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Consider thrifty, green business ventures Tuesday

A do-it-yourself balance of the local economy makes dollars and sense

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Would it not be wonderful if “going green” had been my idea? While I cannot take credit for that and no one else I know can either, it is a fact that living simply has been a common means of existence here since the settlement of Hohenwald.

Many in Lewis County have lived thrifty lifestyles, i. e. green lifestyles, for generations. Most of us have relatives who remember the depression days when survival meant using, reusing and recycling until the item was ‘all used up.’ Growing food, bartering and sharing were not only ways friendships were nurtured, but ways of life.

In later years when jobs were plentiful and Americans still had their thrifty mentality, the country flourished. But the disposable era came along and goods were cheaper to replace than to repair. Now Americans and yes, Lewis Countians, have wasteful habits just as an economic downturn hits.

Interesting how things always seem to come back around.

Sonnenschein, a festival which started in 2006, celebrated Hohenwald’s sustainable heritage. Local art, family-oriented music, crafts and “green” living ideas were the focus of the June event.

Now Sonnenschein is looking to not only celebrate the sustainability which makes Lewis County people who they are, but to create a boost for the local economy by creating jobs.

Sonnenschein organizers agreed after the June 2008 festival, the event had initiated a metamorphosis conducive to business growth and development.

Sonnenschein partnered with the Hohenwald Lewis Chamber of Commerce for the Sonnenschein Summer Conference

in June. Speakers David Blume and Catherine Austin-Fitts addressed the need for sustainable communities to combat today’s global markets.

In other words, conserving and preserving the economic balance of the hometown is one of the strongest ways to keep individual accounts balanced.

To “make it” economically, means to make things work at home.

“We hope to come up with a design for a green business that can be sustained in our community,” organizers said. Tired of waiting for industry to come to their rescue, they have decided to help themselves and design a new business.

And you can put your two cents worth in too.

A meeting held on August 14, 2008 laid the groundwork. Hoped for is a stronger local economy where not only are businesses developed and supported, but money from the ventures is re-invested right here.

Sonnenschein is partnering with LEDGE (Local Economic Development Green Education) Leadership Lewis, the Center for Holistic Ecology, The Leadership School, Solari, Inc., Gaia University and the Global Village Institute in the creation of the Sonnenschein Green Business Summit (GBS), scheduled for October.

Similar in design to projects which created Transition Towns in Europe, this event is designed to marry green principles with a rural American town.

Catherine Austin-Fitts, a member of the project and a former assistant secretary of housing, Federal Housing Commissioner to former President George H. Bush, says the financial trend nation-wide is a shift toward local economies.

At the August meeting, interests were gauged and top business ideas were named.

Among those were a “sustainable” contractor association, a community kitchen, incubator or venture funds, a building supply/building salvage store, ethanol production methods, recycling business ideas (all types of recycling), and an artisan or farmers market/coop.

A meeting on Tuesday September 9, 2008 at The Emporium from 4 p.m.-6:30 p.m. will further develop the ideas above. Experts will be hired by the Sonnenschein GBS in the fields gaining the most attention. Experts will be in Lewis County for the Sonnenschein Green Business Summit in October to teach.

A culmination of the course will be a design simulation of a green business. A panel of experts will evaluate each project for viability and its likelihood of sustainability in rural America.

Businesses will be developed because of this summit, organizers say. The summit is planned for five days of evening classes. The classes will be offered at a discounted rate for Lewis County residents who pre-register.

Who should attend? Anyone interested in being part of organizing a new green business, greening existing businesses, helping market Hohenwald statewide as a ‘green’ town, and/or anyone interested in the revenue more than 100 event participants will bring into the city and county for the five days, October 23-28, 2008.

To register, attend the September 9, 2008 meeting or call 931-796-4874.

Sure wish ‘going green’ had been my idea, but kudos to my green grandparents who made their communities strong.

And Mamaw thought only her thumb was green.