BACKGROUND

The Stinner Climate Ambassadors is a cohort of 14 students from various Ohio universities who participated in a summer internship program with the vision to: “Educate ourselves, each other, and our local Ohio communities on how to foster connection and elevate marginalized voices through the cultivation of climate resilient, regenerative food systems.”

SITE VISITS

Cheserhill Produce Auction + Rural Action

During our week in Athens, OH we travelled with Community Food Initiatives to the Chesterhill Produce Auction, a local food hub run by Rural Action. With the nearest grocery store being a 30 minute drive, this auction sells and distributes fresh, local produce throughout the Mid-Ohio Valley while investing back in local farmers and residents. CFI purchases produce here to be donated through their distribution programs seen below.

Community Food Initiatives (Athens, OH)

After purchasing produce with CFI at the auction, I joined their Veggie Van team in Coolville, Ohio for distribution. This mobile produce market distributes weekly produce packs to residents of rural Southeast Ohio and offers additional reduced cost produce for purchase.

Bradt Family Farm (Carroll, OH)

- Crops include Corn, Soybeans, Wheat, and cover crop cereal grains.
- Have used soil conservation practices for over 50 years.
- Partner with farms “to build soil health, farm resiliency and food security.”

South Side Family Farms (Johnstown/Columbus)

- Planting corn by hand at the Johnstown Farm plot (left) and selling SSSF produce at the Whitehall farmers market (right).
- While in Columbus, we spent multiple days with Minister Aaron, the founder of South Side Family Farms. We toured urban farms which provide a space for Columbus’ youth to interact with agriculture and sell produce to residents who have limited access to cultural produce. We harvested this produce to sell at the Whitehall farmers market. We then headed out to their Johnstown plot where we planted an acre of corn by hand!

Mission of Mary ( Dayton, OH)

- In Dayton, we visited Mission of Mary, a farm that serves the Twin Towers neighborhood. Abandoned by industry, this area has a history of disinvestment and food injustice.

Stratford Ecological Center (Delaware, OH)

- A non-profit educational organic farm and nature preserve on 236 acres of land.
- "Dedicated to the education of children and adults in understanding the relationships between living things and the environment.”

Brandt Family Farm (Dayton, OH)

- Jeff Dickinson sharing the soil health benefits of roller crimping grass crops.

Stinner team planting lettuce at Mission of Mary Farm plot in Dayton.

We spent two days planting lettuce, weeding plots, and planting native edibles across three urban farm plots.

"Like our meeting, life is then so short, so let us give only to each the best. Right now I ask only to be made a gift for this land from which I grew. Keep this promise and let me come now into sweet rest so I can grow again through you and the land on which we stand.”

- Ben Stinner

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- I found the application for this internship on the SENR Job + Internship update post on the Carmen Canvas career development resources page. I absolutely recommend reviewing these opportunities each month.
- Remember that there are always other students your age out there who share your environmental passions. Do not lose hope!
- Interacting with farmers and leaders who have dedicated their livelihoods to sustainable agriculture, soil health, and community food systems and being welcomed on their land has restored my hope in the future of farming. I recommend getting out on a farm with these folks, getting your hands dirty, and opening yourself to engage in conversation about their work, you will learn so much.

REFLECTION

I chose to participate in this experience as my future career aspiration is to work in the community development field at a nonprofit devoted to achieving local sustainable food systems. This internship exposed me to the many unique positions that exist across the state and country in this field. After graduating college at the end of this year I hope to seek a job working for an organization similar to those we visited this summer.