



# MOVING CLOSER TOWARD LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES

## BALLE BEAT

Laury Hammel

**C**LOSE to 250 people from 25 states and three nations participated in a dynamic gathering of activists at the Second International BALLE Conference in Philadelphia May 20-23, 2004. The interactive nature of the sessions — together with the innate desire of attendees to network — enabled everyone to utilize the knowledge gained in their own programs. There were too many extraordinary presentations to describe them all, but the plenary sessions featured the following:

At the outdoor dinner the first evening at her White Dog Café, Judy Wicks painted a verbal picture of how entrepreneurs can create local living enterprises and have fun doing it. Judy shared her own business history filled with precious gems of wisdom.

Friday morning opened up with Michael Shuman and Stacy Mitchell analyzing latest breakthroughs, presenting compelling cases for why making purchases from locally owned firms is essential for a strong local economy. Robin Rather from Livable Cities in Austin, Texas; Michelle Long from Sustainable Connections in Bellingham, Washington; Spencer Putnam from Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, and Kinde Nebeker from Vest Pocket Coalition in Salt Lake City presented astonishing success stories of local business owners banding together.

Will Raap of Gardener's Supply Company and the Intervale Foundation in Burlington, Vermont offered marvelous models of how we change

our community and our world through business. Friday evening welcomed Mark Ritchie of the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy and Helena Norberg-Hodge of the International Society for Ecology and Culture who spoke about globalization and international trade and their impact on the environment and human rights. This was an eye-opener as we learned about the unfairness of current trade policies and how genuine fair trade policies can make a major positive impact on workers, small farmers, entrepreneurs, and our environment.

Saturday morning opened up with Glynn Lloyd, founder of City Fresh Foods, which offers healthy ethnic food to schools, institutions, and other organizations. Glynn is an excellent example of a new generation of inner city entrepreneurs who have successfully created a community-based business that works to meet the needs and aspirations of all his stakeholders. Philadelphia lawyer

Thomas Linzey, stunned participants regarding the necessity for laws to be changed regarding corporate relationships to our local communities. Much of the good work of community activists often ends not achieving its ultimate purpose because the laws don't protect the community from misguided corporate policy.

Jim Slama from Sustainable Chicago blew us all away with his success in penetrating the Chicago's mayor's office and enlisting the mayor and others in efforts to make Chicago

the greenest city in America. Former Los Angeles gang member, Aqeela Sherrills, spoke about how his work with gangs and his successful engineering of a peace treaty has saved lives and is a model for change in our world. Zoe Rose of *Proud Neighbor Magazine* in Philadelphia, detailed how a committed person with a great idea and a ton of energy can make a difference.

The conference closed with David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, presenting a spirited overview of the political and economic times we find ourselves in. He received a standing ovation acknowledging his spirit and his clear and

somewhat scary case detailing how the current U.S. political leaders are building a global military, industrial, and political empire for the benefit of a few.

As a conference postscript, over 60 leaders convened for a highly productive and exciting leadership work-

shop led by Michelle and Derek Long. People left the gathering with new practical tools and an invigorated positive spirit. There are currently over 30 communities with local BALLE networks at various stages of development. For more information about BALLE, please check our web site at [livingeconomies.org](http://livingeconomies.org). □

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