

FIRST NATIONAL BALLE CONFERENCE TARGETS KEY ISSUES AND PROJECTS

BALLE BEAT

Laury Hammel

OVER 115 business leaders gathered for the First National BALLE Conference held at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon May 30 – June 1. Underlying principles of the local living economy movement were addressed in depth by speakers representing different perspectives and areas of expertise.

Four prominent BALLE leaders who were pivotal in forming the organization delivered opening statements. David Korten spoke about why a living economy was the only real choice facing our nation and that the current economy was leading us down an economically suicidal path. He outlined clearly how the economic domination of large transnational corporations deprived human beings and all life of being whole and robbed us of our future. Michael Shuman presented a compelling case for the need for sustainably operated locally owned companies. Judy Wicks described in detail how Philadelphia and other communities are inventorying the current status of the various “building blocks” that make up a local living economy. Philadelphia is focusing on local food systems, clothing, energy, and financial capital. Laury Hammel talked about the threefold nature of BALLE. BALLE is an alliance of local business networks committed to transforming commerce through the power of small and mid-sized businesses.

Other keynote speakers included Becky Tarbotton, representing the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC) in British Columbia who spoke of the negative conse-

quences of a globalized food system and the benefits of localization. Becky eloquently made the connection between the current trends in U.S. food, farming, and the broader process of globalization. Stacy Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self Reliance offered lessons learned in her multiyear campaign to support strong local economies. Stacy’s numerous examples of “buy local campaign” successes inspired the conference participants as did her tactical methods and strategies for curbing the influence of big box stores while strengthening local living economies. Several outstanding panel discussions and breakout sessions allowed for friendly conversation among business leaders from all around North America

sustainable investor expectations, the increase in “nonlocal” purchasing and conventional thinking that measures success by size and constant growth; and Developing specific organizational tactics and methods for building local BALLE network. □

Laury Hammel, based in Boston is co-founder and co-chair of the Business Alliance of Local Living Economies. Websites: www.LivingEconomies.org and www.sconnect.org.

**The number of
communities with local
BALLE networks —
or planning one — has
now reached 25.**

and encouraged everyone to dig deep into specific projects and issues.

The conference accomplished goals set by the BALLE leadership including: Bringing progressive business leaders together from over 25 different communities, 15 states, and British Columbia to brainstorm, share information, and build relationships; Encouraging the development of new BALLE local networks all over North America. The number of communities who either have local BALLE networks or are interested in forming them is now 25; Addressing the challenges and opportunities to strong local living economies including public policy, un-