

Earth Charter celebrates 10 years on campus

by Natalie Johnson - Thursday, October 14, 2010

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/6441/earth-charter-celebrates-10-years-on-campus/>

... it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life and to future generations. ? Earth Charter preamble

A decade ago, 61 participants in the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's first Earth Charter Summit signed the worldwide declaration of fundamental principles for a just, sustainable and peaceful global society.

On Sunday, Oct. 17, the 10th-annual Earth Charter Summit kicks off with an open house from 3 to 6 p.m. at the University's Community Garden with chili and live music by Nicole Rae and the Traveling Suitcase.

A shuttle will run from campus to the garden, which is located at 633 W. Third Ave, just west of Ohio Street, behind the former National Guard building.

The weeklong summit will celebrate the charter's four pillars ? respect and care for the community of life; ecological integrity; social and economic justice; and democracy, nonviolence and peace. Events are free and open to the public.

"The educational aspects of the summits continue to attract people from the wider community as well as the campus, and the goals we envisioned in 2001 have certainly been surpassed," said English professor Andrew Robson, who led efforts to bring the charter to UW.

"The Earth Charter principles continue to provide a framework, and the summits provide an important opportunity every year to enhance awareness, address new and recurring challenges, and celebrate success."

The Earth Charter is a far-reaching document, said Maureen Muldoon, UW Oshkosh associate professor of geology.

"Each year, we try to have a variety of events that address one or more of the principles," she said.

This year, the summit highlights local, sustainable food; Fair Trade; and campus sustainability.

Sustainable food

The garden event on Sunday and the "Growing Food, Growing Communities" Banquet on Monday, Oct. 18, address the sustainable food theme.

The banquet in Reeve Memorial Union Ballroom begins at 5 p.m. with a social hour, followed by a

dinner of local, organic food at 6 p.m., and a 7 p.m. presentation by Rick Brooks, outreach program manager at UW-Madison.

Brooks is the board chair of Sarvodaya USA, a support organization for a grassroots empowerment movement in 15,000 villages in Haiti, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He specializes in facilitating health and social change. A former Robert F. Kennedy Fellow, he has worked with community service organizations and taught first-graders through graduate and continuing education students for more than three decades.

Fair Trade

Summit events related to Fair Trade include a presentation about SERRV, one of the largest Fair Trade vendors in the country, at 4:45 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 19, in Reeve Union Theatre; and a 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 21, showing of the documentary “The Dark Side of Chocolate” also in Reeve Union Theatre.

As an example of respecting and caring for the community of life, Fair Trade represents the first principle of the charter, said David Barnhill, UWO’s environmental studies director.

UW Oshkosh is the nation’s first Fair Trade University. An alternative to “free trade,” Fair Trade is a system that ensures a fair price and living wage to growers, financial assistance, humane working conditions, gender equity, local empowerment and environmental stability.

“Fair Trade promotes real peace by working toward social justice and economic security, rather than the kind of peace enforced by military power,” Barnhill said.

“Students who learn about Fair Trade tend to be very supportive. It gives them an opportunity to make the world a better place by supporting those who are actually growing and making the products they buy.”

Campus sustainability

Muldoon said the summit’s campus sustainability component will highlight bike riding on Wednesday, Oct. 20, including a presentation about Bicycle Commuting Tips from 9:40 a.m. to 2 p.m., outside Reeve Memorial Union; a UWO Bike Community Ride at 2:30 p.m., beginning at the Student Recreation and Wellness Center; and a 4 p.m. public meeting about UWO’s bicycle and pedestrian plan in Reeve Union, Room 202.

In addition, the Homecoming 2010 [Tour de Titan 2 Bike Ride](#) at 11 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 23, will promote a bike-friendly Oshkosh. Cyclists will depart from the Student Recreation and Wellness Center and end on Josslyn Street at Homecoming’s Tent City, where riders are invited to enjoy complimentary food, beverages and entertainment.

The Campus Sustainability Council/Earth Charter tent will offer information about campus sustainability efforts and the Earth Charter as well as a chance to win a stainless steel, reusable water bottle in the sustainability quiz.

- [See the full Earth Charter schedule.](#)