

Community Assistantship Program

...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Increasing Healthy Food Access

Prepared in partnership with
United Acres

Prepared by
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Center for Urban and
Regional Affairs (CURA)

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CURA CAP Research Assistantship Position with United Acres
Spring, 2016
Claire Stoscheck

The CURA CAP Research Assistantship position with United Acres has been a very positive professional and learning experience. I thank the United Acres board for the opportunity to learn about and support their work, and CURA for making this opportunity possible and supporting me in this work, as well as the staff from Cooperative Extension who mentored the project.

Through this Research Assistantship, I was able to produce several products which helped to support United Acres develop as a new non-profit. This organizational development work included work to obtain non-profit status, a three-year budget, and a fundraising plan. A brief description of each product follows:

- 1) **Three-year organizational budget:** I collected information (by interviewing Board President Pat Halbe and community garden manager Lyle Lundstrum, as well as conducting my own analysis) and produced a three-year projected budget for United Acres, which was used for fundraising and the 1023 application to the IRS.
- 2) **Initial Market Analysis:** I created a spreadsheet to determine the approximate amount of volume of fresh and frozen produce that the RC Hospital wanted to purchase (for certain items), and the approximate amount of income it would bring in for United Acres, in order to help determine whether or not other markets were needed for the current growing season.
- 3) **The IRS 1023 Application:** I collected, produced and wrote information in order to complete the IRS 1023 application for tax exempt status on behalf of United Acres. This included writing a narrative about United Acres' programs and goals, as well as how it functions as an organization, finances, and fundraising plans, as well as much more. I also did research on how to write successful a 1023 application, called the IRS several times and spoke to someone who has successfully completed 1023's several times as well, in order to get full and detailed information on how to put together a successful

application. I printed and prepared the application to be sent to the IRS, and delivered it to the United Acres board. Please see the narrative written for the 1023 in the attached document. The 1023 is an extensive application and it took up significant portion of this position's hours.

- 4) **Grant application to WedgeShare:** I wrote a grant application on behalf of United Acres for \$8,500 from WedgeShare. This included filling out the Minnesota Common Grant Application, which will greatly serve United Acres' in its future fundraising—as it can be used as a template for other grant proposals. In this application I refined language around United Acres' goals and how it plans to meet them, and created completely new material on evaluation and metrics for success.
- 5) **Grant prospecting:** I spent the remaining hours for the position researching similar organizations and their funders, and researching funders and their RFPs to see if they would fit United Acres' work. This included private and public funders. I gathered information about funders, RFPs and the level of fit with United Acres (among other information) in a spreadsheet. All in all I prospected approximately 60 relevant grant/funding opportunities for United Acres.
- 6) **Grants calendar:** I chose the best fits and put them in a timeline of when their respective applications are due, so that the next fundraiser for United Acres can quickly get to work on the most relevant grant applications and so that the United Acres board can easily make a fundraising plan for the rest of 2016 (and likely into early 2017).

All other Attachments Follow:
Page 2, Part IV “Narrative Description of your Activities”

“Past, present and planned activities”

The objective of United Acres, Inc. (hereby referred to as United Acres) is to increase the availability, access and affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables to the people of Olivia, MN, Renville County and the surrounding area. According to the 2015 County Healthy Rankings compiled by the MN Health Department, Renville County ranks 85 out of 87 in Overall Health Outcomes (87 being the worst). This includes being tied for the 5th worst in “limited access to healthy foods.”

United Acres is a community garden of three acres in the City of Olivia, MN which will increase access to fresh and healthy fruits and vegetables for low-income members of the community and other groups who are socially disadvantaged, thus increasing health outcomes in the community. United Acres will increase access to fresh produce through donations to the local food shelf, as well as reduced-price or donated CSA shares to low-income individuals and families.

United Acres will also offer a host of free healthy food, nutrition, gardening, food system and sustainability classes to the community, in particular to low-income community members, veterans, children, elders, people with disabilities, and youth. These educational classes are key for promoting food, nutrition and gardening skills, so that residents can be empowered with the knowledge and skills needed to live healthier lives.

Finally, United Acres will also serve as an educational model of sustainable farming and living, with the goal of inspiring and educating community members such as farmers and other business people to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

Another goal of the organization is to promote vegetable and fruit farming to youth in order to increase their interest in becoming farmers. Current market trends show that a majority of Southwest MN vegetable farmers will have the opportunity to retire within the next 10 years, leaving a dearth of farmers. Through its educational programs, United Acres will help inspire youth to get excited about sustainable fruit and vegetable farming in Renville County—resulting in the double benefit of filling demand for producers and also of potentially diversifying the agricultural system of Southwest MN (which currently focuses only on commodity crops) so that it can be more environmentally sustainable.

Past & Present:

United Acres is a very new organization—having started in November of 2015. Board members, independent contractors, and volunteers are presently in the process of developing programs, organizational structure, work plans, a business plan, and the garden site.

Future:

United Acres plans to operate three major programs in the future—Educational Classes, Healthy Food Access for Economically & Socially Disadvantaged Populations, and a Sustainability Hub Model—which are described below:

- 1. Educational Classes:**
Promote Healthy Food Skills and Knowledge through Classes

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

What is the activity?

United Acres will offer educational classes to the community in Renville County, in particular socially disadvantaged groups. Many of these classes will be offered in collaboration with organizational partners.

United Acres will partner with the University of Minnesota Extension SNAP-Ed program to teach classes to low income community members and families. Programming planned for the garden includes, but is not limited to: Cooking Matters, Cooking Matters for Families, Cooking Matter for Teens, Growing Healthy Kids, Nutrition to Grow On, Family Gardening, Eat Healthy Be Active, Cooking Matters for WIC Families, and I Can Prevent Diabetes.

The University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development program will collaborate with United Acres to offer programming to youth and children through Junior Master Gardeners and food futures for family health, as well as other healthy living and science related classes.

United Acres will also facilitate and host other classes, potentially including gardening, composting, soil health, pollinator health, sustainable food systems and seed saving classes. These classes will be offered to community members with disabilities in collaboration with organizations such as Developmental Achievement Center and special education departments in area schools. Classes will be offered to veterans through collaborations with Renville County Veterans Services and the American Legion in Olivia, as well as other legions in the county. United Acres will partner with early childhood programs such as the Early Childhood Family Education program to offer classes to families with young children.

Classes on nutrition, cooking and food preservation will be offered to the broader community in collaboration with the local Hospital (RC Hospital & Clinics), who will also be promoting diabetes prevention and weight management among staff, patients and the broader community by using products from the garden.

Where is the activity conducted?

The classes will be offered on the United Acres community garden site in Olivia, MN.

Who conducts the Activity?

These classes will be conducted in part by United Acre staff and Board members, but primarily by partners such as University of Minnesota Extension staff and RC Hospital & Clinics staff.

When is the activity conducted?

The classes will take place year around, with the agriculture/gardening classes occurring primarily during the growing season.

How does the activity further your exempt purposes?

Educational classes will increase food skills, healthy living habits, and overall food system and agricultural knowledge, empowering community members to live healthier and more sustainable lives. This classes will in particular provide skills for low-income community members and other socially disadvantaged groups to gain skills, experience and confidence related to food, nutrition and agriculture. Classes will also expose youth to sustainable agriculture and healthy eating, and give them skills to become farmers themselves should they chose that profession.

What percentage of your total time is allocated to the activity?

It is expected that a total of about 40% of the organization's time will be dedicated to educational classes, starting in 2017 (after the garden itself has been established and the classroom has been built).

How is the activity funded?

Educational classes will be funded through a combination of in-kind donations of time/expertise from organizational partnerships, grants, individual donations and earned income from the garden's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Farm-to-Institution activities. In the future, United Acres may solicit *optional* donations from class attendees who can afford it, with the hope that these donations can help support more free classes for low-income community members in the future.

**2. Healthy Food Access for Economically & Socially Disadvantaged Populations:
Promote Access to healthy fresh local foods for low-income community members through reduced cost
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares & donations to the food shelf**

What is the activity?

Starting in 2016, United Acres will make donations of produce to the Renville County Food Shelf in Olivia, thus making local fresh produce available to the community members who are most in need. Starting in 2017, United Acres will begin to offer reduced cost Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to low-income families and individuals in the community, thus increasing access to healthy, fresh, nutritious local foods for these communities. These reduced cost CSA shares will be offered below market rate, allow for payment plans, and allow customers to use SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits to purchase the shares.

United Acres will encourage community members who can afford it, as well as businesses, to sponsor CSA shares as donations to the Renville County Food Shelf or as donations to low-income community members in order to create more access to healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables for the communities with the most financial need. CSA shares will also be sold at market rate to community members who can afford it as a way to help subsidize the reduced-cost shares for low-income community members. In addition, United Acres will promote healthy food access in Renville County through Farm-to-Institution and wholesale channels by distributing its produce through institutions and other entities which buy wholesale, such as the local hospital and local school districts. Potential future partnerships include local businesses, assisted living/nursing homes, and the nearby Willmar Food Hub. Note: In 2016 and 2017, United Acres will cultivate one and one-half acres, and in 2018 cultivated acreage will double to three acres.

Where is the activity conducted?

Fruits and vegetables will be grown in United Acres' community garden located in Olivia, MN. The CSA will operate out of the United Acres garden, and staff will distribute CSA shares to various pick-up sites across the city and county. Produce will also be distributed to the food shelf and institutions.

Who conducts the Activity?

The farming, processing, logistics and communications work of the CSA, food shelf donations and Farm-to-Institution will be conducted by United Acres' board members, volunteers and independent contractors.

When is the activity conducted?

The work of the production of fruits and vegetables as well as the CSA will occur primarily during the growing season (April to October).

How does the activity further your exempt purposes?

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

The reduced-price CSA, donated CSA shares, and donations to the food shelf will make fresh, healthy food available to low-income residents of Renville County—who currently experience a major lack of good food access, resulting in poor health outcomes.

What percentage of your total time is allocated to the activity?

It is expected that a total of about 50% of the organization's time will be dedicated to growing produce for—and operation of—the CSA, donations to the food shelf, and Farm-to-Institution.

How is the activity funded?

Some CSA shares and wholesale produce will be sold at the market rate to generate income to cover the cost of production, and any earnings that remain will go towards subsidizing reduced cost CSA shares for low-income community members, educational classes, donations to the food shelf, and other activities which do not generate income but have costs for the organization.

3. Sustainability Hub Model:

Provide an Educational model for sustainable living by serving as a Sustainability Hub

What is the activity?

United Acres will become a sustainability hub—modeling environmentally sustainable living and farming to the community—by installing demonstration projects. These projects will include grey water and composting systems, solar panels, and the establishment of a Pollinator Safe Zone in order to host honey bee hives. The projects will be integrated into the educational classes, and visitors to United Acres will have the opportunity to observe and learn from them. United Acres will also potentially collect food scraps from local institutional partners (i.e. the school or hospital) to add to its composting system, thus recycling food waste back into the local agricultural-ecosystem.

Where is the activity conducted?

The United Acres community garden site in Olivia, MN will be the sustainability hub.

Who conducts the Activity?

The installation of sustainability projects will be conducted by United Acres' board, volunteers, independent contractors and partners.

When is the activity conducted?

The sustainability hub features of the United Acres farm will operate year round.

How does the activity further your exempt purposes?

By demonstrating sustainable farming and living practices, United Acres can educate and inspire others in the community to adapt these practices on their farms and in their homes.

What percentage of your total time is allocated to the activity?

It is expected that a total of about 10% of the organization's time will be dedicated to installing and managing sustainability projects.

How is the activity funded?

The sustainability projects will be funded through grants and individual contributions from the public, as well as potentially earnings from CSA and wholesale sales.

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

Page 2, Part V "Compensation and Other Financial Arrangements with your Officers, Directors, Trustees, Employees and Independent Contractors," line 1a:

Complete list of officers, directors, and trustees.

Name	Title	Mailing Address	Compensation Amount
Pat Halbe	Board President	PO Box 123 Hector, MN 55342	None
Lisa Neutgens	Board Vice President	19086 880th Ave Sacred Heart, MN 56285	None
Leah Schueler	Board Treasurer	1967 600 th St Echo, MN 56237	None
Alica Whitmore	Board Secretary	1967 600th St Echo, MN 56237	None
Julie Remer	Board Member	211 E Fairview Ave Olivia, MN 56277	None
Julie Gluth	Board Member	623 3 rd St NW Renville MN 56284	None

Page 3, Part V “Compensation and Other Financial Arrangements with your Officers, Directors, Trustees, Employees and Independent Contractors,” line 3a:

“For each of your officers, directors, trustees, highest compensated employees, and highest compensated independent contractors listed on lines 1a, 1b, or 1c, attach a list showing their name, qualifications, average hours worked, and duties.”

Name	Title	Qualifications	Averaged Hours Worked	Duties
Pat Halbe	Board President	Vice President of Financial Services, United FCS (background in agricultural financing)	40 hours/month	Marketing; Program Development; Strategic Planning; Partnerships; Fundraising
Lisa Neutgens	Board Vice President	UMN Cooperative Extension Renville County 4-H Program Coordinator (background in education)	10-20 hours/month	Human Resources; Volunteer Coordination
Leah Schueler	Board Treasurer	Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Coordinator for Kandiyohi and Renville Counties (background in public health)	10-20 hours/month	Marketing; handling grants and financial documents
Alica Whitmore	Board Secretary	SNAP-Ed Educator Redwood County Extension Office (background in public health and nutrition)	10-20 hours/month	Administrative duties for the board
Julie Remer	Board Member	Nutritionist at RC Hospital and Clinics in Olivia, MN (background in public health and nutrition)	10-20 hours/month	Program development
Julie Gluth	Board Member	Kitchen Director at RC Hospital and Clinics in Olivia, MN (background in public health and nutrition)	10-20 hours/month	Program development; liaison with the Department of Agriculture on product sourcing

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

Page 4, Part V, "Compensation and Other Financial Arrangements with your Officers, Directors, Trustees, Employees and Independent Contractors," line 5a:

"Have you adopted a conflict of interest policy consistent with the sample conflict of interest policy in Appendix A to the instructions? If 'Yes,' provide a copy of the policy and explain how the policy has been adopted, such as by resolution of your governing board."

Yes, United Acres passed a Conflict of Interest Policy by resolution of the governing board in March 2016 that is consistent with the sample conflict of interest policy in Appendix A to the instructions.

Please see the policy on the following two pages.

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

Page 5, Part VI, “Your Members and Other Individuals and Organizations that Receive Benefits from You”, line 1a:

“In carrying out your exempt purposes, do you provide goods, services, or funds to individuals? If ‘Yes,’ describe each program that provides goods, services, or funds to individuals.”

United Acres will provide many goods and services to individuals who live in Renville County, as listed below:

Educational Classes: Individuals will benefit from the service of educational classes provided in the garden, by gaining healthy food skills and food and agricultural knowledge. These classes will be free and open to the public, and targeted at low-income and other socially disadvantaged groups.

Increasing access to healthy fresh food for low-income community members: Clients of the local food shelf will benefit from having access to more fresh healthy produce. United Acres will also provide fresh healthy local food to individuals through the sale of CSA shares. Low-income community members will benefit from reduced cost and/or donated CSA shares. CSA shares will be a good that individuals in the community will benefit from. Individuals who are clients of the institutions and businesses that United Acres will distribute through will benefit by consuming more fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables. Again, wholesale food will be a good that individuals will benefit from.

Sustainability Hub: Individuals who visit the United Acres community garden will learn more about sustainable farming and living practices by exploring the sustainability hub demonstration projects, providing them with a valuable service.

Additional benefits to individuals:

Master Gardeners will have the opportunity to gain volunteers hours at United Acres. Neighboring farmers will benefit from increased pollinator-friendly green space.

Please refer to the **Appendix for Page 2, Part IV “Narrative Description of your Activities”** for more information on each of the programs listed above which provide goods and services.

**Page 5, Section VI, “Your Members and Other Individuals and Organizations that Receive Benefits from You,”
line 1b:**

“In carrying out your exempt purposes, do you provide goods, services, or funds to organizations? If ‘Yes,’ describe each program that provides goods, services, or funds to organizations.”

United Acres will provide many goods and services to organizations, including:

Educational Classes: RC Hospital & Clinics, the University of Minnesota Extensions (4-H and SNAP programs) and other organizational partners will be provided with space—in both the garden as well as the classroom building—to conduct their free educational classes.

Increasing access to healthy fresh food for low-income community members: The Renville County Food Shelf will receive in-kind food donations through donated CSA shares, as well as donations of surplus produce. Institutions such as RC Hospital & Clinics, local schools and nursing homes will receive purchased goods (in the form of fresh healthy food) from United Acres.

Sustainability Hub: Organizations seeking sustainability education opportunities for their members will benefit from the sustainability hub demonstration projects, providing them with a valuable service.

Additional benefits to organizations:

The City of Olivia, as well as the general population and the surrounding areas, will have access to more green space, increased tax revenue, and a vibrant community garden to be proud of. We see potential future community partnerships with civic, youth, and educational organizations, who could all benefit from United Acres’ goods and services. Renville County will benefit from having more youth interested in diversified and sustainable farming practices.

Please refer to the **Appendix for Page 2, Part IV “Narrative Description of your Activities”** for more information on each of the programs listed above which provide goods and services.

Page 5, Part VI, “Your Members and Other Individuals and Organizations that Receive Benefits from You”, line 2:

“Do any of your programs limit the provision of goods, services, or funds to a specific individual or group of specific individuals? For example, answer “Yes,” if goods, services, or funds are provided only for a particular individual, your members, individuals who work for a particular employer, or graduates of a particular school. If “Yes,” explain the limitation and how recipients are selected for each program.”

Most of United Acres’ programs are open to the greater community in Olivia, Renville County, and the surrounding area—including the CSA, the sustainability hub and the educational classes (though some classes may include targeted outreach to disadvantaged populations such as low-income community members, people with disabilities or veterans).

The reduced price CSA for low-income community members will be limited to individuals and families with documented low incomes. This sub-program will be available to those who are enrolled in Minnesota Food Assistance/Support (including SNAP), WIC, MinnesotaCare and Minnesota Medical Assistance, or Social Security Disability. All recipients who show documentation of enrollment in any of the programs listed above will eligible to be selected to the reduced cost CSA program, or as eligible to possibly receive a donated CSA share.

Page 5, Part VI, "Your Members and Other Individuals and Organizations that Receive Benefits from You", line 3:

"Do any individuals who receive goods, services, or funds through your programs have a family or business relationship with any officer, director, trustee, or with any of your highest compensated employees or highest compensated independent contractors listed in Part V, lines 1a, 1b, and 1c? If 'Yes,' explain how these related individuals are eligible for goods, services or funds."

Because many of United Acres' programs and services are open to the public (anyone in the community can participate), family members of the Board of Directors may choose to purchase a market-rate CSA to consume or donate to the Food Shelf, or participate United Acres' classes in the future. However, they will absolutely not receive any preferential treatment and will be treated like any other member of the general public.

Page 6, Part VIII, "Your Specific Activities," line 4a:

"Attach a description of each fundraising program."

United Acres Board, volunteers, staff and independent contractors plan to engage in the following fundraising activities:

- Grant writing (for both Foundation and Government grants and contracts);
- Community partnerships (which may result in in-kind donation of goods and/or services);
- Solicitation of in-kind donations (contributions of goods or services, other than cash grants-- such as Graduate Research Assistants from the University of Minnesota);
- Solicitation of sponsorships from the private sector starting in the second year of operations;
- Earned income from Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce sales, direct produce sales to institutions serving many vulnerable populations (such as local schools and Nursing homes), and direct sales to other entities such as businesses or food hubs. All profit earned from sales will go directly to help support United Acres' charitable programs, such as donations to the food shelf, reduced cost CSAs for low-income community members, educational classes and the sustainability hub.

Page 6, Part VIII, "Your Specific Activities," line 4b:

"Do you or will you have written or oral contracts with any individuals or organizations to raise funds for you? If 'Yes,' describe these activities. Include all revenue and expense from these activities and state who conducts them. Revenue and expense should be provided for the time periods specified in Part IX, Financial Data. Also, attach a copy of any contracts or agreements."

At some point in the year 2016 (and in 2017-2018), United Acres plans to contract an individual grant writer to assist the Board in their grant-writing efforts. This contract will be very small, with approximately \$3,500 to be expended on the grant-writer per year for their assistance on four to six grant proposals. The individual grant writer is unknown at this time. The revenues that the contracted grant-writer will bring in are completely unknown. No contract or agreement has been drafted at this time.

Page 6, Part VIII, "Your Specific Activities," line 7b:

"Do or will persons other than your employees or volunteers manage your activities or facilities?"

Yes, the manager of the community garden operations for United Acres is an independent contractor. The contract community garden operations manager is responsible for managing the community garden's production operations, including tilling, planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest handling. They will also manage contracted seasonal laborers to help with production operations. There are no business or family relationships between the contracted manager and United Acres' officers or directors.

United Acres, Inc. - EIN: 81-1045612
Attachment to Form 1023

Page 9, Part IX, "Financial Data," Section A "Statement of Revenues and Expenses"- Itemized lists for lines 9, 22 and 23:

	Current Tax Year	3 prior tax years or 2 succeeding tax years			Total (a) through (d)
	(a) From 1/1/16 To 12/31/16	(b) From 1/04/15 To 12/31/15	(c) From 1/1/17 To 12/31/17	(d) From 1/1/18 To 12/31/18	
Revenues:					
Line 9 -					
Gross receipts from admissions, merchandise sold or services performed, or furnishing of facilities in any activity that is related to your exempt purposes (attach itemized list)					
CSA Produce Sales	-	-	8,750	26,250	35,000
Farm-to-Institution Sales/Wholesale Produce	12,000	-	9,000	12,000	33,000
Donations from class attendees	-	-	-	450	450
TOTAL	12,000	-	17,750	38,700	68,450
Expenses:					
Line 22-					
Professional Fees					
Contract community garden operations manager	25,000	-	25,000	25,000	
Contract seasonal laborers	6,100	-	9,100	18,100	
Contracted accountant	150	-	150	150	
TOTAL	31,250	-	34,250	43,250	
Line 23-					
Any expense not otherwise classified, such as program services (attach itemized list)					
Bank Service Charges	50	-	50	50	
Fees & Filing	850	-	-	-	
Liability Insurance	750	-	750	750	
Office Supplies	50	-	600	900	
Program Advertising	-	-	750	1,250	
Transportation Expenses	-	-	805	1,610	
Professional Development	400	-	400	400	
IT and Computer	-	-	3,000	400	
Meetings-Program	200	-	500	1,000	
Seeds, Seedlings, Trees	800	-	800	1,600	
Fencing	-	-	-	16,000	
Tools	100	-	100	100	
Machinery Rental	4,190	-	4,190	4,190	
Biodegradable Plastic	335	-	335	335	
Fertilizer/Manure	500	-	500	1,000	
Pesticides	250	-	250	500	
Freezer/Cooler	16,000	-	-	-	
Other materials	850	-	-	-	
Irrigation set up & Materials	6,660	-	100	200	
Postage	50	-	200	400	
Printing and Reproduction	-	-	300	500	
TOTAL	32,035	-	13,630	31,185	