office of Sustainability Practices and I still have the same feeling of excitement as I did when I first stepped through the door. It is my absolute privilege to work with faculty, staff and students to advocate for and support a more sustainable future. I am grateful to continue this work.

Thank you to all of you who have been working alongside us to support students on their sustainability journey.

With gratitude,
Dr. Yumiko Jakobcic
Director, Office of Sustainability Practices

By the Numbers

This fiscal year, we had thousands of students, faculty, and community members engaged in sustainable action in many different ways.

1500

bottles of honey harvested from the SAP 2,431

tons of waste diverted from the landfill 4000

courses that discuss sustainability

23

recipients of the Sustainability Champion award 354

classes and community groups that visited the SAP 99

graduates from the ENS, Geography, and NRM programs

5000中

markers recycled

3

zero waste football games

600

servings of produce donated

Education and Research

The primary purpose of our office is to provide the necessary skills, processes, tools, and resources to address global, national, regional, and local sustainability issues through curriculum, activities, internships, and service learning projects that promote awareness and improve performance through the application of sustainable development best practices. We work diligently to offer a wide range of educational programs to further our academic impact on and off campus. This year, we attended numerous conferences, held presentations, supported student and faculty projects, and worked to provide students with a robust education.

Academic Impact

The SAP maintains a robust academic impact, offering experiential learning across a range of subjects, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the SAP, and its collaborative spirit with numerous departments.

AFN 417: Applied Food and Nutrition

This class visited the SAP to learn about the different growing practices and how local food related to human nutrition before volunteering on the farm.

ART 295: Space Studio

These students visited the SAP for an extensive tour to inform their final site-specific sculptural design that culminated in two art exhibitions.

BMS 100: Intro into Health and Human Disease

In this course, students toured the SAP and learned about the impact of fresh, local food on both the human body and the broader environment.



ENS 183: Sustainability as a Lifestyle

The farm manager gave a guest lecture to the students on the history of agriculture in the United States and the importance of sustainable farming practices.

ENS 201: Introduction to Environmental and Sustainability Studies

These students volunteered during the land blessing in the spring by helping plant tomatoes into New City's high tunnel, weed the community garden plots, and sow seeds for Grand Rapids' Juneteenth celebration.



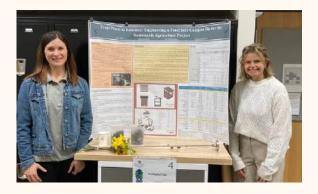
ENS 311: To Bee or Not to Bee

Students had hands-on experience about beekeeping by examining the SAP's apiary each week during the summer and fall semesters. The students took measurements about the health of the hives and applied mite treatments when necessary.



One of the engineering students interviewed the SAP manager in order to design a hot composting bin for the SAP, which they built on site at the SAP. This composter has allowed the farm to turn a significant amount of food waste into nutrient rich compost.





FVP 226: Media II

Students in this course interviewed the farm manager and used the SAP as a shooting location for a documentary on food access amongst GV students.

INT 342: Food Matters

Students from this course interviewed the farm manager to learn about tilling practices and volunteer with various farm tasks.

Educational Tours

The SAP had many educational visits from a variety of classes, professors, students, and community members

- Professor Anthony Meyer's honeybee course
- Professor Shelia Blackman's Sustainable Agriculture class
- Professor Yumiko Jakobcic's ENS class
- Professor Janet Vail's class
- Professor Alexandre Mangala's ENS course
- GVSU's Environmental Coalition (SEC)
- Accreditors for the GVSU Food and Nutrition Program
- Educational tour and volunteer hours for about 20 students from East Kentwood High School

Conferences and Presentations

Climate Change Education Solutions Summit

The Climate Change Education Solutions Summit took place with hundreds of environmental educators, students, sustainability professionals, and climate activists exploring the theme "Connecting Minds for a Sustainable Climate Future." Filled with presentations, workshops, and more, CCESS is a great way to connect with your community and the environment.



Climate Change Colloquium

The Place-Based Education Conference featured a special topic event, the Climate Change Colloquium. Featuring our director, Yumiko Jakobcic, a panel of interdisciplinary experts from across West Michigan discussed and addressed various aspects and impacts of the climate crisis.



Equity and Sustainability Presentation

This introductory workshop explored the deep connections between equity and sustainability. Social equity is related to the distribution of resources - clean and healthy waters, air, natural spaces, and more. Participants discussed ways to center social equity within sustainable practices and learned about opportunities to support this work.

GVSU Quest Series: Climate Resilience at GVSU

The goal of Climate Resilience at GVSU was to inform and educate participants about the efforts and commitments at Grand Valley to ensure a flourishing community in the face of change. As climate resilience necessitates engagement of our entire campus community, this session centered on student learning opportunities, innovative research, campus operations and planning, and community engagement.



Growing Connections

The Growing Connections Food Summit brought together West Michigan farmers, businesses, community organizations, educators, and students to develop and strengthen community partnerships and explore solutions for local, sustainable food economies.

Reach Higher Showcase

This year, the Reach Higher Showcase was committed to minimizing their environmental impact and promoting sustainability. Their efforts included eco-friendly posters, digital promotion and registration, reusable supplies, sustainable food practices, local sourcing, waste management, and sustainable transportation options.

"What Does the Earth Ask of Us?" Talk by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Brooks College hosted Robin Wall Kimmerer - a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is the author of the New York Times bestselling collection of essays *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* as well as *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Drawing upon both scientific and indigenous knowledges, this talk explored the covenant of reciprocity, and how might we use the gifts and the responsibilities of human people in support of mutual thriving in a time of ecological crisis.

Research & Assessments

The SAP was a site for both institutional and unorthodox research during the 2024 season, where students were able to learn directly from their observations about planting practices and soil health.

Dylan Drake, Intern

This intern experimented with inoculating the soil of our fruiting crops with beneficial fungi and bacteria to cultivate a biodiverse soil environment to increase the nutrient density and health of our crops. Adding those beneficial microbes resulted in whole beds of heirloom tomato plants that never developed tomato blight throughout the entire season!

Dr. Chelsea Duball, Professor

Dr. Duball, a professor in the Natural Research Management department, introduced her students to the "Soil your Undies," an outreach campaign from the NRCS used to determine the health of the soil.

Dr. Babasola Fateye, Professor

Dr. Fateye, a professor in the Biomedical Sciences department, grew heirloom Nigerian corn in a traditional West African planting and compared the growth output to contemporary corn.

Parker Hice, Intern

Parker took soil samples between the SAP's growing fields and the monoculture field adjacent to the SAP to compare the qualitative differences between sustainable practices and tilled monoculture.

Alexis Asaro and Allison Norcutt, GV Master's Students

Alexis Asaro and Allison Norcutt, both GV master's students in Public Administration, created an evaluability assessment as part of their PNH 664 course by examining the SAP and its ability to function as a healthy and impactful organization.

Ella Potts, Intern

Ella Potts, another fall intern, researched the SAP's geo-hydrology and produced an assessment about the introduction of a bioswale in the South Field to remedy the issue with flooding in that field.

Logan Schatz, Intern

Logan Schatz, a fall intern, produced an assessment for different types of renewable energy sources at the SAP from wind to solar arrays. He also tailored his assessment into a business proposal for the Sustainable Energy Wins, a competition among GVSU students who are interested in working in the renewable energy sector.

Campus and Community Engagement

At the heart of our sustainability efforts lies a strong commitment to fostering meaningful connections within our campus and the broader community. By hosting educational workshops, encouraging active participation in sustainability initiatives, and collaborating with community partners, we work to empower individuals to make a positive impact. Together, we work to build a culture in which environmental responsibility and community engagement go hand in hand, creating lasting change within GVSU and beyond.

Campus Engagement

Farm Stand

The Sustainable Agriculture Project's student interns sell their produce by the clocktower on Wednesdays from 10am-1pm during the harvest season. They engage with students, faculty, staff, and community members to share information about the SAP and its practices. This is a great way to support your local farm while learning more about sustainable farming practices. All proceeds go towards supplies for the SAP and caring for the bees.



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Energizing our World

Energizing Our World (EOW) was an exploration into the world of renewable energy. EOW Summer Camp was a one week summer camp exploration for middle school students designed to spark interest in renewable energy sources and careers. Students performed hands-on experiences with a variety of renewable energy sources and had the opportunity to engage in activities involving solar, wind, and hydro power created and facilitated by GVSU faculty, staff and students.

College Success Summer Camp

The Oliver Wilson Scholars (OWS) Program identifies, recruits and develops students with amazing potential that is translated into success. The OWS Program achieves this through direct access to resources and comprehensive and specialized services that ensure a smooth transition to higher education. Around 50 high schoolers toured the SAP alongside a bee education session.

Fuel Hub Partnership

The SAP provides weekly deliveries to the Fuel Hub to help fuel GVSU's student athletes with healthy, fresh produce.

Events & Workshops



Campus Cleanup with SEC

The SEC hosts multiple campus cleanups throughout the year, working to make our campus beautiful while protecting the environment.



Grand River Cleanup 2023

Making Waves is a University initiative to create collaboration across campus among students, faculty, and staff, as well as with the community. The goal of the Initiative is to explore and investigate the many ways that water touches our lives, from being a life-force to defining GVSU in relation to the Grand River and Lake Michigan. As part of the annual Mayor's Grand River Cleanup effort, Making Waves sponsored the second annual Grand River Campusto-Campus River Cleanup in September.



Harvest Party

Our annual Harvest Party at the SAP is always a great way to celebrate the harvest with friends, food, and games. There were open volunteer hours from 1pm-4pm, with the celebration taking place after.



Honey Harvest Collaboration

Students from the Beekeepers Club joined Dr. Anthony Meyer's beekeeping class to harvest honey from the Apiary located at the SAP. The honey was then sold to help support caring for the bees.



Movie Night with RecWell

In collaboration with RecWell, we showed the movie *The Engine Inside* to educate students and community members about biking and how bicycles have the potential to transform lives and contribute to a better world.

Pass the Plate Cooking Demonstration

In partnership with students, the SAP manager helped put on a cooking demonstration last winter, open to any interested GV student. Together, they cooked Shakshuka using spinach and cilantro harvested from the SAP. The shared meal was delicious and students left with recipe cards along with a list of how to get involved with the SAP's programs.



Soil Judging Team Sampling

In order for an intern to complete their research analysis on examining the different qualities of soil of sustainable and conventional farming, we invited GV's soil judging team to provide assistance with the sampling and analysis. We saw the evidence of the compost added to the soil and surprisingly found out that we have a sandy clay loam. This was led by Dr. Chelsea Duball.

SEC Clothing Swap

The SEC held a sustainable clothing swap event to encourage and introduce new sustainable clothing options.

SEC Mending Workshop

The SEC held a mending workshop to teach students how to mend their clothes, focusing on sustainable fashion choices.

SAP Visits

The SAP was a meeting space for several clubs at GVSU this past season because it offers a unique idyllic campus experience. In addition, the SAP hosted numerous organizations for interactive educational field trips pertaining to the importance of local agriculture, human and earth health, and how the two are extensively interconnected. These field trips broke down barriers and stereotypes about farming and empowered visitors to bring back small-scale growing practices in their own communities.



Albion College Students and Faculty

A group of sustainability students and faculty from Albion came to check out campus. They did a campus tour, had a Q&A with Yumiko, and visited the SAP.



Allendale 5th Graders

All 160 Allendale 5th Graders visited the farm twice, both in the spring and fall of 2024, where they learned about the importance of pollinators, planted a small pollinator garden, did a scavenger hunt, toured the SAP, and saved seeds from our numerous flowers. Thankfully, student volunteers rose to the occasion and led groups of students through the activities.



Community Collaboration on Climate Change (C4)

The C4 is a facilitator and mediator of partnerships, of education, and of consensus building, and creates the space for a robust climate justice movement in our community. C4 visited the SAP to learn more about what we do at the farm.



Congresswoman Hillary Scholten

Congresswoman Hillary Scholten's visit to the Sustainable Agriculture Project (SAP) on October 18 highlights the crucial significance of sustainability in our community. During her visit, the students of the SAP passionately showcased their farm and engaged in meaningful discussions with the Congresswoman about their year-round efforts and the positive impact they have on both Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and the broader Grand Rapids community.



Future Now African Resource Center

Future Now African Resource Center visited the farm on a hot summer's day in July. The students had a site tour of the SAP, where they were able to recognize the vegetables that they normally buy in a grocery store. Then, they learned about pollinators, seeing where our bees lived and compared store-bought honey to SAP's honey. Finally, the students made their own cyanotype T-shirt with plants found on the farm. One of the community outreach interns created the curriculum and itinerary for this site visit.



Juneteeth Celebration

In conjunction with the Introduction to Environmental and Sustainability Studies course, the SAP helped sow and care for approximately 1000 plants for Grand Rapids' Juneteenth celebration, where the plants were given to community members.



MSU Extension Kent County 4H

MSU Extension Kent County 4H visited the SAP in early summer, and we exchanged resources to collaborate on advertising environmental educational events.



Native American Student Association

The Native American Student Association (NASA) had events at the SAP this past summer and fall, including a summer meal and club meetings at the NASA wigwam in the fall semester.



New City Neighbors

New City Neighbors, our partner farm, hosted four volunteering events in conjunction with the SAP this past season, and we were able to plant out their entire tunnel with tomatoes in the spring and clear the tunnel of fully qrown tomatoes at the end of the summer.



Soiling Judging Team

The Soiling Judging team visited the SAP in the spring to compare the soil health and quality of the SAP to the surrounding monoculture field. The results confirmed that our no-till growing methods maintain and build soil health and organic content.



STEM Greenhouse

STEM Greenhouse visited the SAP for a site visit where the students were able to sample some of the SAP's fresh produce including fresh green beans, cherry tomatoes, and borage flowers. Afterwards, the students were able to examine the anatomy of plants through a microscope.



Trio Upward Bound

Trio Upward Bound visited the SAP during their annual campus visit this past summer. The Trio high school students assisted with various farm tasks, learned about plant identification and sustainable agriculture, crafted their own twisted willow decorations, and finally each made two cyanotype images from plants that they foraged on the farm. Hayley Blair, one of the former SAP crew members, helped create and execute the classroom portion of the curriculum for Trio's visit.



West Michigan Academy for Environmental Science

West Michigan Academy for Environmental Science visited the farm in late spring for a hands-on educational experience, which included a brief site tour followed by planting of summer squash in the South Field.

Volunteering

This season, the SAP welcomed several groups of volunteers from different GV departments so they could have hands-on engagement with local agriculture. The volunteers assisted with a range of farm tasks including sowing fall kale, weeding, harvesting squash, and harvesting our fruiting crops. We loved having the departments visit the SAP!

Those departments included:

- Staff members from the Mary Idema Pew Library
- Art Gallery staff members
- Laker Food Co. employees

In addition to the frequent department volunteers, the SAP hosted a number of volunteer opportunities for GVSU students, faculty and staff, and area community members. Those events included working with the office of Civic Engagement to host site volunteering for their "Make a Difference Days" and "Days of Service." The SAP also hosts consistent open volunteer hours every Friday from 1 pm - 4 pm from March to October. By the end of the season, the SAP had regular volunteers who visited the SAP each week to contribute to the laundry list of farm tasks.



Awards and Recognitions

2023 Sustainable Business of the Year

GVSU was recognized by the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum (WMSBF) as a "Sustainable Business of the Year" for its work advancing green stormwater infrastructure and sustainable design on campus.



West Michigan Compost Challenge

GVSU won West Michigan's annual Compost Challenge's collegiate division for the second year in a row.



Intern Spotlights



Annie Droelle

Annie Droelle is a senior majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Studies. She organized workshops and SAP visits for various community groups over the summer. She worked closely with the Grand Rapids Boys & Girls Club and Future Now to cultivate positive experiences at the farm based on their needs and interests. She enjoyed getting to engage the community in sustainable agriculture while learning alongside them. She hopes to continue community-based work in the future.



Anisa MacOwan

Anisa MacOwan is a recent graduate who majored in Environmental and Sustainability Studies. Her core focus in her major was water sustainability. Over the summer, Anisa used her knowledge in water sustainability to research the causes of the low water levels in the Marshall Sandstone Aquifer present in Ottawa County. She then worked with local agencies and the local community to brainstorm solutions that would allow the aquifer to recharge. By the end of the summer, Anisa presented her findings and solutions to the local community to educate about water saving practices local community members and local farmers can implement to solve the issue at hand. Anisa hopes to continue educating people about environmental issues and work in water conservation in the future.



Kat Vann

Kat is an Environmental Sustainability Studies major with a minor in Theater. During the summer season at the SAP, they worked on community outreach projects including running the Instagram account, helping with volunteer events, and working closely with the farm stand. Kat really enjoyed working outside on the farm and absorbing as much knowledge as possible. The following fall semester, they continued working a paid position for the farm stand on campus. As they graduate after this winter 2025 semester, Kat is excited to use their new found knowledge throughout their career.

Featured Alumni



Angela Haan

Angela Haan graduated from GVSU in 2021. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in both Anthropology and Environmental and Sustainability Studies with an emphasis in Food Systems. She was an intern at the Sustainable Agriculture Project, and Co-President of the Farm Club. After graduation, Angela became involved in community work by helping to establish and manage South East Market - a food market aiming to provide fresh, affordable, and local food for communities that have historically been underserved. She then farmed at Blandford Nature Center Farm for two years, and became a leader within the West Michigan Young Farmers Coalition.

Angela now owns her own regenerative business called Solidago Landscape & Design. Solidago Landscape & Design is dedicated to enhancing ecosystem health and community vitality through environmentally responsible practices. The goal is to support homeowners seeking alternatives to traditional grass lawns and to revitalize underutilized public and private spaces, transforming them into vibrant green areas that benefit both people and wildlife. By providing ways to capture carbon through soil regeneration techniques, composting solutions, and prioritizing native plants, Solidago aims to empower community members to make a difference in their own backyards to improve resiliency in the face of climate change.

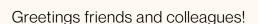


Sustainable Agriculture Project



Letter from the Farm Manager

Isak Davis





2024 was my first year as farm manager and educator for the SAP, and I had a fantastic experience exposing eager minds to the importance of sustainable agriculture and teaching them that growing your own healthy food is approachable and fulfilling. Personally, it is gratifying to witness plants growing from seed kernels into ripe produce during the slow arch of the season. It's a reminder that we all have the potential to develop into something wonderful and meaningful with dutiful communal care and healthy conditions.

Farming provides numerous sources of inspiration. At a base level, farming feeds us, offering the nourishment and energy we require to engage with the larger world through the creation of artistic forms, the development of substantial relationships (both with humans and non-humans alike), and the generation of joy! It provides a source of hope for students grappling with the harsh realities of global climate change and systemic social issues. That tangible hope is woven into the work and care of farming because each year we start seeds that are smaller than a fingernail in the warm refuge of the greenhouse, and trust that those same minuscule seeds rapidly expand into plants that soar to the skies. That trustworthy growth within agriculture has occurred year after year on our Earth and has been a constant source of inspiration throughout generations. That source is still available and waiting to be tapped into, and we will continue to cultivate that hope at the SAP for the next generations.

As the SAP enters into a new season of growth, I am eager to get my hands dirty alongside the new cohort of interns to sow the next generation of seeds in the greenhouse. This past season, we saved many seeds, which deepens our relationship with those plants and perpetuates hope of new life into the future. I can't wait to see those seeds come back to life! It is always an exciting and, now necessary, time to engage positively with the Earth, and the Sustainable Agriculture Project at Grand Valley allows students and community members to deepen their understanding and relationship with our fragile and resilient natural surroundings.

Peas and Love.

Isak Davis

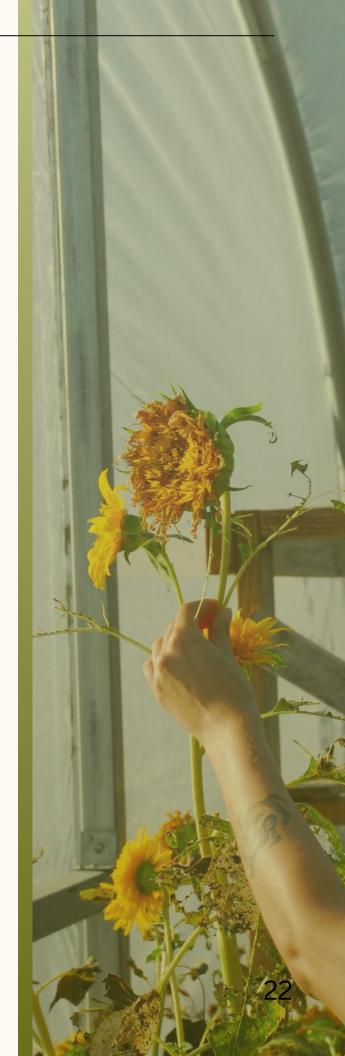
Seeding Sustainable Food Practices

This year was a busy year at the SAP. We received our Produce Safety Certification from the Ottawa County Conservation District, which means that the SAP adheres to the best produce safety practices with our harvesting and washing routine, so we can ensure healthy and clean food for our community.

Once the season was wrapping up, we sowed a cover crop of clover, carrots, and other winter hearty crops over a portion of the South Field to fixate nitrogen and maintain healthy soil structure throughout the chilly winter months.

We prepared a total of 653 CSA shares for our shareholders this past season. Think of the massive salad that you could make with all those vegetables!

This season, we supported Replenish, the GV student food resource, and the Community Food Club with over donations of 650 servings of fresh produce, to ensure access to fresh produce to all members of the community.



Cultivating Leadership

This season, the SAP had 23 interns who learned new skills, fostered community engagement, and shared impactful experiences on the farm.

The interns are one of the crucial elements to the SAP, and they effectively bridge the gap between academic pursuits into active handson experiences in the field.

Collectively, the interns tallied up over 2400 hours either working at the SAP or a SAP-related project!





The SAP also had three farm crew members who worked tirelessly to weed, harvest, wash, pack and deliver produce to shareholders and local food resources.

One of the farm crew members,
Cameron Doane, was awarded the first
Outstanding Student Employee
Scholarship from the Office of Student
Employment. This scholarship
recognizes students who have shown
leadership, dedication and innovation
within their campus employment, and
Cam certainly exemplified those
qualities on the farm.

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Nurturing Place

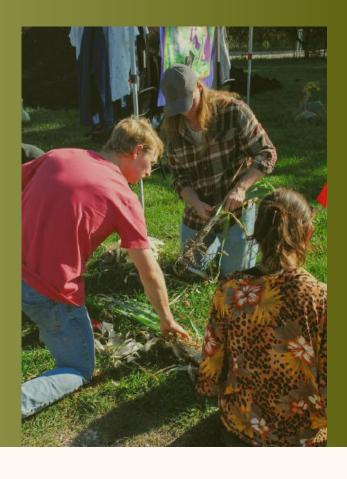
The SAP held our annual Harvest Party during the first Friday of Sustainability Month in October. This communal event featured a shared potluck meal with numerous bouquets of arranged flowers, followed by camp games, seed ball throwing, and an extensive SAP tour. Thankfully, this year we were blessed with picturesque clear skies and balmy weather. In addition to the festivities of the Harvest Party, one of the SAP interns organized a successful clothing swap, where students could exchange their old clothes for a fresh fit.





Growing Community

The SAP had numerous groups visit the farm for engaged educational experiences across a variety of academic disciplines. Overall, we had 11 community organizations partner with us for programming, 5 GVSU clubs met at the space, 3 area schools visited to learn about sustainable agriculture, and 14 GVSU courses collaborated with the SAP on curriculum. This extensive community engagement both with GVSU and other organizations demonstrates the importance and interdisciplinary nature of the SAP.





In addition, in partnership with the Office of Sustainability Practices, the SAP helped host the 2024 Growing Connections Food Summit. This biennial summit, hosts farmers, food justice advocates and stakeholders within West Michigan's food system and encourages collaborative conversation to ensure a healthier and holistic food system.

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Looking to the Future



As the SAP enters into its seventeenth season of growing, we are excited to follow the arch of the season into the future. Starting from the germination of the seeds yielding into the steady, exponential growth of the plants, we will grow alongside them until they are ready for harvest. We will strive to educate and equip the next generation of student farmers to produce their own sustainable food, uncover the buried information from within the layers of soil to contextualize our present reality of food injustice, and build a stronger community around care for the Earth. The SAP is an oasis and meeting grounds for socially and environmentally conscious students, and we will continue to cultivate those threads so hope exudes from the fabric of our being.

This upcoming season, one of our focus areas will be compost production. First, we will lead a backyard composting workshop for the city of Grandville, explaining how to cultivate a healthy compost. Then, we will build upon our partnership with the Engineering Department to revamp our compost operations at the SAP from the ground up in order to curb the food waste gap and invite more community engagement. This will allow us to produce food safe compost that we can use to amend the beds and share with community members.

It is always the time to care for the environment, and in this next season, the SAP will help students utilize their gifts, passions, and abilities to find solutions to global existential challenges right here in Allendale.

Stay Connected

For any inquires, please contact us!

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