

# SU CAMPUS AS LABORATORY

## WILDER Compound Project Promotes Sustainability

By Rachel May, March, 2014

Sustainability at Syracuse University is a collaboration between our educational mission and a thriving urban core. This spring semester, students are getting a hands-on, immersive introduction to resilience and urban sustainability in a series of weekend workshops sponsored by SU Showcase for Sustainability. At the same time, they are gaining a new appreciation for the city of Syracuse. Augie Cummings, a freshman in VPA (film studies), had not heard positive things about the city before but, he says, “This is changing my ideas about the city.”



The *WILDER Compound*, which stands for Wildly Interdependent Living + Design Education for Resilience, is the brainchild of Brooklyn-based Designer **Jill Allyn Peterson**, in conjunction with **Modern Primitive Exchange** Project Director Ethany Uttech and **Canary Project** co-founders Susannah Sayler (a professor in SU’s College of Visual and Performing Arts) and Edward Morris.

The project consists of 6 Saturday afternoon workshops that are meant to encourage students to cultivate self-reliance and sustainable living. Through the workshops students are learning community organizing and web design, repair old bikes, create bike-powered phone chargers, build an earth oven, construct a geodesic dome, and grow their own food.

In their first meeting on February 8, students learned about community organizing and web design by creating **their own collaborative website** to document the workshop series. This allows students both to document the work that they’re doing and to share it more broadly. Community organizer **Molly Rose**

**Kaufman** of Orange, NJ also joined the workshop for the day to lead a few activities and a discussion about how to be successful community organizers.

On February 22, students were joined by local **Mello Velo Bicycle Shop** owners Steve and Sara Morris for a tutorial on bike repair and maintenance. From tuning up the brakes to changing a flat tire, WILDER Compound participants got their hands dirty and learned a few tricks of the trade. The group celebrated their new skills by taking their new-and-improved bikes for a spin around the block.

One goal of SU Showcase for Sustainability is to engage students throughout the University. The WILDER project draws students from 16 different majors—Philosophy, Photography, Chemical Engineering, Architecture, Writing, Geography, Sociology, Advertising, Information Studies, Biology/Public Health, Environmental Engineering, International Relations, Film, Industrial Design, Food Studies, and Policy Studies.

Alexander Vélez, a sophomore studying Philosophy and International Relations at SU, highlighted how much he appreciates the diversity of student majors and interests in the class: “I have learned a lot of different ways of doing things from the other students.” He also went on to discuss how the project has helped him gain skills that he hopes to use in Bolivia this summer where he will be an intern at a legal think tank.

The workshop series will culminate its work on May 3 with a party at **Southwest Community Farm** where they will cut the ribbon on the greenhouse dome, cook locally grown food in the earth oven they constructed, decorate bicycles and host live music and entertainment.

Students are already developing ideas for carrying on the legacy of this workshop after the series comes to a close. One idea is to install a stationary bike in the Schine Student Center that would allow people to charge their phones with one of the bike-powered phone chargers constructed through the workshop. Another is to get a “bike-share” program up and running on campus using the bikes they repaired. With 4 more workshops in the works, who knows what they’ll come up with next?

For more information on the WILDER Compound series, contact **Ethany Uttech**.