

## **“Building a Global Network of Local Living Economies” Australia, May, 2008**

There has been much in the news lately concerning the global food crisis with much speculation about the causes of the rise in food prices. Is the cause the drought in Australia with decreased wheat exports? or the diversion of corn to biodiesel in the US? Or the increase in eating grain fed-meat in India and China?

But what has not been properly addressed is the failure of the global food system itself. The reasons for the price increases is irrelevant. The major point is that the corporate controlled global food system has left people around the world vulnerable to the inevitable fluctuation of prices in the global market place.

Six weeks ago a front page photograph in the New York Times made an impression on me. A hungry child in a ragged dress stood on a trash heap in Haiti looking for food. This image is representative of a failed global economy based on exports and imports, which has made people dependent on foreign transnational corporations to deliver basic needs with no control over price or quality, nor the environmental and social practices in their production.

There was a time when the Haitian girl could have eaten nutritious rice grown in her own country. That was before US corporate growers, subsidized with our tax dollars, dumped cheap rice in Haiti, putting local rice farmers out of business and leaving Haitians dependent on foreign corporations for food, no matter the price or quality.

To add to the misery, the rice coming from the US lacks the nutritional value of the whole-grain native crop. An epidemic of Beriberi in Haitian prisons was traced back to US rice, processed in a way that removes vitamin B. Even US foreign aid adds to the problem by distributing food produced by US corporations, rather than purchasing from local farmers to strengthen their capacity to feed their own. Around the globe, food riots by hungry people, left vulnerable to the price fluctuations of an increasingly unstable global marketplace, demonstrate the misguided strategy of dependency on foreign corporations to deliver basic needs.

Surely we need a new vision for our global economy – one based on local self-reliance and the role of locally owned business to serve the needs of their community.

### **Good Morning Beautiful Business**

When I open my closet door in the morning, I see a sign that says “Good morning beautiful business.” It’s a daily reminder of just how beautiful business can be when we put our best efforts, creativity, and care into producing a product or service we offer to our community.

Economic exchange can be one of the most satisfying and meaningful of human interactions.

When I see that sign, “Good morning beautiful business” I think of my own business, and how the farmers are already out in the fields picking fresh organic fruits and vegetables to bring into the restaurant that day.

I think of the farm animals out in the pastures – pigs, cows and chickens, enjoying the morning sun and fresh air, and of Dougie, the goat herder, who says that when she kisses her goats ears it makes their cheese better!

I think about our bakers coming in early in the morning to put cakes and pies into the oven for our customers to enjoy that day, of the maintenance crew making sure everything is clean and repaired before guests arrive,

and I think of the Zapatista Indians down in Chiapas, Mexico, growing the coffee beans for my morning cup.

Business is about relationships. Money is simply a tool. Business is about relationships with everyone we buy from and sell to, and work with, and about our relationship with Earth itself.

My business is the way I express my love for the world, and that’s what makes it a thing of beauty.

### **Moving to Sansom Street**

The first time I walked onto street where I live and work today I was enchanted. The narrow tree-lined street, with a row of charming, if someone rundown, Victorian brownstone houses was a little oasis from the unfriendly institutional feeling surrounding it.

In 1972, many of the old buildings around the University of Pennsylvania were being torn down and replaced by modern high-rise dormitories and office buildings, strip malls, and parking garages.

In contrast, the lovely one-hundred-year-old houses on Sansom St, with a few small businesses on the first floors, were human-scale – quaint, homey, inviting.

Just after I moved into an apartment at 3420 Sansom, future home of the White Dog, I learned that the entire block had been condemned to make way for a shopping mall.

How could it be that those lovely brownstone rowhouses would be demolished and the local business owners and residents forced out to build chain stores and fast food restaurants!

I was outraged! [This must have been my first BALLE moment.]

I eagerly joined our local community group organized to fight the demolition and save our homes and businesses. Our group developed an alternative proposal to the shopping mall based on the vision of urban activist Jane Jacobs, author of "Death and Life of Great American Cities," who had fought to save her own community in Greenwich Village from demolition to make way for a cross town highway.

Jacobs talked about the importance of mixed-use, where communities prospered from a diverse and lively mixture of residential and retail where people can live, work, go to school and find leisure activities in the same walkable community.

Jacobs challenged the urban renewal movement of the 50's and 60's where whole neighborhoods were razed, destroying vibrant communities and thriving personalized local businesses to build sterile high-rise office buildings and housing projects that were segregated by income – ostentatious developments for the rich, mediocrity for the middle class, and gloomy, depressing housing projects for the poor.

Walkable communities were replaced by car-dependent suburbs where housing plans and shopping malls destroyed rich farmlands.

People no longer worked in the same community where they lived. Work life and family life became separate.

It was also the time of increased industrialization of agriculture, when farmers, stewards of the earth, were forced off of their land by corporate farms and developers in rapidly rising numbers.

Where family farms once raised a diversity of fruits and vegetables for local consumption, and the barnyard was a lively intergrated community of cows, and pigs, chickens and sheep, industrialization brought separation and specialization. Thousand of acres were seeded with the same commodity export crop, and farm animals were moved from green pastures and barnyards into factories where thousands of identical animals are confined in cages.

Without local farms, consumers lost the personal link between our food and the earth.

today most of us no longer know  
Who grows our food,  
Who bakes our bread,  
Brews our beer,  
Sews our clothes,  
Or builds our houses.

We've become disconnected from each other and from our places.

The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker - these were the relationships that once provided the foundations for strong and enjoyable communities.

Many towns and cities have lost their unique identity as streets are lined with the same chain stores found everywhere

or left deserted as customers flock to big box stores,

owned by distant corporations selling goods produced in faraway sweatshops and factory farms.

Without direct relationships, few of us think about the consequences of our economic transactions on other people and communities, on animals and the natural environment.

### **Compartmentalizing Values**

Eventually, our community group won the fight to save our block from the wrecking ball and I was given the opportunity to buy the house I was living in. I had found my place in the world where I wanted to live, work and raise a family. I choose my place and took responsibility for the well-being of my community, where I have now lived and worked for 35 years. Choosing a place and taking responsibility for it, is a basic principle of the Local Living Economy movement.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1983, I started the White Dog Cafe on the first floor of my house, first as a simple coffee and muffin take-out shop, which I grew into a 200 seat full-service restaurant, employing 100 people and occupying three rowhouses for the restaurant and two more for our retail shop, the Black Cat. Today our block is a lively mixture of locally owned independent businesses including a bookstore, an international news shop, a hair salon, a coffeeshop, a realtor's office, four restaurants, and our retail store, which sells locally made and fair trade gifts.

Like the family farm, family inn, and family-run store, I live above the shop in the old-fashioned way, and raised my family in the workplace.

I admire the Ms. Foundation for addressing the separation of family from work by having a "Bring your daughter to work day." When my first child, grace, was born I went right back to work a week later. During the day, I keep Grace in the office with me and at night put her in a basket on the piano. The first day back to work, I closed up at the end of the night, went home, got into bed, and thought to myself, "you're forgetting something. THE BABY!" I hopped out of bed, unlocked the restaurant and found Grace sleeping soundly on the piano. For me, it's not a problem to bring my daughter to work, but a problem to remember to bring her home again!

For me, home life and work life have always been interwoven, and so I naturally have the same value system at home and work.

Physically separating home life from the workplace often leads to the compartmentalization of values.

Business schools tell students "Leave your values at home, when you go to work." So it's teach your children the Golden Rule at home, but at work "Gold Rules!"

### **Short distance**

Living and working in the same community has not only given me a stronger sense of place, but a different business outlook.

Making business decisions in the best interest of the common good comes naturally when those affected are friends, neighbors and employees and the environment I experience every day.

At the White Dog there's a short distance between me as the business decision-maker and those affected by my decisions – a basic principle of BALLE and the local living economy movement.

As a small business owner, living and working in the same community, I am more likely to make decisions from the heart, not just from the head, and they are more likely to be in the best interest of those around me.

I have found that many of the most important decisions I've made came from the heart through situations where I had personal contact and experience with those affected by my decisions.

### **Paying a Living Wage**

An example of this was committing to paying a living wage to dishwashers and prep people. A living wage is the amount an employee needs to cover food, clothing, rent, health care, and the basic expenses of living in a particular city. Far above the federally mandated minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour, it is a voluntary commitment by the businessperson to use the living wage as a minimum wage.

When I first heard about the living wage, I had a typical businessperson's knee jerk reaction against it – "no one's going to tell me how much I should pay my staff,"

Months later, I was in the kitchen when for a split second, three young men who were cleaning and chopping vegetable all happened to look up at me at the same time. Looking at their faces, I had an instant realization. “Of course I want these young men to make enough to live on. How could I not pay people working for me full time enough to cover basic needs. Of course I want to pay a living wage. What had I been thinking!”

It was the direct personal contact that caused me to make a decision from the heart as well as the head.

### **Signing Up for Wind Power**

On another occasion, I was influenced by a direct relationship with nature. I had heard about the problem of global warming and the idea of sustainable energy. I understood the principles intellectually, but hadn't been moved to action.

Then one summer about five years ago, I was driving up to my favorite woods north of Philadelphia. We had been experiencing a severe drought and I saw on the way up how the corn fields along the highway were all brown and some were being plowed under in mid august. When I arrived in the woods I noticed that the beautiful ferns on Fern Hill, which once swayed in the wind, big, green and lush, were crumpled on the ground like brown tissue paper, crackling as I walked through. I could see that the tops of the trees were all brown and many of the leaves had fallen. As I walked through the woods, the only sound was the snapping of dead sticks and rustling of dry leaves. There was an eerie silence – not even the birds were singing – and a feeling of danger, as though the woods could be consumed by fire any minute. I came to the creek, once rushing waist deep, and found there was no water at all – only dust covered rocks. I could feel the woods calling out in distress. This is what it will be like, I anguished, when global warming brings drought and fire to some parts of the world, and storms and floods to others. I went over to a huge old oak and put my arms around it – I became a tree hugger! With my face pressed against the bark, I promised I would do all I could to stop the global warming that was endangering the place I loved. Back in the city, I came into the office and said, “Lets find out renewable energy – how can we get it?” Before long, the White Dog became the first business in Pennsylvania, to get 100% of our electricity from wind power.

Though I intellectually knew what I had to do, it was my personal relationship with the natural environment that touched my heart and caused me to act on what I had already known in my head.

### **Small is Beautiful**

When businesses continually grow larger and larger, the distance between the decision-maker and those affected grows longer, so that

many CEO's rarely have personal relationships with those affected by their decisions. And of course, publicly traded corporations are required by law to serve the financial interests of stockholders above all else.

What we don't see, we often don't care about.

Business schools teach "grow or die."  
Bigger is better, rather than small is beautiful.

Success is measured by material gain.  
And as a society, we are taught the false premise that economic growth benefits everyone.

Yet continual growth is destroying the planet, on which all life depends, by using up more natural resources than can be regenerated.  
and wealth inequality around the globe continues to increase.

On top of that, material growth has not made us any happier. Studies show that it was in the 1950's when the destruction of urban and rural communities began and people were separated by housing projects and migration to the suburbs, when happiness in American society began its decline. With all our material wealth and consumption, we are less happy than we were 50 years ago and less happy than our European counterparts. I'm sure we must be less happy than Australians, if I can judge by all the happy people I've met on my visit.

And we have also become less healthy due to over consumption of processed foods full of fat and sugar and lacking nutrition. Along with a lack of walking and exercise, our unhealthy diet has caused an epidemic of obesity, as well as an increase in diabetes.

Food shipped long distances has been bred to extend shelf life and give uniformity of shape and size for easier packing, while nutritional value and taste have consequently been bred out.

The US Farm Bill subsidizes corporate grain farmers which makes it cheaper to raise cows on grain rather than grass. Yet Grass-fed cows produce meat and milk with essential nutrients otherwise lacking, while corn-raised cows produce products with a higher content of unhealthy saturated fat.

Subsidized high fructose corn syrup is used as a sweetener for sodas and other junk food, making processed food lacking nutritional value more affordable than fruits and vegetables.

school lunches and fast food are therefore dominated by the fats and sugars of subsidized processed foods.

## **Staying Small**

Because success in the business world is measured by material growth, there was a time when I questioned my own success because I didn't have two or three restaurants. I still get the question, "You mean you only have one restaurant?" People are surprised that someone considered a successful restaurateur only has one.

I made a conscious decision to stay small, to be one special restaurant,

because I realized that if I grew beyond a certain point, I would lose what was really most important to my own happiness –

authentic relationships with all the people involved in my business.

And since that time, I've also realized that continual material growth can not be sustained by the finite limits of the planet.

I came to understand that success in our businesses and personal lives could be measured in other ways than growing materially.

We can grow by:

increasing our knowledge,  
expanding consciousness  
developing creativity,  
deepening our relationships,  
increasing our happiness and well being –  
and having more fun!

As author/activist Bill McKibben says, "Its not about belongings, its about belonging."

### **Eskimo Story**

The idea that it is not material belongings, but rather belonging to a community that brings happiness first occurred to me while living in an indigenous culture in 1969.

Just after college, I was a VISTA volunteer in an Eskimo Village in Alaska, where I began to see how cooperation, sharing and community are the key to human survival .

One spring morning, I heard a knocking on my cabin door, and opened it to find an Eskimo woman beckoning to me excitedly, saying, " Seal Party, Seal Party." I looked out to see the women in the village walking across the snow carrying buckets.

I soon learned that the tradition is when an Eskimo catches his first seal in the spring after a long hard winter, his wife holds a "seal party," and invites all the women in the village, and divides the seal meat up between all the families. After the meat is divided, the woman gives away other things that the family may have accumulated during the year.

The idea of hoarding more than one needed was unthinkable – unheard of in Eskimo culture.

Eskimos had no sense of envy. If I were to say, "I love that sweater you're wearing" to an Eskimo, they would just take it off and give it to me. You have to be careful what you admire! They couldn't conceive of the concept of envy, because they are committed to sharing and living cooperatively and have faith that the universe will provide what is needed to survive.

When I contrasted my own society, I realized that our consumer economy is actually based on envy. Advertising purposely creates envy so we feel as if we have to buy a new dress or makeup so we can

look like the models in the ads, or we have to buy a new car, or smoke the same cigarettes or drink the same beer as the handsome, macho men in the ads. We use envy to drive our economy. Big business spends billions of dollars on advertising to affect our behavior and lifestyle, and causes us to buy things that we do not need.

In our society, we reward people who are greedy and we actually admire the ones who hoard the most – the ones most gluttonous, who consume the most natural resources – living in the biggest houses, driving the largest gas-guzzling cars, and having the latest fashions and largest wardrobe.

Advertising programs us to base our self-esteem and security on how much we have, and makes sure we are never satisfied.

The Eskimos were the happiest people I've ever meet – they took great delight in life, and I believe its because their self-esteem and security were not connected to money. It was community that provided them security – it was that sense of belonging.

The Eskimos understood that all life is interconnected, that Earth's resources belong to all and that we must share and cooperate in order to survive. They understood their place in the web of life.

From the Eskimos, I began to see that a sustainable economy, one that lasted thousands of years and worked in harmony with nature, was based on cooperation and sharing, rather than competition and hoarding.

## **White Dog programs**

At the White Dog Café rathering than continually growing physically, we grow deeper through our many community-building programs which build a sense of community and interconnectedness.

Education has become a product of the White Dog along with food and service. We take our customes on solar house tours, teach them how to conduct energy audits of their homes, How waste veggie oil works as a fuel – a farmer collects our oil, and uses it to heat his green houses and run his tractor.

We take our customers on tours of farms, of prisons. Child watch tours witness the lives of inner-city children,

Table Talk speakers such as Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser, Frances Moore Lappee, David Korten, and Juliet Schor. Australian speakers have been philosopher and author Peter Singer and anti-nuclear activist Helen Caldicott.

We have a monthly community service day, and brought 35 customers and staff to New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, to help rebuild.

### **Some people claim my true profession is using good food to lure innocent customers into social activism!**

#### **Special dinners**

We have many special dinners that have become annual traditions. Every year we hold a Native American Thanksgiving Dinner to give thanks for all the many foods in our diet first cultivated by Native Americans,

Farmers' Sunday Supper – when each course features a different farm and the farmer talks with our customers about the farm.

Dance of the Ripe Tomato - a harvest celebration of sustainable and humane agriculture.

We just had our 22<sup>nd</sup> dinner in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King in January.

#### **Growing our Business Model**

At the White Dog we also grow by continuing to develop our sustainable business model. Each year around Earth Day we have a **Green Dog Day** to talk about our green business practices and announce something new each year. Last year adding a compost project that supplies compost to inner city school gardens, and most recently installed a solar hot water system to heat the water for our dishwasher.

#### **International Sister Restaurant Program**

I once had a vision of walking into a restaurant and instead of asking for a table for two or four, I asked for "Table for Five Billion, Please!" imagining a world where everyone has a place at the table politically and economically, and having enough to eat. Though we eventually changed to Six Billion, that became the name of our international sister restaurant program, through which we've taken customers to

other countries to study local food systems and understand how US policy effects the lives of others. Our travels have taken us to Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Mexico. We've eaten with the Sandinistas, and the Zapatistas and the Viet Cong and the Soviets, so our nickname became "Eating with the Enemy."

### **Chiapas**

When the Zapatistas held their uprising on the day NAFTA went into effect, New Years Day, 1994, I was curious to find out why and ended up going to Chiapas ten times over the next ten years.

To comply with NAFTA, the Mexican government had to change the Mexican constitution, eliminating the article, won during the Mexican revolution that protected the communal lands of the indigenous people, opening them to exploitation by foreign corporations

The Zapatistas demanded their right to farm their land, to be self-reliant and not be forced into the global economy to work on plantations or in factories. They wanted the right to raise their children with their traditional customs in their own language and to have autonomy as a community within the country with their own elected representatives. The Zapatistas predicted that with NAFTA, cheap US government subsidized corn would flood across the borders putting local farmers out of business. And that's exactly what happened as subsidized corn was dumped into Mexico including GMO corn which has polluted the native varieties. Thousands of Mexicans lost their land and have immigrated illegally into the US looking for work. Now that US corn has been diverted to biodiesel, the cost of tortillas and

### **Visiting Cuba**

On White Dog trips to Cuba, we witnessed a different outcome. Most of Cuba was once planted in export crops benefiting large corporations and wealthy landowners, while food for domestic consumption was largely imported - primarily from the US. After the revolution and the consequent US embargo, Cuba became dependent on the USSR until their collapse. Faced with the possibility of widespread hunger, Cuban's joined together to build a self-reliant local food system, based

largely on a network of community gardens. On our tour, Mark Dornstreich of Branch Creek Farm, a supplier of the White Dog, marveled at the advanced organic methods in Havana's urban farms. While farmers around the world despair over accelerating costs of petroleum-based chemical fertilizers and pesticides, another form of corporate dependency, Cubans have developed organic farming practices that protect their soil and water while supplying healthy food. Though not a perfect country, Cuba has achieved food sovereignty – freedom to grow their food in ways most beneficial to their people, while greatly reducing, if not eliminating, dependency on oil for production and transport.

It was through these international trips and relationships that I began to understand the problems of the corporate controlled global economy and began to envision an alternative system.

### **Purpose of business is to serve**

I believe that the purpose of business is to serve, and so our mission at the White Dog is to serve in four areas: serving our customers, serving our employees, serving our community, and serving the Earth.

There are many different ways we do this. One of the most important ways of serving the Earth and our community and our customers all at once is to buy locally from organic farmers, which we have been doing for over 20 years.

### **We buy locally because**

- the food tastes better
- Direct relationship with farmers who grow food
  - Build a food community that is personally satisfying
- Transparency about how food is grown and animals are raised
  - The US has a growing number of food scares and recalls involving poisoned products and diseased meat.
- building a stronger local economy builds community self-reliance and provides food security
- local cuts down on transport, a contributor to global warming.

### **Pig Story**

For a long time I had know the importance of buying only cage-free chicken and eggs, but I did not understand about the factory farming of pigs until I read about it in John Robbins book back in the 90's.

There I learned about the barbaric way in which pigs are raised in windowless factories, kept in cages so small they are unable to move forward or backward, nor turn around, standing on slates above a lagoon of their own excrement which goes on to pollute the community water supply. Never enjoying a breeze of fresh air, or a ray of sunshine. Though very social animals, never able to touch each other, socialize or lay in big piles, as pigs love to do. The sows are artificially inseminated, prohibited from building nests and caring for their young as their instincts call them to do. Their babies are taken away prematurely, and the process repeated over and over.

Pigs are not machines; they are intelligent, sociable sentient beings with feelings and emotions like other mammals – like dogs, like humans.

It's a violation of nature to treat them in this cruel and inhumane way. It's a betrayal of our sacred trust as stewards of farm animals. It's institutionalized cruelty that is destroying our own humanity.

I realized that the pork I was using must have been coming from factory farms, as most all pork does. I could not participate in this evil system, so I came into the kitchen, took all the pork off the menu – the ham, bacon, and pork chops - and our chef set out to find a new humane source. A farmer who was bringing in free-range chicken from Lancaster County started bringing us pork raised by his neighbors in a small-scale, traditional way.

Next I discovered the terrible way cattle are raised – how they are herbivores and should have a diet of grass and clover, but because of government subsidizes are forced to eat corn and wheat, and even ground up animal parts. So we found sources for local grass-fed beef. Eventually, all the meat and poultry on our menu came from small family farms where animals are raised on pasture and treated with respect and compassion. We finally had a cruelty free menu - that would be our market niche. I wanted to be the best –to be the only restaurant in town that could make this claim.

But then I thought, "Judy, if you really do care about those animals, if you care about the environment that's being polluted by industrial farming, if you care about the workers in these horrible animal factories and slaughterhouses, if you care about the family farms

being driven out of business, if you care about the consumers eating meat full of hormones and anti-biotics,

then you would not keep this as your market niche, but share what you have learned with other businesses including your competitors.

I was doing the right thing within my company, but that was not enough any longer.

There is no such thing as one sustainable business, or one sustainable household. We must be part of a sustainable system.

I had to turn my attention to building that local sustainable food system.

I had to move from a competitive mentality to one of cooperation in order to build a whole local economy based on humane and sustainable farming.

I asked the farmer who was bringing us pork if he would like to expand his business, and he said he would. "What's holding you back?" I asked. He needed a refrigerated truck so I loaned him \$30,000, and he bought the truck. He has since paid me back.

I increased the Cafe's charitable giving from 10 to 20% of our profits, and started the White Dog Community Enterprises to support projects that would take what I had learned from my business to a higher level of social impact.

## **Fair Food**

So I found a way to share our knowledge by starting the Fair Food Project. First staff person began by providing free consulting to restaurateurs and chefs on how to buy from local farmers, not just for meats, but all locally grown products. She's connected hundreds of restaurants, stores and farms, so that our region has become known for our local food system.

Fair Food Farm Stand

Consumer guide to buying local

Wholesales guide

Farm to institution

Pig Farmer assistance program

With partners we are Starting a food distribution business – the Common Market

Enterprise development – helping to start new businesses needed in our local economy such as fair food grocery stores, youth run cafe, food processing businesses – spinach, garlic, etc.

To help minorities gain ownership positions.

As we move from a global industrial economy to local green economies and need many new local businesses, this is an historic time to make great strides in economic justice by helping those who have been left out of the old economy, find ownership opportunities in the new economy.

### **Seattle**

Two events took place in the fall of 1999 that caused me to direct my full attention to creating a national and eventually an international movement.

The first one was the massive protest against the World Trade Organization in Seattle.

There I saw environmentalists, labor union leaders, farmers, teachers student, but there was no voice of progressive business.

The protest was against corporate control of the global economy, what we didn't want business to be in our lives, but no one was articulating a new vision of what business should and could be as an alternative.

How can we direct positive energy toward building an alternative to corporate globalization?

### **Ben & Jerrys**

Only days after Seattle, the second event happened: Ben and Jerry's ice cream company was sold to the Dutch conglomerant Unilever. It wasn't by choice, by the way. They fought it, but there was a forced buy-out because they are publicly traded and by law must sell to the highest bidder if that is favorable to the financial interests of their stockholders.

When it finally sunk in, I sat up in bed in the middle of the night and said to myself, My God, they've got Ben and Jerry's. I just couldn't believe it. That company was the leader of our movement and had

taught us so much. I learned about the living wage from Ben and Jerry's. It was Ben and Jerry's that came up with the idea of the multiple bottom line, measuring success not just by profit but by a business's effect on society and the environment – now known as the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit.

but since the advent of the responsible business movement, the environmental crisis has deepened, wealth inequality has increased.

Family farms are being forced out by factory farms, family businesses forced out by Wal-marts.

Large corporations often eliminated local companies, as they spread their brands across the county, getting larger and larger until they are most often bought up by multinationals.

Other companies, besides Ben & Jerrys, that have been models of social responsibility were being sold to multinationals, adding to the concentration of wealth our movement had intended to address –

Odawalla Juice was sold to Coca-Cola, Rhino Records to Time Warner, Cascadian Farms to General Mills,

and more recently Stonyfield Farms to Group Dannone, makers of Dannone Yougert, Toms of Maine to Colgate, and the Body Shop to L'oriel.

I could see that the socially responsible business movement that I had been part of for many years was continuing to use the

old paradigm to measure success - continuous growth. Continuous growth in a finite world makes no sense.

At the same time, we had been neglecting these three important issues:

1. A sense of place, national brands had no local identity, nor connection to the natural environment of a place.
2. appropriate scale –at what size do we maximize the human relationships within a company to be human-scale businesses.
3. Ownership

Democracy depends on having many owners.  
The more owners, the more freedom.

So now the movement for responsible business has two fronts – those bringing reforms in large corporations, such as ben & Jerry’s and Stonyfiled continue to model,

and those working to build an alternative to corporate globalization through the local living economy movement

### **Founding of BALLE**

That is why, six and a half years ago, in the fall of 2001, I co-founded BALLE, the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies.

I started with a simple premise – an environmentally, socially and financial sustainable global economy is comprised of a network of sustainable local economies – or living economies that support both natural life and community life.

Rather than a global economy dominated by large corporations, I envisioned a global economy as an intricate web of small to small, win-win business relationships, - a decentralized global network of local living economies, comprised of independent, locally owned businesses.

These businesses are human-scale and community-based and strive to work in harmony with natural systems, while creating community wealth and vitality.

In local living economies

Basic needs are produced at home, while what is not available locally is bought through fair trade which supports the local communities where products originate.

### **The Local Living Economy movement brings together the movements for**

Sustainable local food, Green Building, New Urbanism, community capital, renewable energy, alternative transportation, independent

media, and local arts and culture into one wholistic vision for sustainable communities.

### **Mission of BALLE**

BALLE mission is to catalyse, strengthen and connect local business networks dedicated to bulding local living economies in their regions.

is now an alliance of almost 60 networks in Canada and the US,

Excited to hear that there is interest in starting a BALLE in Australia.

Canada plans to form a separate BALLE from the US and so there will be a new model for a nationwide BALLE.

BALLE is a bottoms up organization where experimentation happens at the local level and success stories, such as local first campaigns, are passed onto the other networks through the BALLE network.

We communcate among the networks in several ways: monthly Round-up calls on subjects around how to build stronger networks, like dues structures, or getting non-profit status, or around programs to help member businesses such as raising capital, or greening your business. We also have a newsletter that spreads best practices, and a members only section of our website.

One of our most important vehicles for spreading models and building community is our annual international conference with our 6<sup>th</sup> annual conference coming up this June 5-8 in Boston, with two preconference forums on june 4 – starting local first campaigns and manufacturing locally.

I hope some of you will be able to attend someday.

More can be found on our website at [livingeconomies.org](http://livingeconomies.org)

### **Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia Starting SBN**

after starting Balle, went home to Philly and thought, "how does one go about building a local living economy?"

what do we need – food & farming, housing/green building, energy, capital, local arts and culture, independent media, etc.

what I called the building blocks of a local living economy

connecting the dots between these areas of positive growth  
people in one area weren't talking to the others

Use building blocks to:

1. taking an inventory of who the leaders were in business, non-profit and govt in each area – food, energy, transportation, green blg., capital, recycling, clothing, media/pr/marketing, etc.

2. Forming partnerships with existing group, alignments, building community

3. Form leadership team with someone from each BB on board.

4. Recruit members from each area

5. Teach each other – monthly seminars

6. Do business with each other.

7. Conference planning

- Food bb do food planning for conference

- Business services BB – which included Marketing do the promo

- Breakouts on capital, recycling, green blg. Etc

- First conference in conjunction with green blg.

- Fashion show of local clothing

8. Self-organize around passions – meet regularly or sporadically as needed, and figure out ways to work together such as landscape building block purchasing supplies together.

9. Public policy – each bb writes part of the white paper for mayoral candidates,  
image/brand of city to be green and attract green.

Advanced network – Bellingham has paid staff pp for 4 BB-

Green blg. Energy, food & farming, independent retail/local first

SBN now has almost 400 members

6<sup>th</sup> annual Social Venture Institute for emerging entrepreneurs

Members directory and website

Circle of Entrepreneurs

Green jobs program with the City

Important factor of fun – joy of community – Merry Mecca.

Always have local wine and cheese.

SustainaBall with a local band and local foods – annual fundraiser

Members meeting with members talent show

New Years Resolutions for Sustainability

State of SBN Address

Building a community of like minded people – buying from each other to cooperatively build sustainable systems

[www.sbnPhiladelphia.org](http://www.sbnPhiladelphia.org)

### **Buy local campaign**

BALLE is starting Local First campaigns around the country, using one another as models through a tool kit. First one in Bellingham, Washington. Buy Local First – not just food, but supporting local retailers, especially those who sell locally made products.

Each has difference tone and feel appropriate to the town or city. Buy Local Philly at holiday time.

### **Multiplier effect**

Studies have been done in Maine and Texas showing that when a \$100 is spent in a local store \$45 recirculates in the local economy, where only \$11 stays within the local economy when you shop at a big box store.

Charitable Giving in comparison to sales is 4 times higher with locally owned businesses.

### **Reinventing Growth**

Rather than spreading our brands, BALLE businesses spread our models – teaching others our business model in a cooperative way..

BALLE businesses are reinventing growth. Rather than expanding our businesses beyond our own region by creating chains or national brands in the cookie cutter format of the industrial era, which require long distant transport,

BALLE entrepreneurs to look at the needs of our own community.

Zimmerman’s Deli in Ann Arbor is a perfect example of this model of growth and innovation –Rather than having a chain of Zimmerman’s they have created a “community of businesses” such as a creamery and bakery that close economic loops in their local, economy.

When I felt ready for a second business, 19 years ago, I started a retail store, the Black Cat, where we sell locally made and fairly traded gifts, because such a store didn’t exist in our community.

Local entrepreneurs can look at what imports can be replaced to make their community more self reliant through local manufacturing - using local supplies and local labor for local consumption?

Where are the gaps in our local economic systems that we can fill with a new business?

We can look within the essential building blocks of a local living economy for the businesses our community may need, such as:

Locally grown and processed food,  
Locally grown fiber crops and textile production,  
locally designed and made clothing,  
green building, design, construction and building materials,  
renewable energy production,  
alternative transportation,  
recycling and reuse,  
earth-friendly cleaning supplies,  
community capital institutions,  
independent retail,  
zero waste manufacturing,

health and well-being products and services,

## **Exports**

Through local ownership, we can focus on what is unique to our region and develop products for export based on the individual character and culture of a region, on the creative ideas and innovations of the local creative class and unique natural resources.

## **Climate change and peak oil**

The world now faces an historic triple challenge. Not only of climate change but also of Peak Oil, that we have reached the peak of oil production and the supply will now begin to decrease even as the demand increases - driving prices up. And thirdly a depletion of all natural resources and the breakdown of natural systems.

But worse than running out of oil, is not running out, since the damage done by burning it is destroying the planet on which we all depend for survival.

## **Export/import system**

Cheap oil has been the lifeblood of corporate globalization, making it possible for multinational corporations to ship products from distant places where labor and natural resources are easy to exploit.

There are studies that show that the amount of a product, such as meat, potatoes, apples, ice cream, beer, bottled water that is exported out of a state or country is equal to that which is imported in! There is no reason to ship goods all over the world that could largely be produced at home.

A study showed that Americans imported English sugar cookies, and the English imported American cookies, and it was pointed out that it would save a lot of carbon emissions if they simply exchanged recipes!

The unnecessary transportation of goods around the globe is a major contributor to global warming.

### **Subsidizes**

The export/import model has been made more harmful by the agricultural subsidies provided by the US and EU governments to large corporations. Coerced or bribed into eliminating trade barriers and opening their borders, developing countries have been victimized by the dumping of subsidized crops such as corn, wheat, rice, soy beans and cotton sold below the cost of production. Just as as happened in Mexico and Haiti, small farmers around the world have been put out of business.

Once thriving local economies have been destroyed making people around the world dependent on large corporations to provide food and fiber shipped long distances, adding to the carbon emissions which cause global warming.

The solution is clear we must develop community self-reliance with local energy security,  
local food security,  
and small scale local processing and manufacturing to provide basic needs locally.

Building local living economies is not only a way to reduce carbon emissions,

it is also preparing us for a world affected by climate change and peak oil by ending our reliance on long supply chains  
easily disrupted by adverse weather,  
the rising cost of oil,  
and social upheaval.

### **Decentralization/Localization**

The local living economy movement is essentially about decentralization and localization of our economy:

- localization of business ownership brings economic control back to communities from far away board rooms who often make decisions without regard to the welfare of local communities.

We need local governments to align economic development strategies with building self-reliant local economies, rather than a strategy that gives tax breaks to big box stores and multi-national chains that compete unfairly with local businesses and drain capital from local economies.

- localization of energy sources so that every community has energy security from renewable sources ends our dependent on oil from far-away places.

- localization of our food system  
we need to localize our food system so that every community has food sovereignty- freedom to grow their food in ways most beneficial to their people

- localization of building materials to use local wood, sustainably harvested, stone and other local building materials and to use energy efficient designs appropriate to local weather and environmental conditions.

\* localization of investments. We need money to grow local economies. Many of us put our savings in the stock market but that takes money out of our local communities. When I realized that, I disinvested from even screened stocks and put my savings into the Philadelphia Reinvestment Fund, where my money is loaned out to small businesses and non-profits in my own region.

It even provided the money to build the wind turbines in the mid part of Pennsylvania that produce the wind energy we use at the White Dog.

I call this getting a “living return” – not only a financial return, but the benefit of living in a stronger and more sustainable local and global economy.

Disinvest in the stock market and put your money in a local bank, credit union, or community reinvestment fund to put your money to work to build your local economy.

- localization and decentralization of communications, promoting independent media, so that we have many sources of information and are not dependent on corporate controlled media. buy from local bookstores and subscribe to alternative news magazines and internet news.

- decentralizing and localization of culture to protect local culture and languages from corporate monoculture and to support local artists, musicians and creative innovators in every community.

## **Peace**

Creating a world where every community has local food, water and energy security, creates the foundation for world peace.

## **Fun**

During debate and discussion about climate change and peak oil there is often a focus on the costs and hardships of moving to a low-carbon economy.

But there is little talk of the benefits to our quality of life. We're not talking about going back to the cave age,

but rather, about gathering with friends over a meal of locally produced food, in a warm, well-insulated house, and getting there by riding our bikes or walking along uncongested streets or taking public transportation.

People go to farmers markets not just to get food, but for the sense of community and sense of place that comes from it, and because its fun.

In her new book, "Dancing in the Streets" Barbara Ehrenreich talks the importance of "collective joy" and how it is often missing in our industrialized, materialistic society, which she believes has caused an epidemic of depression.

We've come to think that a good time has to mean spending a lot of money to travel and be entertained.

But we can create more fun in our own communities, rather than depending on expensive vacations to distant places to have a good time.

### **Birth of a Nation**

A customer sent me her book *Dancing in the streets* because the White Dog hosts many block parties where we dance in the streets and bring collective joy.

For many years on the Fourth of July eve we have the Liberty and Justice for All ball, and I put on a skit called the Birth of the Nation. First comes a Revolutionary War fellow with his drum, then a midwife with her lantern, and then I come out dressed as a pregnant colonial woman, with a clown face and a little colonial hat. And a sign on my back that says, "George Washington slept here!" My midwife delivers twins, a white woman and a black woman. One says "Justice," one says "Liberty," and they are dressed in red, white, and blue, They hop onto the stage and do a tap dance to "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Then we wheel out the Statue of Liberty. We light our sparklers and sing "God Bless America." It's very patriotic.

These are all celebrations that increase happiness and build community, and historically have often been put on by locally owned businesses – the town grocery store held the community holiday party in the town where I grew up, and I'm sure many of you grew up in places where the local milk company or hardware store throws a community event.

Building a sustainable and inclusive local economy is not only about our responsibility to future generations,

but also about reconnecting to place and with each other as we build community,

creating local identity through local musicians, artists and creative entrepreneurs,

and increasing happiness and collective joy that comes from working collaboratively toward a shared vision.

To summarize:

**The Local Living Economies Movement is about:**

Maximizing relationships, not maximizing profits

Growth of consciousness and creativity, not brands and market-share,  
Democracy and decentralized ownership, not concentrated wealth.  
A living return, not the highest return.  
A fair price, not the lowest price.  
Sharing, not hoarding,  
Simplicity, not gluttony,  
Life serving, not self-serving.  
Partnership, not domination.  
Cooperation based, not competition based.  
Win-win exchange, not win-lose exploitation.  
Family farms, not factory farms.  
Bio-diversity, not monocrops.  
Cultural diversity, not monoculture.  
Creativity, not conformity.  
Slow food, not fast food.  
Our bucks, not Starbucks.  
Our mart, not Wal-Mart.  
Community worth, not Woolworth  
Valuing life over life-style.  
And as the Earth Charter says,  
"Being more, not having more."

### **Protecting what we love**

At its heart, our movement for local living economies is about love.  
And its love that can overcome the fear that many may feel in the  
hard days ahead brought on by climate change and environmental  
collapse.

In my own experience, it was my love for animals that motivated me  
to challenge the factory farm system and begin building a local living  
economy in my region.

Our power comes from protecting what we love – love of place, love of  
life – people, animals, nature, all of life on our beautiful planet Earth.

And I would say, for the entrepreneurs amongst us – it's also about a  
love of business. Business has been corrupted as an instrument of  
greed rather than one of service to the common good. Yet we know  
that business is beautiful when we put our creativity and care into  
producing a product or service needed by our community.

Our materialistic society has desensitized us to the suffering that underlies our industrial economic system.

We're also desensitized by a false idea of masculinity based on control and domination. We need a more feminine, nurturing approach to life – to bring forth the goddess in each of us, men and women both, bringing care and compassion to our economy, and peace and harmony to our world.

We must open our hearts and eyes and ears - to hear the cry of the pigs in the crates, of a cow for her calf, of animals in laboratories, in the fur industry.

To feel the suffering of men, women and children enslaved in sweatshops, in the rug industry, in diamond and coalmines, and in chocolate production. The suffering of migrant workers in slaughterhouses and pesticide-soaked industrial farms.

The suffering of the people of Iraq, of Nigeria, of the rainforest tribes - everywhere where there is oil and natural resources to exploit, and fight wars over.

Let us hear the cry of the whales, of the polar bears, of the trees, of the coral reefs, of the natural world that is dying around us.

What provides the energy and passion for all we must do in this movement is simply to allow ourselves to love what we love.

And in so doing, find our place as humans in the family of life.