

# ESLARP NEWS

East St. Louis Action Research Project  
College of Fine and Applied Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

MARCH 2006  
Volume 06, Issue 1

## **A Community Assistance & Development Project**

**Faculty and students from several campus units collaborate East St. Louis neighborhood groups and community organizations on highly tangible and visible projects that address the immediate and long-term needs of East St. Louis.**



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## **Facing Changes**

*Vicki Eddings*

Welcome to the first edition of ESLARP NEWS. You're probably accustomed to receiving the NTACNEWS newsletter which was published monthly at one time and then became an occasional newsletter. ESLARP NEWS will be published bi-monthly during the academic year. ESLARP has been extremely busy working with our community partners and has seen many changes over the past few years. We're pleased to report that under the direction of Professor Mike Andrejasich ESLARP continues to provide the residents of East St. Louis with the quality technical assistance our partners have come to expect.

Campus involvement has grown extensively in the recent past. We've expanded from our 3 core units of Architecture, Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture to 11 UIUC units including: The Graduate School of Library and Information Science, The College of Education, The Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, The College of Law Clinic, The School of Social Work, The Department of Theatre, The School of Music and The Department of History.

ESLARP staffs a local office in East St. Louis where Ms. Billie Turner provides assistance as our Community Liaison. In addition to Billie's constant presence in the community, we received funding from the University of Illinois which enabled us to staff 11 graduate assistant positions on campus. Under the direction of UIUC faculty members, these students work closely with neighborhood and community organizations on various projects throughout ESL. The students receive valuable community based learning experience and in turn our community partners receive technical assistance from many disciplines within the University.

## **Rebuilding Community Concepts**

*Christina Fisher*

Community Concepts was founded in 1998 as part of the Village Theatre's program. After receiving a grant from The Enterprise Community, Community Concept started to train youth in video and the how-to of stage production, which brought about the production of the award winning talent show entitled Star Showcase. Presented at the Village Theatre, Star Showcase produces 26 shows per year and won best entertainment show, best innovative show and viewers choice awards for 1998 & 1999.

In 2000, Community Concepts became a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization. After achievements in stage production, Community Concepts focused on the technical training for teens. The teen program received a grant from the national program "Learning Matter Inc." Listen Up, sponsored by Kellogg to produce public service announcements, can be seen at [www.listenup.org](http://www.listenup.org).

Community Concepts then suffered a significant setback. The Village Theatre, which houses Community Concepts, was lost in a fire in February of 2000. Since that time, Community Concepts became a mobile unit—conducting training and productions at the local city halls and gyms. ESLARP has been instrumental in assisting with the rebuilding of the theatre —providing grant-writing assistance, architectural advice and hundreds of volunteer-hours in physical assistance. The Theatre reopened its doors in 2004 and once again Community Concepts has a permanent home, training youth in computer literacy and video production.

Please visit us at: 6500 Old Missouri Avenue, Centerville, IL 62207. Tel: (618) 337-7611

## Department of Landscape Architecture gets Involved

Laura Lawson

Students in the Department of Landscape Architecture (LA) are from a community-learning course in which students learn by engaging with real sites and talking with residents while providing professional services to neighborhood organizations seeking to improve their community. In the Spring of 2006, students from LA are looking into the potential of cultural heritage tourism as well as park rejuvenation. The study of culture heritage tourism builds on work completed by Professor Bruce Wicks and his students from the Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism, who developed a report, "Mounds Trail Tourism Development Project." We are taking this project to the next level by looking at specific sites,

routes, and approaches to tourism. Our objective is to develop proposals that create positive opportunities for the local community and support the potential of visitors learning more about East St. Louis' history, present, and future goals. The students are also working on design proposals for Jones Park, Lincoln Park, and the 41st St. Corridor. This is a continuation of work from last year's studio. In Jones Park, we are working with the Parks District to develop design proposals that serve family reunions in the park. The proposals may include improved picnic areas, playgrounds, and spaces from more formal events. At Lincoln Park, we are working on designs for a new pavilion and

playground. In partnership with the 41st St. Neighborhood Action. Group, we are continuing to develop a park design and assisting with strategies for funding and implementation.



Former 41st Street President Edgar Ellis discussing an idea with University of Illinois student from the Department of Landscape Architecture..

## East St. Louis Park District

Irma Golliday

ESLARP is working with the East St. Louis Park District on tourism development projects. In September 2005, Professor Bruce Wicks and his students from the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism met with Irma Golliday, Director of the Park District, to discuss the need of a "family reunion" park in East St. Louis. Jones/Hill Park was chosen due to the location off of I-64. They toured the entire park and took special interest in the historical fountain. The group formulated a plan to assist in renovating derelict buildings such as the baseball bleachers and field which was the

location for junior league baseball and football as well as high school baseball games and concerts. ESLARP is assisting in the planning of renovating the boat house where weddings and special events will be held. The boat house will become the focal point for family reunions. ESLARP is also assisting with the layout for the picnic areas; documenting the need for newer and safer playground equipment; the need to have working and clean restrooms in addition to functional bar-b-cue equipment, tables and benches; and the need for good public relations and safety issues.

During ESLARP's fall Outreach Weekend, students, faculty and staff from the University of Illinois helped rebuild the picnic tables in Jones Park. Plans are in the works for a shelter to be built over the newly-renovated picnic tables.

## EPDC

Stacy Harwood

For the past two years, UI urban planning students have introduced university life to a group of East St. Louis teens interested in going to college. The teens learn about the admissions process, financial aid, dorm life, tour the campus and even try ice skating. The participants are students at Emerson Park Development Corporation's Tomorrow's Builders Charter School. The school

helps teens obtain their high school diploma as well as provides training in construction. UI students also spent a Friday at the high school as part of the exchange. The teens also learn about urban planning from the UI students. The teens assisted with resident interviews for the now complete Emerson Park Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

## RiverWeb

Kalev Leetaru

The mission of RiverWeb (<http://www.riverweb.uiuc.edu/>) is to promote environmental education and historical and cultural awareness about rivers and their watersheds among students, educators, and their communities, and to facilitate greater citizen participation in environmental monitoring, planning, and policy-making by harnessing advanced information technologies. Kalev Leetaru is a PhD student in GSLIS and currently stewards the RiverWeb project. He is currently involved in a model digital history article detailing the history and evolution of the East St. Louis area.

## SENDO South End New Development Organization

*Stacy Harwood & Janni Sorensen*



University of Illinois students worked with SENDO to develop and purchase promotional materials to get the word out about the neighborhood organization and increase membership. SENDO is one of ESLARP's long standing community partners. We have

worked together to develop a comprehensive plan for the neighborhood and have begun to implement the plan through outreach weekend volunteer activities and class projects. Some of the recent projects have included a No-Dumping Campaign in the neighborhood and a T-shirt fundraiser. Students worked with SENDO members to design a T-shirt for the organization. Residents wear the T-shirts to SENDO meetings and during neighborhood clean-ups. We have also assisted SENDO in expanding their boundaries and have done extensive outreach in the neighborhood to increase local participation in SENDO's work. ESLARP graduate assistants attend the monthly SENDO meetings to identify additional ways ESLARP can support SENDO's work in the South End neighborhood. SENDO meets every first Wednesday of the month at 5:30 PM at Shiloh A.M.E. Church at the corner of Baker and 19th. If other groups are interested in having ESLARP attend meetings please contact us.

## Opal's House

*Lynne Dearborn*

Opal's House represents the conversion of a two-story brick and wood-framed duplex, built in the mid 1920s, into a shelter for women and children in the greater St. Louis Metro Region. In the fall of 2003, the Executive Director contacted ESLARP to assist in the building conversion from a duplex into an emergency shelter which will serve six women and their children at any one time for periods of not more than 30 days. Working in an advisory capacity, Professor Lynne Dearborn has assisted the board of Opal's House Inc. to address code issues, examine construction estimates and bids, and address construction issues that have arisen. During numerous outreach weekends since 2004, student volunteers have assisted with building maintenance tasks, weatherization, clean up and third-party inspections. Expected occupancy of the shelter is summer of 2006. If you are in need of help, please call Opal's House at (800) 441-0819. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (800) 799-7233.

Opal's House provides the **HAT** of life:

- We instill **HARMONY**—offering peace and tranquility from violence
- We honor **ALTRUISM**—promoting safety and the well-being of all women & children
- We value **TOGETHERNESS**—building unity within families to shield us from violence

<http://www.prairienet.org/opalshouse/index.htm>

## Creating Community Technology Centers

*Martin Wolske*

Since the Fall of 2000 masters students in Martin Wolske's "Introduction to Networked Systems" course, offered through the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, have been working in collaboration with ESLARP and Prairienet to establish Community Technology Centers throughout East St. Louis and collar communities. These Community Technology Centers, or CTC's, were placed in a variety of organizations active in the community, including churches, youth centers, day care centers, veterans organizations, and libraries. These organizations have in turn used these CTC's as a tool to further accomplish their mission of outreach to the communities they serve. Prairienet actively works with the DigitalESL Collaborative to offer further training and support, including "Train the Trainer" classes and Teen Tech programs.

Students in the course begin the semester learning the basics of working with computers, installing an operating system and applications, and networking computers together. The students spend the second half of the semester using the service learning project in East St. Louis to hone these skills in the context of the needs of community outreach centers. Computers donated by individuals, organizations, and businesses throughout Illinois are refurbished and configured to meet the needs of the various organizations receiving computers. To date, forty-one CTC's have been setup in East St. Louis through the work of the class. Further, eight of these sites have had upgrades to their original CTC setup in previous semesters. For the Spring 2006 semester, one new site will be established, in addition to upgrades to five previously setup CTC's. Since Fall 2000, including CTC's setup in other Illinois communities, students in the course will have setup fifty-one different CTC's by the end of this semester.

## 2005/2006 Graduate Assistants

**Matt Bramstedt:** School of Architecture (Opal's House, Land of Lincoln)  
**Kellee Caton:** Recreation, Sport & Tourism (Family reunion, heritage trail, tourism summit)  
**Cherry Dabney:** School of Social Work (Newsletter & Rush City)  
**Jennifer Forbes:** Law and Urban Planning (Planning and Legal research for Rush City)  
**Sangjun Kang:** Urban and Regional Planning (Flooding/vacancy in ESL, GIS)  
**Kalev Leetaru:** Library and Information Science (RiverWeb)  
**Leah Ostenberg:** Urban and Regional Planning (Precinct 12-Lansdowne neighborhood)  
**Kathuria Pankhuri:** Urban and Regional Planning (Digital ESL Collaborative and Community Technology Centers)  
**Bridgette Richardson:** School of Architecture (Outreach Week ends)  
**Felicia Taylor:** Urban and Regional Planning (Website development, Village Theatre/Community Concepts)  
**Kona Taylor:** Curriculum and Instruction (Education software, Virtual Reality Technology)  
**Grant Ullrich:** Architecture (ESLARP Website development)

## SPRING 2006

### Outreach Weekends

February 10-11

March 10-11

April 7-8 and 28-29

## ESLARP Staff

**Michael J. Andrejasich, Director**  
(Associate Director for Undergrad Studies, School of Architecture)  
**Janni Sorensen, Assistant to the Director**  
(Ph.D. Candidate, Urban Planning)  
**Vicki Eddings, Administrative Coordinator**  
**Billie Turner, Community Liaison**

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## ESLARP Campus Advisory Committee

**Paul Adams**  
Director, PrairieNet, Graduate School of Library and Information Science  
**Mike Andrejasich**  
Director, ESLARP, & Associate Director for Undergrad Studies, School of Architecture  
**Vernon Burton**  
Senior Research Scientist, Supercomputing Applications  
**Lynn Dearborn**  
Assistant Professor, School of Architecture  
**Vicki Eddings (Ex Officio)**  
Administrative Coordinator  
**Cynthea Geerdes**  
Associate Clinical Professor & Director of Transactions and Community Economic Development Clinic, College of Law  
**Stacy Harwood**  
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Associate Head, Department of Landscape Architecture  
**Laura Lawson**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture  
**Robert I. Selby**  
Associate Professor and Associate Director of Graduate Studies, School of Architecture  
**Janni Sorensen**  
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**Bruce Wicks**  
Associate Professor and Director, Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism

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## MISSION STATEMENT

ESLARP establishes and nurtures mutually enhancing partnerships between community-based organizations in distressed urban areas, and students, staff, and faculty at the University of Illinois and on other campuses. Through these innovative partnerships, ESLARP promotes the revitalization of distressed areas as well as advances the University's research, teaching, and service missions.