

Fellows

Thom Barnes – Coalition for Economic Justice



The Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ), formed in 1986 by faith and community leaders, is an ongoing coalition of labor, faith, community, academic and student activists and organizations. CEJ engages in collective action to promote strong, sustainable communities and economic justice for all. CEJ's mission is to build and win dynamic campaigns for living wages, rights at work, accountable economic

development, and health care for all, through education, public advocacy and mobilization of members, communities and allies. CEJ is the Buffalo affiliate of the NYS Labor-Religion Coalition and Jobs with Justice.

Project and activities description: Thom was engaged in CEJ's programmatic work while he also participated in administrative and fundraising duties.

- a. Thom was involved, to varying degrees, in CEJ's primary campaigns. Most notably, he helped plan an accountability session with local members of the NYS Senate and Assembly as well as candidates seeking office in 2010. He was responsible for drafting invitations to elected officials and candidates, securing a venue, publicizing the event, drafting materials for the media, and doing individual and organizational turnout work. Preparation for this event included going door-to-door with other CEJ interns and volunteers in a particular election district(s) to promote the event and increase turnout.
- b. In addition to working on our statewide campaign work and organizing an accountability session, Thom helped create campaign and website materials related to CEJ's living wage initiatives. Specifically, Thom had to interview key CEJ leaders and workers to capture and record their stories for use in general promotion and in order to influence decision makers.
- c. Lastly, Thom worked alongside other CEJ staff and volunteers to ensure that we will meet our summer fundraising goals. This work included promoting and helping with logistics for our summer fundraising event – the Strike for Justice.

Work products: Thom was exposed to local and state politicians and had an opportunity to do policy lobbying in Buffalo. He learned the basics of event organizing and media engagement, and developed personal connections with workers and CEJ leaders to better understand the value of their work. By the end of the summer Thom had:

- a. Created a brief guide (toolkit) explaining how to execute a legislative accountability session.
- b. Completed a written review (based on surveying some number of participants) of the accountability session.

- c. Produced some number of written and/or recorded worker/CEJ leader stories that can be used on our website or in our campaigns.
- d. Submitted one letter to the editor related to one of our primary campaigns.

Thom, who is from a small town in the Adirondacks outside Lake Placid, was enthralled with living and working in Buffalo for the summer. Upon entering the CEJ offices in a 16-story “skyscraper,” as he jokingly asserted, “My supervisor, Allison, and coworkers were all incredibly generous and accommodating, making me feel at home in a cubicle that was wholeheartedly foreign to me. The first day, I was immediately thrust into the thick of the action. Driving out to Williamsville...I spent some time in my first union hall. Always imagining them as gruff, dirty places where leather-skinned industrial workers profess their hatred of the foreman while enjoying a few pints, I was ever-so-slightly disappointed to see that it looked much like a normal office building. The ensuing discussion within this office was decidedly working-class, though, as union leaders from the Western New York Area all gathered themselves around a table far too small for their gigantic personalities. The table a litter of important documents, union flags, and coffee cups, I watched as the Area Labor Federation discussed their agenda. All very vocal, intelligent and well-spoken, I hoped that one day I too may have a seat at that table.”

After Thom was exposed to Buffalo’s urban landscape and the inner workings of WNY labor and politics, he was assigned his primary task of the summer: organize a candidates forum with NYS Senators and Assemblymembers from the 58th, 59th, 60th, and 61st Districts. In typical Thom fashion he reflects, “I was also able to hob-nob with a few politicians, having long chats with a number of individuals running for state senate. It's interesting the moment you begin to see them as approachable people, rather than demi-gods behind the podium or on the television screen. At that moment you realize that they, too, are human, with their plights, flaws and gripes as great as the rest of us.” Along with organizing work on the candidates forum, Thom had to make calls for other events sponsored by CEJ and PPG giving him insight into local issues. “Very diligently, I went through a phone-banking list, making hundreds of calls to individuals to remind them about the upcoming public hearing on the waterfront development, PPG event, and candidates forum. The reaction I received from different individuals was interesting to observe.”



Sam Bordia – People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH)

People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo is a grassroots, non-profit community organization working to rebuild the West Side of Buffalo. PUSH organizes residents to confront institutions that perpetuate poverty on the West Side and to create and implement an action plan for improving the neighborhood. We strive to build a democratic, action-oriented organization capable of addressing the lack of living wage jobs and poor housing conditions.

Project and activities description: PUSH Buffalo is interested in creating profiles of neighborhood needs as they relate to home energy efficiency retrofit work, green jobs, and healthy homes. Profile information that Sam collected combines Freedom of Information Act requests, secondary quantitative and statistical data, Internet resources, and qualitative interview data and ground-level observation. Areas covered by Sam’s work include both West Side and East Side neighborhoods in Buffalo.

Work products: Sam wrote progress reports and two in-depth neighborhood profiles that clearly demonstrate the needs, opportunities, and challenges facing residents of the study areas. Based on the completed profiles, Sam alerted PUSH staff to outreach opportunities, campaign work, and program development related to energy efficiency retrofit work, green jobs, and healthy homes.

After arriving to Buffalo from Seattle, Sam was introduced to PUSH through a tour of the Grant Street neighborhood where the organization is located. Immediately, Sam could feel the organization’s influence, “I got a tour of the neighborhood and various housing and garden projects that PUSH is funding for the community. They all seemed pretty impressive and it looks like the organization is making a real difference in the community in which they work. It was also interesting walking around with the people from PUSH as they knew just about everyone in the neighborhood and seemed to be a very welcome presence there.”

Besides working on collecting data from various sources concerning home ownership and household income throughout areas of WNY, Sam was given additional responsibilities in relation to work PUSH does restoring housing stock in low-income communities, “I was able to sit in on a meeting with a local contractor who was interested in performing weatherization work and even used my ILR background to provide some commentary on union rules and what working with a union would mean for the contractor which was sweet.” Also, Sam was trusted with representing PUSH on a national stage, “My supervisors at PUSH asked me to sit in on a long call for them about the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative which was being listened to by people from all over the country. The idea was interesting as the initiative hopes to pool a bunch of funding and then turn around and make it available to different organizations in different

municipalities which they say will make home retrofitting more efficient (they claim that it reduces costs by about 25% to do all the work at once instead of hiring different people for different jobs with different grant money). I even asked the last question which was cool as people in Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston were forced to listen to my Buffalonian concerns. It's nice that PUSH is willing to give me that kind of responsibility to represent them on a national stage like that.”

Sam’s work connected him to the city of Buffalo, especially the area of the west side he worked in all summer. In review of the summer Sam had only good things to say, both about his work and that of the future of Buffalo, “All in all I enjoyed my time at PUSH and in the city of Buffalo...There seems to be a lot of good work going on, especially on the west side, and I am excited to hear about how things turn out. Hopefully, all the work I did around the weatherization program can come to fruition and fill a definite need in the community for energy efficient homes and jobs.”



Julia Burgdorf - Clean Air Coalition of Western New York

The Clean Air Coalition of Western New York is a community-based organization that informs and organizes residents to prevent and reduce pollution. They envision a WNY where residents have the information, skills and desire to make their communities healthy, sustainable and green. CAC is creating a constituency of citizens who hold leaders accountable for the community's health.

Project and activities description: Julia spent her summer identifying the region's most pressing environmental health hazards. While there are many agencies that collect information on community health threats there has never been an attempt to look at the data collectively, confirm it with people who live in those communities and identify the most imminent threats. In order to develop and advocate for policy to combat environmental health hazards, the Clean Air Coalition first needed Julia to identify the region's priority communities. Julia was responsible for reading the appropriate literature on threatened communities and speaking with experts and ordinary people.

Work products: The final product of Julia's work is a report on the most threatening environmental health hot spots in Western New York. The report includes pictures, expert and community testimonials and technical information about each of the hot spots. Julia's work will be used to inform the Coalition's future campaigns.

It became evident early on in the fellowship that Julia was enamored and dedicated to her work with CAC. In describing her work Julia reported to the group, "Environmental justice refers to the movement to keep pollutants, hazardous waste, and other quality of life issues related to industry, away from residential areas. Our focus is on keeping citizens healthy, and after seeing incredibly high rates of cancer, lupus, asthma, and other illnesses in certain areas of Buffalo it's clear that there's a lot of work still to be done. The people most affected by these dangerous levels of emissions and toxins are usually poor and often minorities. The residents I've met are incredibly dedicated to their communities and very passionate about creating a safe atmosphere in which to settle down, raise a family, and enjoy life without constantly feeling ill and worrying about a sick family member."

As the fellowship progressed, Julia began to see how the issues in WNY intertwine and how that impacts an individual's work, "As we get closer and closer to the end of the High Road fellowship, it's really gratifying to start seeing all the things we've been learning about come together. Last Friday we walked through the East Side of Buffalo and were given a tour and a discussion of some of the problems facing that neighborhood by Professor Taylor from the Urban Studies Program. It was not only interesting to hear his thoughts on the area, and where they conflicted with the plans for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Center, but it also ended up being particularly useful to me.

This was because only a few days later, on Tuesday, I interviewed David Hahn-Baker, an activist and intellectual who has already been working for several years to improve the environmental health of East Side residents as part of the Community Action Organization's Environmental Justice Action Group (EJAG). He was kind enough to sit down with me and share some of his considerable knowledge on environmental justice campaign in general and the fight to make the homes on the East Side lead-safe in particular.”

Julia produced many policy briefs, position papers and reports on environmental issues and environmental justice activities occurring in WNY. Besides developing critical skills for future work opportunities, Julia made it apparent how much the fellowship contributed to her development as a person, “This program has been really amazing not only because I learned a lot about public policy and gained some pretty excellent research skills, but also because I now feel much more competent in my ability to survive on my own. Don’t get me wrong, I would definitely still be tiger-bait if left in the jungle somewhere, but I can now confidently navigate a new city, cook half-decent meals, shake hands with a politician, and decipher the many, many acronyms used by the EPA.”



Mike Dolce - Western New York Apollo Alliance

WNY Apollo is a local chapter of a national coalition of labor, business, and environmental groups promoting the green economy. Our local chapter currently operates an annual home energy conservation (HECK) program for low-income homeowners and is seeking to expand into other arenas.

Project and activities description:

- a. Mike developed a Facebook and Internet presence for WNY Apollo. He created profiles of member organizations and their activities and filmed interviews with them. Mike also created materials about the HECK program, including interviews with past participants, to aid in explaining, marketing, and fundraising for the program.
- b. Mike documented success stories of Buffalo environmental justice struggles. In the process he used written materials, photos, and video to tell the stories in an inspiring way.

Work products: The work products are the written, video and web materials.

The WNY Apollo Alliance's primary project every year is implementing the Home Energy Conservation Kit (HECK) Program for an underprivileged neighborhood in Buffalo. Mike contributed to the project through both technical office work as well as in the field door-to-door recruitment campaigns. On one such campaign he recalled, "Throughout the afternoon we encountered some interesting depictions into the world of ILR. First, all of the people participating in the HECK (Home Energy Conservation Kit) Program are all homeowners, but very few are currently employed. Most of their income comes from SSI, unemployment, and other government programs. Also, most of the population is aging, in the baby-boomer population. This shows how the industrial jobs along the Buffalo River created vibrant working class areas like Seneca-Babcock decades ago, but now the fallout is an aging, unemployed population without the resources or know-how to reinvent the community. This is why programs such as HECK and even the entire mission of PPG is important because it provides a place to unify public interest projects in areas where the citizens have the time and desire but just not the knowledge or resources to get the necessary transformations accomplished."

The work in Seneca-Babcock along with opportunities to learn film editing techniques, computer and website design skills, and basic environmental research allowed Mike to learn both conceptual and practical skills for the future, "These projects provided me with a good mix of field work along with office time. I was able to interact with some local environmental justice activists as well as people in the WNY community. Along the way I learned some new skills such as film editing and how to conduct an interview. I liked the assignments and feel my summer was be filled with valuable, fun work."



Anne Finn and Kwan Park -
International Institute of Buffalo

Since 1918, the International Institute of Buffalo has assisted immigrants, refugees, and others who face linguistic and cultural barriers to become self-sufficient, active members of our community. Today, the Institute serves as a dynamic international center, providing critical services to refugees and immigrants and promoting global

understanding and connections in Western New York.

Project and activities description: Annie and Kwan serves as Program Assistants in the International Exchanges and Global Education Department at the International Institute.

Work included:

- a. Drafted questions for the 2010 Academic World Quest competition, an annual international trivia competition held every fall for area high school students. The competition has six rounds of eight questions, including rounds on history, culture, and current events.
- b. Participated in the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. Annie and Kwan helped create competitive proposals on the resources in Buffalo and Western New York and had the opportunity to attend professional meetings and cultural outings with international delegations that visited Buffalo during June and July of 2010.
- c. Assisted the Department with administrative tasks.
- d. Worked with the refugee Resettlement Department at IIB with tasks like setting up apartments for incoming refugees.
- e. Conducted research on issues close to our mission and programs, such as cultural competency, refugee issues, and human trafficking.
- f. Compiled a Talking Points report for International Exchanges Program, using statistics provided from our partners and evaluations returned from visitors and interpreters. This will include information like number of hotel rooms booked in 2009, countries of origin of visitors, and visitor perceptions of the Buffalo Niagara region.
- g. Taught ESL classes for both advanced and beginning English speakers.

Work products:

- a. Wrote age-appropriate questions for Academic World Quest.
- b. Maintained professional demeanor when communicating with U.S. State Department officials in Washington, or when speaking with international visitors in our community.
- c. Contacted at least five businesses to request donations to be used as thank you gifts or prizes

- d. Drafted two proposals to send to U.S. State Department representatives that will highlight professional and cultural resources in Buffalo.
- e. ESL students' advancement during the course of the curriculum.

The opportunity to have such a hands-on service fellowship gripped Annie from the beginning of the summer. While Annie successfully completed numerous research and writing tasks in the International Institute office, it was evident during Friday discussions that teaching ESL classes really uplifted her, "Today I was able to help teach some ESL classes and had my heart won over time and again by the amazing people that the Institute works with. Many of the students speak little to no English and one of the men I was able to work with not only knew no English but is not literate in his own language. I can only imagine the frustration I would feel with not being able to communicate with the world around me; however, the man showed no frustration or anger at his inability to understand but happiness and thankfulness at my attempts to help him. His eagerness to learn the language so that he could make a life for his family here was inspiring and the optimistic spirit of the refugees in the classes I worked with made it hard not to smile all day."

Kwan also enjoyed his students and learned from them on a daily basis. Quite contrary to Annie's memories of dealing with refugees with little education, Kwan was impressed those with quality educations who could easily communicate with him and teach him about themselves and their culture. "I met two new Arabic-speaking refugees who arrived here very recently. They were around my age and spoke English quite well. It was pretty interesting to hear them talk about why they are here and their life stories." Friday discussions revealed the impact teaching ESL classed had for both Annie and Kwan. All of their memories from the week were shared with intimate accuracy and always with a smile.

Besides teaching and mentoring refugees, Annie and Kwan were given first-hand insight into international economic and policy issues. As Annie recalls, "Kwan and I were given the opportunity to sit in on one of the International Visitor Program meetings with the Chinese delegation that we had in town. We went to the U.S. Export Assistance Center and observed the exchange between the Chinese delegates and an International Trade Specialist who works for the U.S. Department of Commerce. The meeting had to be conducted with a translator seeing as neither of the delegates could speak English, which was very interesting to observe. The meeting focused on how the Department of Commerce works with U.S. producers and foreign retailers to create markets for U.S. products abroad. The delegates work for a large telecommunications company in China; however, they were interested in the flow of goods in other markets as well and talked with us about consumer tastes in China and how they are slowly adapting to a more Western flavor."

These incredible experiences left both Annie and Kwan wanting more. By the end of the fellowship, both of the International Institute fellows had rave reviews of the program and their comments reveal the impact of the High Roads Program on their worldviews and personal development:

"This fellowship has been an amazingly rewarding experience for me and I would like to thank Lou Jean and all those involved for crafting such a well- rounded program. Aside

from the people I met, my favorite part about this experience has been the wide range of activities and places that we have been exposed to. There was never a dull moment, which for a summer job is quite a feat. Outside of our experiences as a group I also have to say that I am extremely happy that I ended up at the International Institute of Buffalo. My supervisor, Julienne Mascellino, was an amazing boss who was approachable, easy to work with and very well organized. I loved that she trusted Kwan and I enough to collaborate with us on important projects and that she did not just give us meaningless tasks. Furthermore, I would not trade my time in the ESL classrooms for anything. I learned so much from my students and got such joy out of interacting with them. They have seriously made me reevaluate some of my decisions and what I want to do in the future.” –Annie

“I feel that my time in this fellowship has been really well spent. If I were to pick one important thing I learned, I'd say that the High Road fellowship experience reminded me that organizations are created and operated by people just like us. Consequently, the fellowship sort of re-sparked my interest in human resources and organizational behavior. To sum it all up, the High Road fellowship experience has been truly awesome.” -Kwan



Aaron Klein - Urban Roots Community Garden Center

Urban Roots Community Garden Center Cooperative, Inc. is a cooperatively owned retail garden center on Buffalo's west side – owned by more than 600 members of the community. In addition to providing a convenient and welcoming location for Buffalo residents to shop for garden materials and supplies, we strive to rejuvenate and improve our neighborhood as well as the quality of life throughout Buffalo with workshops, outreach, and partnerships. Urban

Roots is looking forward to an exciting spring/summer season with participation in the Buffalo National Garden Festival June 27 – July 25. National media, including more than 40 garden bloggers from around the country have committed to attend the Festival. As part of Urban Roots participation in the greening and gardening of Buffalo, we will use this event as a way to reach and engage additional residents of the city and surrounding suburbs, as well as to spread the message of the Urban Roots model and the story of the excitement of the regeneration of Buffalo's near west side. We will host workshops and presentation on urban gardening themes every weekend throughout the festival that will require the organization and execution of each event.

Project and activities description: As part of the organization of the festival programming at Urban Roots, Aaron was responsible for

- a. Communication with the community, the broader public and Urban Roots customers regarding the workshops and events
- b. Establishing a registration program for each event with a survey of participants overall satisfaction and opinion of event
- c. Organizing the physical set up and logistic of workshops
- d. Working with event facilitators' needs
- e. Working with the GM to cross merchandise and maintain product in store relevant to each event
- f. The development of a volunteer base to help execute each event.

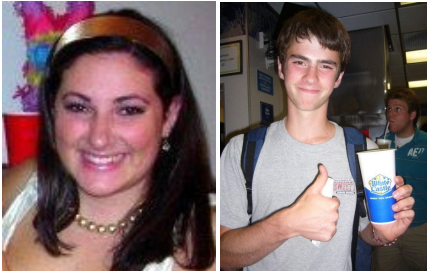
Work products: Aaron's work products include hosting successful workshops and events where the public is satisfied with the overall program experience and maintains Urban Roots' respect in the community for gaining knowledge of urban gardening. Aaron also helped create a positive experience for our volunteers that fostered a continued relationship to administer future events, programs and needs at UR. Urban Roots as a business will acquire new customers and additional sales through interest in related workshops/events and merchandising.

Aaron worked in the garden as well as in the office, and the work balance provided him with a unique opportunity within the High Roads Fellowship. Aaron gained technical skills in gardening and property maintenance along with community development experience. Showing how technical skills such as gardening impact community development, Aaron recalls, "Deb and I created a raised vegetable garden... We planted everything from Tomatoes to Herbs to Brussel Sprouts. By the end of the

month the garden should start producing edible veggies, which will be an exciting time. For the last couple days we've been able to pick and eat blueberries right off of the bushes in the garden. The ability to grow and eat your own food is critical to lowering a person's cost of living. No matter the quality of local grocery stores, they cannot meet the low cost of growing your own vegetables."

Working in a neighborhood co-op provides an opportunity to see community development from the most grassroots level, and Aaron was able to help determine how to improve Urban Roots through work with different committees within the co-op. "Wednesday night after work I sat in on the Education Committee meeting for Urban Roots. The committee is made up of member-owners, which is something very unique to a co-op... The Committee and I brainstormed ideas on how to improve attendance at the workshops including making people pre-register and getting rewards for attending multiple workshops."

Reflecting on his personal growth over the course of the program, Aaron had this to say, "My summer at Urban Roots was an important learning experience for me. When you're working four or more days a week at a Community Co-op it is critical that you can give information and help to members of the community. I've always been a decently outgoing person, but it isn't always easy to greet everyone you see with a "hello" and a genuine smile. I learned a lot about the plants at Urban Roots, but also learned to not be afraid to tell a customer that I didn't know the answer to their question, and find an employee who could help them. Working at a Garden Center helped me develop a higher level of attention to detail. Both in school and in the job market it is vital to a person to be able to notice even minute discrepancies in their work in order to continue to improve." Furthermore, the High Roads Fellowship made Aaron realize that his work at Urban Roots is part of a larger idea, one that impacts society from a foundational level, "My friends though that it was weird for a teenager with no previous knowledge or interest in horticulture would spend the summer working at a Garden Center, and at first I thought they were right. However, Urban Roots isn't just a Garden Center. Urban Roots is a vibrant part of the community, a place where locals can come to talk, but also feel a sense of pride in their neighborhood. The business is a constant reminder to the entire city of Buffalo that if they work together they can help rejuvenate the city they love."



Elaina Mule and Zach Smith - Partnership for the Public Good

The Partnership for the Public Good uses research, advocacy, and communication to promote better public policy for the Buffalo region. PPG unites a broad range of organizations – from social service providers to arts groups, from environmental advocates to affordable

housing providers, from anti-violence coalitions to academic institutions – around a community-based vision of a revitalized Buffalo. PPG’s premise is that Buffalo does not need to start from scratch or chase silver bullets in seeking revitalization. Rather, we need to patiently cultivate assets such as our highly skilled workforce, many universities, historic architecture, location near the border, waterfront, cultural diversity, locally owned independent businesses, active non-profit community, and rich history. PPG has crafted a set of Principles for a Revitalized Buffalo, a Poverty Research Library, a citizen’s tool kit, many policy reports, fact sheets, and policy briefs. The PPG conducts monthly forums, testifies at public hearings and provides policy research and support for its over 75 partner organizations.

Project and activities description: Each year, PPG leads a community process to craft a Community Agenda: ten policy actions that state and local governments can take to help revitalize the Buffalo region in the coming year. Elaina and Zach conducted research on the 2010 planks of the community agenda, and, in collaboration with Megan Connelly, PPG Program and Development Director, drafted policy briefs for publication and application to local government policy making. The planks of the 2010 Community Agenda include specific proposals to:

- i) Reduce poverty with living wages
- ii) Improve conditions at the holding center
- iii) Maintain health care services in disadvantages communities
- iv) Address regional vacancy crisis
- v) Clean up Tonawanda Coke
- vi) Target block-by-block revitalization to green development zones
- vii) Improve food security
- viii) Reform New York State’s subsidy programs
- ix) Require a community benefit agreement for Erie Canal redevelopment
- x) Reform New York State campaign finance.

Zach and Elaina were in charge of creating the PPG website, developing related interactive media, and advancing PPG’s media and partner outreach.

Work products: Zach and Elaina wrote policy briefs on targeted local economic development policies, created print and electronic information packets on the work of the PPG, and maintained communications and outreach to partners, public officials and the media. They also participated in the planning of monthly forums and other public events.

Elaina's work for PPG focused primarily on composing an extensive fact sheet of Buffalo that would help PPG as well as other organizations develop policy measures to combat the region's societal ills. Zach, was the confirmed High Road "tech guy" for the summer, as his primary responsibility was creating the PPG website. While both of these tasks kept Elaina and Zach plenty busy in the office, the PPG's comprehensive message allowed both fellows to attend numerous debates, hearings, lectures and experience a broad range of issues first-hand. One of these issues was the Canal Side development along the waterfront in downtown Buffalo, which left an impression on Elaina, "It's been really cool to be so involved with the Canal Side development: first we got to hear the Bass Pro Report from Kevin and Andy, and then we got to hear what members of common council and other members of the community thought at their Bass Pro presentation last week, and now Zach and I have gotten to see what local businesses and organizations think as well. We spent most of the day Monday walking up and down Hertel, Elmwood, Niagara, and Grant and going into local businesses and trying to get them to attend the Hearing. We also gave them information on how to join the Canal Side Community Alliance, who has fought for more of a say in the Canal Side Development process."

Working for the PPG also allowed Elaina and Zach to participate in local and state politics. The insight garnered during these experiences combined with policy research in other areas of the country gave Elaina and Zach the opportunity to learn what works and what doesn't. Zach recalls, "I drafted a letter of support for the "Land Grant Bill" that was proposed by Assemblyman Sam Hoyt. The bill would create an entity that would focus on the reuse of vacant properties. In Flint, Michigan, a land bank was used to effectively revive the community and had great economic benefits, so I feel like this could be an exciting opportunity for Erie County." Elaina came into close contact with the turmoil of local politics during her day with Erie County Legislator Maria Whyte, "I had the opportunity to shadow Erie County Legislator Maria Whyte. Her "Chief of Staff" (even though they don't really have a staff), Melissa, gave me a tour of the legislative building and an inside scoop on the dynamics of the legislature. It was really interesting and sort of scary to hear about all the inner workings of our county government, including deals that have been made, personal tensions, and political strategies."

Elaina, a resident of Williamsville the greater part of her life, expressed how the High Roads Fellowship changed her understanding of the place she calls home. "I have enjoyed many of Buffalo's neighborhoods, die-hard sports fans, and unique food; and through these experiences I have grown to love this city. Yet, I have just begun to realize how much more there is to Buffalo. The city has groups and organizations who care about the fate of Buffalo, and who are actively working towards its revival. It feels great to be working with one of these organizations, accepting that the problems my hometown faces as a reality and actually doing something about them instead of just saying "what a shame." PPG has allowed me to delve right into these issues." In a similar sentiment with regards to the finish of the program, Zach left all of his coworkers and fellow High Road Fellows with this farewell, "I can't believe these nine weeks have gone by so fast. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience, as I have gained valuable experience and met some great people. I just want to thank everyone for making this summer so awesome, and hopefully will be seeing you around sooner than later."



J.C. Tretter and Sam Bordia -
Hispanics United of Buffalo

Hispanics United of Buffalo (HUB), established in 1989, is Buffalo's only community based not-for-profit organization providing low and moderate income Hispanics, African Americans, immigrants and others with culturally appropriate bilingual programs addressing serious social and

economic self sufficiency needs. HUB offers a wide scope of services to meet the economic and social needs of its clients including: affordable housing referral, emergency shelter grants, domestic violence, health and preventive services, case management, tutoring for youth, court advocacy, senior services, ESL classes and GED tutoring, translation services for clients seeking services from other providers, and a youth development and job readiness training program for youth ages 14-21.

Project and activities description: J.C. and Sam assisted the Pre-Employment Program in job development. This consisted of preparing a marketing plan to showcase the HUB Pre-Employment Program as well as the candidates for placements to employers. In addition, J.C. formed relationships with the Human Resources departments of local companies, unions and other organizations. These relationships have added to our working relationships with union apprenticeship programs with the Cement, Plumbers and Carpenters unions. The summer fellow assisted with increasing numbers of referrals and communication with these partners while also helping us in building others.

Work products: J.C. and Sam's work products are the numbers of jobs developed and the number of companies contacted. They visited these companies and organizations to market the program. They also participated in the Employer Advisory Board and helped to expand this group.

J.C. worked the entire summer with Hispanics United, while Sam split his time with HUB and PUSH Buffalo, with the majority spent at PUSH. While working to place people in jobs, J.C. showed the innovation and creativity brought to Buffalo by the High Roads Fellows. "I decided to look through the over 300 resumes that were on file and began grouping together similar jobs that had been done. By the end of it I took the fourteen most common jobs and listed fifteen sample bullet points for what people do at that occupation. I also, then selected the best resume that predominately contained that occupation. The fact was that we were naturally repeating the same things on every resume because there are only so many things each occupation does. With the database I created we will easily be able to access past ideas which will quicken the process."

J.C. also had the opportunity to meet with HR staff at different firms and organizations throughout the region. This experience provides valuable insights into the world of ILR while simultaneously helping those in search of jobs in Buffalo. "My Supervisor and I took a drive out to Elma to meet with the HR at Servotronics. It is a

production company so I expected a big assembly line type plant but instead it was way more detailed than that. The company makes smaller parts for airplanes. The workers there pretty much carefully test all the equipment over and over to make sure it is safe. The plant was similar to a lab; where everyone had an area where they would work and make their measurements of the equipment. We took a full tour and then made our pitch to Pam from HR. She seemed to like us so I think it went well. When we got back to the office I looked up resumes of people who would fit in there and I think I found a good fit.”

J.C. and Sam were fortunate to witness and participate in the unified work of several West Side organizations. As Sam recalls, “The best part of the week was a tour I took on Tuesday with Steve Deisig of HUB and a couple of my PUSH supervisors through a training/contractor network that they hope to establish. The network would hope to recruit trainees from the West Side and either train them in basic skills like ESL or basic math at HUB and from then train them in contracting work at the Outsource Center (on the East Side) and go on to train them more with New Buffalo Impact (in Tonawanda). With all of this, they are also working on a contractor network to find employers for all the people that they will train. They are hoping to get local community members trained and eventually get them well-paying jobs.” J.C. mentions a similar drive to bring together the resources of different organizations fighting for similar goals. “I went to a West Side housing meeting where many different organizations discussed their programs on how to help find affordable housing for the community. What I thought was cool was that all the groups are making a combined website that will have all their information on it so people looking for housing can find all they need to know on one website.”

Working within the fabric of the city for the first time, J.C.’s perspective on society changed significantly. “My time at HUB was a great experience for me because it allowed me to see a different culture and a different lifestyle that I had never seen first hand before.” Sam also mentioned how experiences and conversations he had during the fellowship have changed his future outlook both professionally and personally. “I went to the Hispanics United of Buffalo office to meet my supervisor, Steve Deisig. He was a good guy and seemed genuinely happy to be doing what he did. His life story was very interesting as he is actually an ILR grad who was making a lot of money doing HR consulting in California before he relocated to Buffalo to take care of his mother. He originally took the job with Hispanics United to get the benefits and ended up staying because he found it so much more rewarding than his old job where he would be called in to help companies perform mass layoffs. The difference in what he does now, helping people find jobs, homes and get off welfare to what he did before is like night and day and its inspiring to see someone who would be willing to give up so much money to do that.”

Speakers/Activities

Week 1: June 1 - 4

Van Tour of Buffalo: Anthony Armstrong, Senior Policy Fellow, PPG

“The tour was a very humbling experience. I have heard of all of the troubles the city is facing in the news, but to see it in person was incredible. The blocks of abandoned homes are depressing sights and make you wonder what happened to the bustling and thriving city that once was. However, through our conversations in the morning and in the van, it became apparent how much potential Buffalo has to become great again. What amazes me is how dedicated people are to restoring this place. The passion that Buffalonians have for their city really is impressive.” -Zach

Buffalo: The Stories We Tell: Sam Magavern

Cultural Work, Cultural Life: Arts and Urban Economics: Lou Jean

Allentown Walk:

- Ujima Theatre: Beverly Dove, founder, actress
- Studio Hart: Barbara Hart, artist, and Daniel Hart, Ex. Dir., Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
- Babeville and Hallwalls: Ed Cardoni, Ex. Dir., Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center

“This past Friday proved to be a wonderful day as we explored Buffalo’s artistic side with tours of the Ujima Theatre, Hart Gallery and Babeville. I have always enjoyed the cultural richness and diversity that Buffalo offers and love being able to find new hidden gems within the city. The rich history behind Ujima theatre and the powerful presence of the woman who gave us the tour there inspired me to get together a group to go see their current play, *Exonerated*. I look forward to the unique experience that the small community run theater promises.” –Annie

Week 2: June 7 - 11

City on the Edge: Mark Goldman, author, historian, cultural entrepreneur

“I thought our speaker this Monday (Mark Goldman) was very engaging and I’m excited to read his book.” –Julia

“Monday started off with a bang as we were graced with the presence of Mr. Mark Goldman, the spunky, brilliant historian/entrepreneur. His presentation was refreshingly unconventional and full of honest, rational thought.” –Annie

Suburban Sprawl and Urban Poverty: Sam Magavern

Tools and Methods of Corporate Citizenship Research: Kevin Connor, Public Accountability Initiative

West Side Walking Tour: Block by Block Neighborhood Revitalization: Aaron Bartley, People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH Buffalo)

“We got to see some of that dedication firsthand when we visited PUSH buffalo later in the afternoon. We arrived at the PUSH offices shortly after a shooting had occurred on a nearby street corner. It was really a strong reminder of why it's so important to stay involved in these neighborhoods in the first place. I hear about shootings on the news all the time, especially those in downtown Rochester, but they never seem real. It was clear that the staff at PUSH were very affected by what had happened and that they are really committed to not only the housing in Buffalo but more importantly the people who live and work with them. The amount they've been able to accomplish in a few years is very impressive.” -Julia

Week 3: June 14-18

PPG Forum: Saving the Safety Net: The Impact of Child Care Subsidy Cuts

Debbie Coyne, Holy Innocents Day Care
Sister Sharon Goodremote, FSSJ Catholic Charities
Bill O’Connell, Homeless Alliance of WNY
Karen Welch, Neighborhood Legal Services

“It was a pretty enlightening event, with a number of well-spoken individuals from different community organizations. Catholic charities, childcare organizations, and one very outspoken small business owner all contributed their expertise to the round-table conversation. At one point, a local Erie County legislator stated that he wanted to hear how we interns felt about the issue...(in my mind) whether the County Executive had correctly used all of the money allocated to him for childcare subsidies was a moot point, the true question was how we can ensure that the county has enough money to care for *all* of the area's children in need.” -Thom

Making Local Government Work: Sam Magavern

Life in Local Government: Ray Walter, Erie County Legislator

IDA Reform in NYS: Press Conference (optional)

City Hall Field Trip: Challenges and Rewards of Public Service

Michael LoCurto and David Rivera, Buffalo Common Council Members
Guided tour of City Hall: David Granville, Economic Development Dept.

“The fun only continued when we took a comprehensive tour of the Gotham-esque City Hall building. Our tour was led by a very well-learned individual, who spent the time describing in detail the symbolism present in the building's many murals, the history of

the structure, even the wood-grain...Everyone had a good time, and we all had a laugh when we got to meet, in person, a rather silly-named Director of Treasury and Collection” -Thom

Week 4: June 21 - 25

Federal Reserve Bank in Action: Regional Human Capital Research: Richard Dietz and Jaison Abel, Federal Reserve Bank Economists

“I really enjoyed this past Friday and getting to see the academic side of everything too, which is something I can relate to more through my economics classes and projects I have done for school and in internships. I really love economics, so it was really nice to hear about possible career paths for economists in local development work.” -Elaina

Tracking Employment and Workforce Trends: John Slenker, Labor Market Analyst, NYS Department of Labor

ILR Education, Careers and Career Services: Regina Duffey Moravek, Director of Career Services, Cornell ILR

“The career-services meeting was a big help. I will definitely go down to their offices next year to discuss my future.” -JC

South Buffalo Field Trip: Local Businesses & Neighborhood Development

Patrick Curry, Chief of Staff for Mark Schroeder, NYS Assemblyman
Ann Enger, Ex. Dir., Greater South Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

“I really liked that a politician and a large program like AmeriCorps were so involved in the area. The new lightposts and planters really gave Seneca street the feeling of a real community area. With the changes, it started to remind me a little bit of Main Street in the village of Williamsville, which is one of my favorite place to walk to (going through Glenn Falls) and then going to the little shops on that strip. Through the renovations and the education center, I think it’s really an area that will become enjoyable to walk through and spend time.” -Elaina

Week 5: June 28 – July 1

PPG Community Health Worker Presentation

“This Wednesday Erin, Emma, and I attended the "Community Health Workers Forum" which the PPG held. It was really interesting, since I had never even heard the term "community health worker" before. The main presenter, Sergio Matos, was very engaging and made a compelling case for why CHWs are needed. So much of environmental justice overlaps with the injustice of healthcare in general that I found many similarities to what I'm learning at CAC. Poor, minority communities are bearing

the brunt of environmental hazards and this burden is made even more difficult by the fact that often they don't have access to information and medical care that they could use to manage their illnesses.” -Julia

Week 6: July 6 - 9

Missing the Target: How Economic Development Programs Have Failed to Revive Buffalo’s Most Challenged Neighborhoods: Sam Magavern

Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus: A Case Study in Progress: Patrick Whalen, Chief Operating Officer, BNMC

Economic Justice and Local Government Policy: Maria Whyte, Erie County Legislator

East Buffalo Field Trip: New Partnerships for Neighborhood Development

Henry Taylor, Professor and Director of Center for Urban Studies, UB

George K. Arthur, President, Michigan Street Preservation Corporation,

Past President, Buffalo Common Council

“(The) discussion reinforced some of the basics of community economic development we learned in the beginning of our fellowship. Efficiently allocating funds in developing a community does not mean sporadically spreading them out to various regions. We need to focus on a specific area and develop it to the best of our ability. By specifically targeting certain areas, the people in the community can actually see the changes and thereby take the initiative to decorate their own houses.” –Kwan

Week 7: July 12 - 16

Common Council Hearing on Canal Side CBA (optional)

“One shot out of left field were the building trade unionists, who broke from the rest of the left to support the development at all costs. It's hard to knock them for it, too. The development would mean more jobs and more money to individuals that sorely need it. However, it's always important to keep the big picture in mind, and good jobs for a few construction workers might mean poverty level jobs for three hundred Bass Pro workers.” -Thom

“On Tuesday evening in a hot and stuffy Common Council Chambers the public opinion battle concerning the Canal Side Community Benefits Agreement took place. The High Road fellows, PPG and CEJ had a strong presence, including short speeches in favor of a CBA from Zach Smith (High Roader), Allison Duwe (CEJ), Micaela Shapiro-Shellaby (CEJ), and Megan Connelly (PPG). Most of the opinion was in favor of a CBA for the Canal Side agreement, while the dissent mainly came from people in the business community.” -Mike

Student to Alumnus: Keeping Cornell Connections: Matthew Nagowski, President Cornell Club of WNY

Waterfront Walking and Boat Tour: From Heritage to Green Jobs: Greg Stevens, CEO RiverWright

“Touring the grain elevators was a truly wonderful experience. The feeling was similar to being in the Sistine Chapel...The walls were sparse and the floors dirty, but the towering columns and the booming echoes of footsteps added a sense of majesty to the place. I sincerely hope they will be able to find some potential for re-use with these incredible structures.” –Thom

“Last Friday’s fellowship meeting was one of, if not the best day of the program so far... The afternoon tour of the grain elevators and the waterfront really gave me hope for the future of Buffalo. Although the area is home now to mostly abandoned elevators, our guide Greg and his business partners have a plan to turn the area into the largest Green Fuel producing area in the world. Buffalo would be a perfect site for this because of all its ability to store grain, corn and algae, and its ability to ship in the products. This really is something that could put Buffalo on the map, attracting businesses and residents. -Aaron

Week 8: July 19 - 23

PPG Forum: Economic Development Subsidy Reform in New York State

David Sweet, Buffalo developer
Roxanne Button, green architect
Duane Diggs, VOICE Buffalo

Smart Growth, Authority Reform, and NYS Government Challenges: Sam Hoyt, New York State Assemblyman

“I very much enjoyed the off-the-record discussion with Assemblyman Sam Hoyt... Personally, I've enjoyed discussions with politicians the most in this program. It's not that the other discussions weren't interesting. It's that I'm a political junkie, and this fellowship was invaluable in teaching me the complexities of local politics.” -Kwan

Cultural Assets in Buffalo’s Economy – Past, Present and Future

Field Trip to North Buffalo: Tour Frank Lloyd Wright’s Darwin Martin House and Burchfield Penney Art Center: Lou Jean

“It was great to see a cultural side of Buffalo and focus on its assets instead of its problems. While not all of Frank Lloyd Wright's designs were really for me, I really enjoyed learning about his techniques and styles, especially because our tour guide was really great. My favorite part was the cottage; I could really have seen myself living there. Also, the art museum was really interesting too. It was great to have my own personal tour guide as I walked with Lou Jean for a bit. I was very impressed by her knowledge on a lot of the local artists, and it really made the experience better.” -Elaina

Week 9: July 26 - 30

PPG Forum: **State and Municipal Governments Address Climate Change**

Bill Magavern, Director, Sierra Club California

Jim Simon, WNY Climate Action

Darren Kempner, Deputy Commissioner, Erie County Department of
Environment and Planning

Bill Nowak, Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Policy Research, Senator

Antoine Thompson, NYS Senate

CEJ Candidates Forum (optional)

Visit by Chris Crooker, ILR Assistant Dean of Alumni Affairs & Development

Visit by Buffalo News Reporter

Continuing Academic Opportunities in Economic Development: Lou Jean