In the Fall 2014 semester my responsibilities as the Office for Sustainability’s Event Planning intern included a variety of tasks. My most important role was the involvement I had in planning this year’s National Campus Sustainability Day with Keynote Speaker Judy Wicks. The event spanned 3 days and included the following: Welcome/Networking Dinner for Judy at Saffron, classroom visit to Tim Palmer’s class to discuss sustainable business, Gibbs House visit, Community Luncheon and Roundtable Discussion at OfS, student meet & greet, Keynote Address “Building a New Economy: What’s Love got to do with it?” and “Doing Well by Doing Good Workshop”.

Event Planning Responsibilities:
In order to have successfully executed this event, it was vital that our event team met regularly for the months leading up to this event. Anne Copeland, Jeff Spoelstra and I met weekly to distribute responsibilities and maintain a regular plan of action. This included making, confirming and keeping in contact with the proper contacts for reservations in catering and venues for all sub events. I was also responsible for maintaining contact with Judy Wick’s assistant in order to mutually accommodate for both OfS and Judy’s needs throughout this event.

Recruitment and Promotion:
Recruiting attendants for specific sub events became one of my major tasks as NCSD approached. We had a vision for each event and felt that these could occur unless people with specific professional background or ambition were involved. Through the Welcome Dinner at Saffron the night upon Judy’s arrival, we wanted to create an environment that would acknowledge “emerging leaders” in the Kalamazoo Community and give our guest of honor, Judy Wicks, an understanding of how devoted Kalamazoo and WMU is to the idea of sustainability. Judy was unable to attend this event due to unforeseen travel delays, so our welcome dinner was transformed into a networking dinner that allowed a wide variety of professionals to discuss their ideas who would not normally have the chance to connect.

The vision of the Luncheon and Community Roundtable Discussion held at OfS as a place to celebrate Judy Wicks and the sustainable leaders we had in attendance. This event was also utilized to allow for discussion on community issues and ideas for creating a better environment for all Kalamazoo community members.

Through the Doing Well by Doing Good Workshop we gave emerging business ideas the opportunity to present their ideas engage in further business plan development. We had the chance to hear from students on WMU’s campus, present businesses in the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids area. With the specific audience we had in mind for these sub-events, we wanted to create a tool that allowed us to reach the same community members for future events of this kind. We utilized excel to create a “mind map” of community members that included their affiliation with sustainability, contact information, and business or position.
General promotion took place through e-mail blasts via constant contact, in-class announcements by OfS students, chalking and poster ing campus and downtown, an interview with Judy on WMUK, and access to information on all events on the OfS website. We also targeted who we felt was our most appropriate audience through flyering and promotion at October’s 2014 ArtHop and the weekly Kalamazoo Farmer’s Market. Recruitment and management of staff and volunteers in order to execute these promotional strategies was another duty I had been made responsible for overseeing.

Responsibilities during National Campus Sustainability Day Events:

My priority responsibility for the length of Judy Wick’s visit was to accompany her throughout her stay and make her feel welcomed at WMU and Kalamazoo. Prior to the event, I had worked with Anne on creating plans for the set up and break down of each event based on expected occupancy, recording and photography needs, venue services and timeline and assisted in executing set up and break down plans for each event. It was important that I be made available to attend each event in order to respond to any unforeseen issues, although this did not necessarily occur during any of our events this year. I’ve learned that this is a very important component to event planning and vital for successful execution.

Outcomes:

Each event was successful in its vision and completion. Through the wonderful discussion and variety of backgrounds at our Welcome Dinner, this event was able to transform into a successful networking event and encourage excitement for sustainability (and NCSD). The classroom and Gibbs House visit gave Judy a further understanding of what sustainability means to WMU. She was very impressed with the Sustainable Business program offered at Western, and with much of the Permaculture work being done by our OfS staff.

“Building a New Economy: What’s Love Got to do with It?” reached near capacity in one of Sangren Hall’s 200 seat auditoriums. She had a very engaged audience who participated in successful book sales and one-on-one discussion following her Keynote.

Our “Doing well by Doing Good Workshop” achieved the “incubator” type space that we envisioned it creating. Prospective and existing businesses of all kinds were brought together to present ideas and discuss further development.