

JIM EMBRY Links, Articles, videos

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2011/01/09/1592669/ky-voices-ways-to-encourage-sustainability.html#more#ixzz1BN7VSJmV>

Ky. Voices: Ways to encourage sustainability, creativity

By Jim Embry at 12:00am on Jan 9, 2011 Modified at 1:44am on Jan 9, 2011



The author, left, helps a high school student plant at the Winburn Community Art Garden.

I was asked to spend a few minutes talking with Mayor Jim Gray's transition team to share my thoughts about his Fresh Start plan.

This is a brief sketch of my presentation to the Quality of Life Committee, which centered on fresh solutions for sustainable development.

The full presentation with links is on our Web site <http://sustainlex.org/freshstart.html>. The ideas include:

- Teach all employees of the Urban County Government, the University of Kentucky and Transylvania University how to make a paradigm shift in our way of looking at the world. Use such texts as *Leadership Reconsidered* by the Kellogg Foundation and *Planet U-Sustaining the World* and *Reinventing the University*. Then initiate a citywide learning project for all citizens.
- Implement Local Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations in 1992 as the guiding framework for our comprehensive action strategy for environmental protection, economic prosperity and community well-being.
- Create a city Food and Agriculture Division and a GROW Lexington Food Policy Council that would work to strengthen the local food system and provide food security.
- Create a Commission on Youth patterned after the Hampton, Va., Youth Commission that would provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in the city's planning and decision making.
- Establish in Lexington an affiliate of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild founded by Bill Strickland.
- Create a Sustainable Cities Commission headed by University of Kentucky professor Richard Levine who designs entirely new cities for China and who can guide a human systems view integrated within our eco-system.
- Create a Youth Green Corps in every council district with young people involved in planting trees, supporting garden plots, cleaning up empty lots, creating art installations from recycled objects and learning environmental literacy.
- Create a Lexington Ecumenical Sustainability Council that would articulate ways the faith community can support our community direction toward sustainable development.
- Create an Arts and Sustainable Development Council composed of arts organizations, artists and the media working collaboratively to create the new songs, poetry, theater, dance and visuals that help make our transition to sustainable living irresistible.
- Create a Diversity in Skilled Trades Commission that would open the closed doors of the commercial construction skilled trades in Lexington to workers who are African-American and Latino.

- Create a Commission on Women to improve the quality of life for all women and in particular those who are at risk. Such programs as Vermont Works for Women should be studied as a model for similar efforts in Lexington.
- Provide language translation services on the government Web site like on the Boston website, www.cityofboston.gov. Many people have come to Lexington from other countries also seeking a fresh start and should be embraced as an important part of our future.
- Use the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (dsni.org) of Boston as a model for Lexington's East End. DSNI is a high performing holistic community change effort that began in 1988 and continues to create a vibrant, high-quality diverse urban village.
- Study and implement the Mondragon (Spain) worker cooperative enterprise model. Cleveland, Ohio, is building a re-localized cooperative economy based on the Mondragon model and recognizes that worker co-ops are one of the most transformative things communities can undertake to rebuild the local economy.
- Institute a Meatless Monday campaign patterned after the effort instituted by Johns Hopkins School of Public Health as a way to improve our health and reduce our carbon footprint that impacts climate change.

A Fresh Start plan can be a springboard to dynamic activity and purposeful innovation. But it is also an opportunity to inspire people on their deepest level to change their behavior and their collective actions to secure a sustainable future on Earth.

To succeed, we must involve all sectors of our community, and draw from our traditions and new technologies, from our hearts, our minds and our spirits.

Jim Embry is director of the Sustainable Communities Network in Lexington.

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2011/01/09/1592669/ky-voices-ways-to-encourage-sustainability.html#more#ixzz1BN7VSJmV>



<http://www.gardeners.com/Jim-Embry-2010-Garden-Crusader/7464,default,pg.html>

Jim Embry, 2010 Garden Crusader



Jim Embry, 1010 Garden Crusader

Jim Embry believes that community gardening is the most important social movement in the country. "The climate is changing and that is because we are disconnected from the earth," he says. With a lifetime of experience as a social activist, Jim is now working to connect community gardeners to the earth — and to each other.

"In the garden, adults and even very young children, learn about patience and discovery and not to be afraid. Gardens teach citizenship and stewardship," he said. "For the last generation, the focus has been on computer literacy; now it's time for the focus to be on eco-literacy."



- [Learn more](#) about the Garden Crusader program
- See the list of [all 2010 winners](#)

[ShareThis](#)

For his work to bring people together through community gardening and to integrate gardening with the quest for environmental stewardship and social justice, Jim Embry has been presented with a Garden Crusader Award from Gardener's Supply.

It started in the 1960s

Jim got his start as an activist when he was just 10 years old, by attending civil rights demonstrations. His adult life has been devoted to social activism and he has become deeply involved in causes relating to environmental protections, natural foods, women's rights and much more.

"It is really all connected, but years ago, we didn't know how to make the connections," he said. "And over time I really began to see the importance of networks."

For many years, he ran his own business and raised six children. Though he always stayed involved, his family and his business took up much of his energy. That changed in 2000 when he moved to Detroit to run the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership. While in Detroit, he began working closely with urban farms and community gardens.

"I really got to see a green vision of how everything is interconnected," he said. "And it all comes down to sustainable communities. You can't have a sustainable community if the land is polluted or if women are marginalized. We can't discriminate. I see sustainability as all encompassing."

In 2005, Jim returned to his hometown of Lexington, KY. He thought he was going to lead a quiet life and be semi-retired. But just one month after moving back, he went to a meeting about building a more sustainable city.

"I felt compelled to say something and then I felt compelled to get a lot more involved," he said. Soon after, he founded the Sustainable Communities Network so he could work locally while also being connecting to other communities around the country and the world.

Jim has helped to expand community gardening in Lexington by holding community gardening workshops and tours. He has also organized local and regional conferences focused on food security. He founded a Youth Green Corps that has placed over 150 youth in community service projects. And he has given dozens of presentations to groups ranging from neighborhood associations to university classes.

Jim believes that gardening has the power to change the world, not just by improving people's health and environment, but by actually changing the way people think. "How we think has to be the same as how we act," he said.

Bringing the Garden Home

At home, Jim has extensive gardens and grows a wide variety of vegetables and fruit, including okra, peppers, tomatoes and raspberries. But it's his blackberries that have made a mark in town. Three decades ago, when his six children were young, he planted blackberries at his former house.

"Those blackberry plants are still there, and I've shared the rootstock with people all over town," he said, proudly. Jim Embry is always making connections.

.....

<http://www.kentucky.com/2011/01/09/1592669/ky-voices-ways-to-encourage-sustainability.html#more#ixzz1AY2ipAzK>

.....



http://www.ecoshar.com/?page_id=84

jim embry



Recently I had the good fortune to interview a man that I originally met many years ago, when I had no comprehension of the world around me and how my actions

made an impact. The age at which I met Jim Embry was about the same age he was when he sat on his first picket line during the civil rights movement. I was 10 and playing soccer and the only thing that I knew about him was that he was the coach for the best team in the Youth Soccer League in Lexington, KY. That was over 20 years ago. Little did I know then that the man that coached the Jaguars was not only a great soccer coach, but an absolutely amazing human being. I found out just how extraordinary Jim Embry was when I sat down and talked with him the other day. We talked for more than an hour, and I took 6 pages of notes. Below are excerpts from the conversation.

Jim is a man of action, plain and simple. He is involved in many different organizations including; Sustainable Communities Network, Youth Green Corps, The Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden, The Northeast Lexington Initiative, Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, Bluegrass Partnership for a Green Community, Earth Spirit Rising, Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group, Central KY Council for Peace and Justice, Growing Food and Justice, American Community Gardening Association, Slow Food USA and the list goes on. When I asked Jim why he feels so compelled to action he gave me a simple quote “The energies of activism become as much a part of your DNA as your physical DNA.” He said he wakes up every day excited about the opportunity to create change in his community, and does not look at his endeavors as something he has to get done, but rather something that he gets to participate in.

Jim draws his inspiration from his parents and grandparents and sees his actions as a way of honoring his family’s efforts in the movements of the past. Jim grew up in the civil rights movement, his mother was the President of [CORE](#) (Congress of Racial Equality), and started his more than 50 years of activism at the age of 10, when he sat on his first picket line. His parents felt that it was extremely important to involve the youth of the times, and they “...made sure their children were on the front lines,” a sentiment that he carries with him still today. According to Jim, working with the youth is a “no brainer.” The idea of sustainability goes beyond the environmental aspect and involves a social aspect, and “...we can’t be sustainable unless we involve young people.”

Jim focuses on the idea of an “internal transformation” that will help guide society toward a more sustainable future, and we need to start that process young, from birth, not when we are 18, 25, or 40 years old. Working with all children regardless of their background, Jim is involved in mentoring over 180 kids that are a part of the Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership program ([HOBY.org](#)). There are also the kids from the alternative school, ML King Academy and from the youth Drug Court that he works with stating “No matter the background or upbringing we can teach and guide these young people to become the leaders of tomorrow.”

Jim moved to Detroit in 2000 to serve as the first Director of the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership which served as a way to link the small groups in the local community and those around the country into one community that allowed for the sharing of ideas and information, allowing each to feed and grow from the theory and practice of the others. As Boggs Center Director Jim helped organize Detroit Summer, Summer Youth Leadership Institute, Artists and Children Create Community Together, YES! Magazine’s State of the Possible Retreats and so many other community building programs. His efforts also included

being part of the founding of Sustainable Detroit which works to inspire sustainable thinking and living. When he moved back to Lexington, KY in 2005 Jim founded Sustainable Communities Network (SustainLex.org) as a continuation of his work in Detroit and immediately began to tap into the broader community. Among the activities that SustainLex.org has developed are community gardens all over Lexington. Jim says his model of urban agriculture is Will Allen's "[Growing Power](#)" program in Milwaukee and Chicago whom Jim met while living in Detroit in the early 2000's. He said they were dedicated to the idea of "growing fish", which is an add-on to the "Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime" to which he adds, "teach people to grow fish/food and the community eats for a lifetime."

The work is rewarding, but has not been easy. Jim says he has encountered obstacles at every turn. "There are different obstacles at different levels, but they are all based on a resistance to change. We are essentially asking people to change the way they live. Anytime you ask a person to make radical changes it takes them out of their comfort zone, and they push back." Jim related it to pushing an elephant up a hill. "Sometimes the elephant makes a mess, and we have to stop and clean up that mess before we can start moving up the hill again," Changes are all equally important, but the type of change depends on who you are talking to. "In the affluent areas you are talking about a shift in the mindset. These are the people who run companies, make laws, and enact policies that affect the people in the less advantaged areas. The lower income communities need a sense of self reliance, and a way to bring the community together for a cause, so we see neighborhood gardens being planted." These gardens not only provide sustenance for the community, they act as a means of beautification, instill a sense of pride, and develop community capacity.

I asked Jim about our home town of Lexington and the fact that there are more and more horse farms being chopped up to make room for new housing developments and whether there was an ideology that growth is more important than the farms. His feeling is that there is a prevailing cultural pathos that goes back to Manifest Destiny that says that "if we are not growing we are not fulfilling our destiny." This attitude of suburban sprawl is not unique to Lexington, but due to the amount of farmland in the area that has been repurposed it is extremely evident. Jim told me about his trips to Italy for Terra Madre, and Cuba where the cities are much more dense, and local people actually produce the food that is needed "in" the city, stating that the majority of the food in the markets was not brought in from the outlying farmland, but grown in small "community" style gardens. "These are the models we need to follow for the future sustainability in our urban settings."

As we ended our conversation I asked what I thought was a true "interview" question, regarding the accomplishment he was most proud of. This was the dumbest question I asked Jim, and based on our conversation I should have known better. The long and short of it is that there is no "best" or "most important." There was only the work that he has done, and that work is just a small piece of the larger mission. Jim feels that Newtonian/Industrial Age thinking is archaic and is a believer in Quantum Thinking, that all things are intertwined and interrelated, so asking Jim his proudest accomplishment is kind of like asking someone to pick the most important link in a chain. There isn't one, because without all of them together, the whole thing would fall apart. A quote from the late Thomas Berry seems to sum up the conversation perfectly.

If the dynamics of the Universe from the beginning shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the Sun, and formed the Earth, if this same dynamism brought forth the continents and the seas and atmosphere, if it awakened life in the primordial cell and then brought into being the unnumbered variety of living beings, and finally brought us into being and guided us safely through the turbulent centuries, there is reason to believe that this same guiding process is precisely what has awakened in us our present understanding of ourselves and our relation to this stupendous process. Sensitized to such guidance from the very structure and functioning of the Universe, we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture.

It truly was a pleasure to talk with Jim. After our conversation I was not only inspired to continue working toward a better world, but also grateful that there are people like him that are working so diligently to make sure that we all have a better world to pass down to our children. Jim Embry truly is the embodiment of the ideal that we must “Think Globally and Act Locally.”

<http://tedxlex.com/about/>

WHAT IS TEDxLex:

TEDxLex is an half-day event designed to bring leading technologists, innovators, and musicians together to share their vision of creativity and ideology. This event will provide a platform for local creative minds to learn from these extraordinary speakers, and spread their ideas on how new media and technology are shaping the future of this city and world. There will be live speakers, two recorded TED Talks, and a number of networking sessions both during and after the event including a day at the horse races. Visit www.tedxlex.com for more details



Jim Embry

Jim Embry of Lexington, KY, a speaker with the Yes! Magazine Speakers' Bureau, brings an unwavering belief that it is possible to build a socially just, sustainable, and peaceful society that reflects and shares the highest ideals of being human. Jim's lifetime commitment to community activism had its beginnings with civil rights movement when he was 10 years old. More than 30 years ago he helped found Lexington's Good Foods Cooperative, and continues to promote urban agriculture. He served as the Executive Director of the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership in Detroit for 4 years. In 2005, Jim returned to his roots in Kentucky where he founded the Sustainable Communities Initiative. Dedicated to nurturing young people as social change agents, Jim works with young and not-so-young to create sustainable communities on a healthy planet.

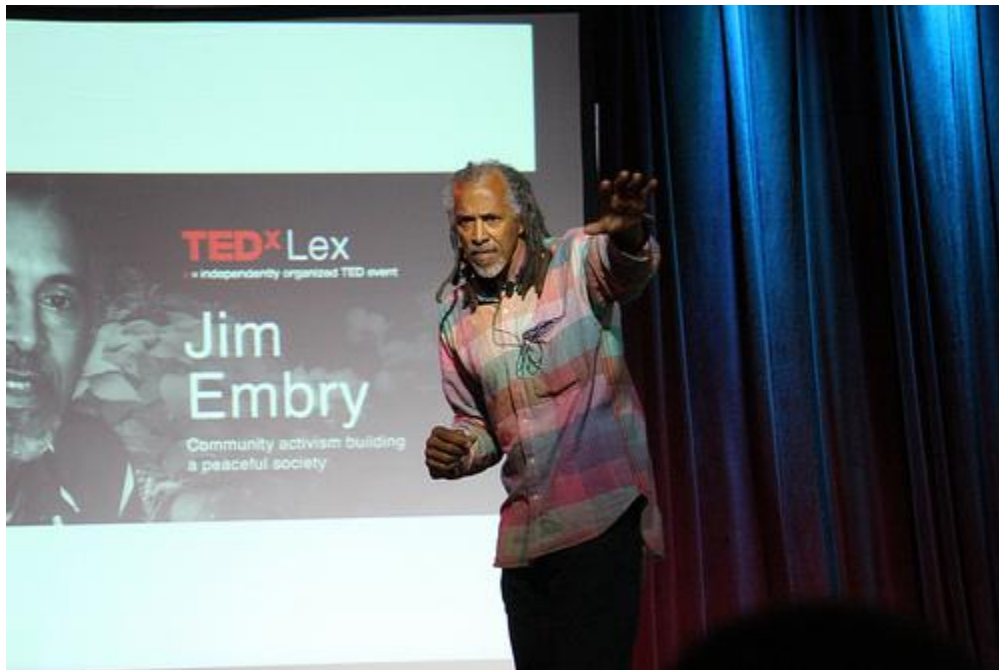
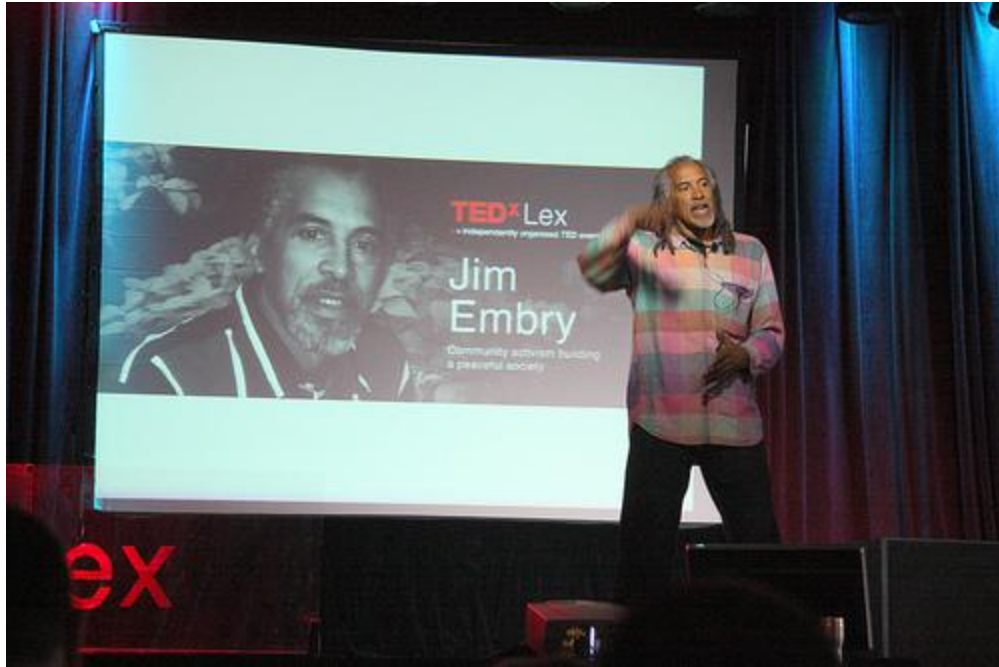
day, April 23, 2010

Jim Embry at TedXLex at Busters



<http://minglefreely.blogspot.com/2010/04/jim-embry-at-tedxlex-at-busters.html>

Another fabulous brainathon is in progress in Lexington. On the heels of the Creative Cities Summit, and Now What Lexington, is TedXLexington, playing to a full house at Busters.



\

<http://www.urbanfarmonline.com/urban-farm-videos/urban-farming-activities/terra-madre.aspx>

Terra Madre

Slow Food's biannual international gathering celebrates the diversity of local foods from around the world.



Every two years, people from around the world gather in Turin, Italy, for an event like no other. Chefs, small producers, artisans, fisherman, youth and community activists converge, bringing with them foods found only in their small corners of the world. You may find fish sourced from the coast of the Philippines sitting next to wine produced at a Georgian vineyard. The sights, smells and tastes mix together in a way that seduces the palate.

This is Terra Madre, a meeting ground for members of [Slow Food International](#).

Slow Food, as a whole, aims to reclaim access to local foods, to nurture the idea of consuming local food together and to ensure all people have access to high-quality foods. Terra Madre is just one component of this bigger network, which includes parallel events Salone del Gusto and The Ark of Taste (to preserve nearly forgotten foods) and hundreds of *convivia* around the globe that host local events.

Ensuring people can get to Terra Madre is a priority for the organizers. For those who fly in for the four-day event, Terra Madre provides four nights of lodging, three meals per day, a shuttle service, and transportation to and from the airport.

“It has been, for me, one of the most inclusive events I’ve ever been to—most inclusive, most diverse, most democratic,” says Jim Embry, a community activist in Lexington, Ky., and Terra

Madre delegate. “This organization believes in the sense of Earth’s diversity.”

Watch the video above as Embry tells more about the Terra Madre experience.



<http://www.earthspiritorising.org/2009/03/welcome-jim-embry/>



[Home](#) / [EarthSpirit News](#) / Welcome Jim Embry!

[Welcome Jim Embry!](#)

March 11th, 2009



Jim Embry of Lexington, KY, joins the panelists at the Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, June 13. A speaker with the Yes! Magazine Speakers’ Bureau, Jim brings an unwavering belief that it is possible to build a socially just, sustainable, and peaceful society that reflects and shares the highest ideals of being human. Jim’s lifetime commitment to community activism had its beginnings with civil rights movement when he was 10 years old. More than 30 years ago he helped found Lexington’s Good Foods Cooperative, and continues to promote urban agriculture. He served as the Executive Director of the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership in Detroit for 4 years. In 2005, Jim returned to his roots in Kentucky where he founded the Sustainable Communities Initiative. Dedicated to nurturing young people as social change agents, Jim works with young and not-so-young to create sustainable communities on a healthy planet.

Learn more about Jim Embry at: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/speakers.asp>

This entry was posted on Wednesday, March 11th, 2009 at 9:31 pm and is filed under [EarthSpirit News](#).

.....
<http://www.kentucky.com/2010/07/28/1366214/kentucky-voices-community-garden.html#more>

Kentucky Voices: Community garden tour

12:00am on Jul 28, 2010 Modified at 1:40am on Jul 28, 2010

By Jim Embry

Low-income, under-served communities are at the highest risk for obesity because they often lack supermarkets, leaving convenience stores or fast-food chains as the main source of meals.

Fruits and vegetables may also be cost-prohibitive for low-income families, but community gardens provide the opportunity to grow their own.

There are more than 40 community gardens in Lexington (about 10,000 nationally) and others are literally sprouting up weekly.

Gardening can also help recharge urban energy and teach about surface water issues and pesticides. It's a way to get children outside, working and playing together to transform empty lots as a practice of citizenship.

Lexington's 4th Annual Community Garden Tour from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, July 29, will provide a look at more than 15 gardens.

Organized by Sustainable Communities Network, the tour begins and ends at The Rock Methodist Church, 1015 North Limestone.

Tour on a bus or bring a bicycle to join a two-wheel tour. The event is free either way.

Some of the sites we'll showcase are:

- The Drug Court Community Art Garden, conceived by Fayette Family Court Judge Lucinda Masterton, who, with her out-of-the-box and into-the-garden-thinking, wanted a site where youth and adults in drug court could do community service, gain a renewed sense of responsibility and work together.

Located on Nelson Avenue, this garden gave the judge an opportunity to lay down her gavel and take up a garden trowel.

But the primary beneficiaries are the youth engaged in an opportunity to work together on a project that benefits the community, and just seeing the judge get dirty.

■ Fresh Solutions is a new collaborative of the Catholic Action Center, Sustainable Communities Network and Employment Solutions. Located on Whipple Court, these projects involve Lexington residents who were formerly homeless and adults with disabilities in a unique approach to including all of our citizens in the sustainability movement.

There is composting that takes food waste normally going to the landfill and turns it into rich soil while also producing loads of worms.

A hoop house will allow us to grow vegetables year-round and seedlings for Lexington community gardens as well as supply herbs for restaurants.

Boy Scouts are working on additional shelving and second-level growing space for winter operation.

■ Portofino's (on the bike tour) restaurateur Wayne Masterman wanted fresh herbs so he set up a basil garden in the parking lot. How local can you get? He was inspired by the Fairmount Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver, B.C., that grows herbs, flowers, apples, vegetables and bees on its roof, saving about \$30,000 a year in food costs.

Other stops will include Virginia Place, Beaumont and Maxwell Presbyterian churches, Columbia Avenue, Fresh Stop, Kid's Café, London Ferrill, the University of Kentucky Gaines Center and North Lime.

The tour is meant to inspire and encourage citizens, the faith community, neighborhood associations, women's support groups and teachers to establish community gardens and reconnect with an American tradition.

During World Wars I and II, Americans supported the war effort by planting Victory Gardens and sharing the bounty with neighbors.

This grand spirit of community engagement and learning around gardening is what we need and what we witness re-emerging in the urban gardening and local foods movement.

First ladies Michelle Obama and Jane Beshear have planted edible gardens in hopes of inspiring citizens to get outside, grow a garden and eat more healthful food.

As the economy has declined, more people are struggling to meet basic needs, which is generating a renewed interest in growing our own food.

.....

Almost every day we receive requests for support, workshops and funds to establish backyard and community gardens.

A potluck dinner follows Thursday's tour; those attending are asked to bring a dish to share.

To register, email sustainlex@gmail.com or call (859) 312-7024. It's all free but donations are accepted.

Jim Embry is director of Sustainable Communities Network.

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/07/28/1366214/kentucky-voices-community-garden.html#more#ixzz1BNCApCsv>

Domestic violence victims raise garden that raises hope

By Valarie Honeycutt Spears, vhoneycutt@herald-leader.com at 12:00am on Aug 1, 2010 — vhoneycutt@herald-leader.com Modified at 3:48am on Aug 1, 2010

Resident Sandy Boyd at the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program Shelter in eastern Fayette County. The program is in its infancy of a five-year plan in which residents are starting to grow their own vegetables and flowers and manage bee hives to make honey.

Donations for all facets of the program are accepted on the program's Web site, at www.beyondtheviolence.org. or can be made by calling Fleet at (859) 509-2143.

Sandy Boyd and the other women who live at the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program shelter see a lot of hope in a head of cabbage and a tomato picked fresh from the shelter's garden.

Residents of the facility that sits on 40 acres in eastern Fayette County are beginning to feed themselves from a garden that is the first phase of a proposed agriculture and marketing initiative. Within five years, the initiative could make area domestic violence victims more self-sufficient, according to officials.

But the project has hit a road block: The program did not win \$50,000 from a contest in June that was sponsored by Pepsi. Officials had hoped to use the money to hire a farmer to turn the property into a working farm and manage volunteer workers.

Diane Fleet, assistant director of the domestic violence program, is heading the garden project. She said the program needs to hire a farmer if it is to move forward.

A farm manager could spur a significant change so that "it's not just a shelter with a farm, but the farm is the shelter," said Fleet.

"We think we could hire a full-time farmer for \$35,000 to \$40,000," said Darlene Thomas, the center's executive director.

With some tweaking, the project could integrate many of the shelter's programs, said Fleet: healing and self-care, self-sufficiency, credit repair and marketing and finance.

Meanwhile, the shelter's residents made spaghetti sauce and salsa from the garden's tomatoes one night last week for dinner. They've been eating a lot of cole slaw this summer. And within the next several months, they hope to start selling their flowers around Lexington.

The families living at the center aren't required to work in the gardens or to cook the produce, but many do.

Sandy Boyd, a resident who has been working in the garden, said that law enforcement officials guided her to the shelter when she was abused a few weeks ago while traveling through the area on a trip from Mississippi to Ohio.

Boyd said she is now planning on settling in Lexington.

"I guess you would call it a healing process," Boyd said of her time working in the garden. "It took a lot of stress off."

Angela Wall of Lexington said she has been at the shelter for two weeks and hopes to soon be living independently. She has been cooking vegetables from the garden for the residents' meals.

"If you get in the kitchen you feel better about yourself," said Wall. "It's therapeutic for me to cook."

Gwen Clark of Harrodsburg said she came to the center two weeks ago and hopes to use her time there to begin a new life and perhaps go to college.

In the meantime, she said she will help in the garden and cook the produce "to occupy my mind."

Officially called the Three Sisters Project, it is a collaboration of the domestic violence program, the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center and the University of Kentucky's Violence Intervention Program.

The farm has 16 raised beds containing vegetables and herbs.

The project recently acquired a beehive and Thomas said they hope to start selling honey, along with flowers.

Shelter officials are seeking advice and help from many local groups.

The local chapter of a group called Architecture for Humanity is designing a master plan for the 40 acres.

And Fleet said that donations from BB&T Bank officials will help bring to the project a hoop building. That is a steel framed, polyethylene fabric-covered building that would allow shelter officials to do some growing year round.

Jim Embry, a community garden activist, has built and helped to plant the raised gardens on the farm.

Church garden groups, the University of Kentucky and state agriculture officials have all been consulted.

But what the program needs now, shelter officials said, are volunteer workers and donations that can help hire a farmer and supplement the program in other ways.

"None of us are farmers," said Thomas. "We can weed a garden here or there. But we are going to need that expertise."

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/08/01/1371659/domestic-violence-victims-raise.html#more#ixzz1BNClean4>

<http://www.kentucky.com/2010/06/22/1317767/merlene-davis-agencies-want-to.html>

Merlene Davis: Agencies want to grow a farm for families

By Merlene Davis at 12:00am on Jun 22, 2010 — Herald-Leader columnist Modified at 7:45am on Jun 22, 2010

- That is Diane Fleet's vision for the Three Sisters Project, a collaboration of BDVP, the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center and the University of Kentucky's Violence Intervention Program.



-
- Latara Appleby
- Jim Embry, a community garden enthusiast, worked with Darlene Thomas, center, and Diane Fleet of the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program to create raised herb and vegetable beds.
-

The peace and serenity of country life envelops you on the 40 acres that the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program calls home. It is the perfect spot for healing and emotional restoration after families have been torn apart by intimate partner violence.

Working that land would be practical as well as therapeutic, producing enough food for the residential families to eat and help a much-needed program become self-sustaining.

That is Diane Fleet's vision for the Three Sisters Project, a collaboration of BDVP, the Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center and the University of Kentucky's Violence Intervention Program.

"It is about empowering women, men and children and about empowering non-profits to become self-sufficient," said Fleet, assistant director of BDVP.

The name Three Sisters stems from a Native American legend in which beans, squash and corn are grown together to the benefit of all. The three agencies do much the same thing for families in crisis, Fleet said. "Our purposes overlap so much."

The collaboration would produce whatever each can offer to make the farm in eastern Fayette County a source of food and profit for all.

"For the longest time, I asked if this is a blessing or a curse," said Darlene Thomas, executive director of BDVP, who also mows the grass. "We have the opportunity to develop it even more."

The farm now consists of 16 raised beds containing vegetables and herbs. A nearby plot has been tilled and seeded with cut flowers that will be sold at market in the fall. The farm recently acquired a beehive, and another is expected soon. There are two horses living there temporarily.

But much more is wanted and needed to make it economically viable.

Architecture for Humanity is working on a five-year design plan to bring cohesion to the vision, Fleet said. If the farm wants an orchard, the plan will have a spot saved for that, she said.

Other volunteers have helped as well. Jim Embry, a community garden activist, has built and helped to plant the raised gardens on the farm.

"When we came out here last summer, what we found, especially with the different women's groups, is that the people had not seen gardening or the farm as a part of what they do to prepare for healing," Embry said. "Now there is a recognition of both the healing aspect and the economic-development aspect."

Thomas agreed.

"The real purpose is that sense of sustainability," she said. "We are asking our families to take a new direction toward self-sufficiency, and we're giving them tools to do that. Shouldn't we be doing the same thing?"

To do that, however, Fleet said, they need a farm manager who knows what crops to plant, and where and how to get ready to produce.

That knowledge will cost money. To get it, Three Sisters has come up with a variety of options.

First, the project is one of many non-profits vying for the \$1.3 million that Pepsi is giving away each month this year. BDVP is listed in the \$50,000 category. If it wins the money, it can pay the salary of a hands-on farmer who also can manage the volunteers who are willing to work.

The top 10 will receive that amount. On Monday, the project was listed at No. 163.

You can help by voting online for the project every day. Go to www.refresheverything.com/bdvpfarm.

Or you can donate. Donations are accepted on BDVP's Web site, www.beyondtheviolence.org. Or you can call Fleet at (859) 509-2143 and ask her to send you a pledge card. You can pledge as little as \$10 for five cabbage plants, \$200 for bee hives, \$1,000 for irrigation equipment or \$2,500 for a tractor.

The residential families can't be required to work the gardens, but Fleet said the farm can teach them management and marketing techniques.

"We have women wandering out here all the time," Thomas said. "They are not sure what to do, but they are wandering out here.

"We have an opportunity to develop this into so much more."

Reach Merlene Davis at (859) 231-3218 or 1-800-950-6397, Ext. 3218, or mdavis1@herald-leader.com.

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/06/22/1317767/merlene-davis-agencies-want-to.html#more#ixzz1BNJspXxV>

EBLEN: Where's your food coming from?

Local gardens, organics lead way

tom eblen - herald-leader columnist

Do you ever worry about where your next meal is coming from? Maybe you should.

I don't mean how you will pay for it, although that seems to be a concern for more and more people these days.

I mean literally where it's coming from, what's in it and whether the food and the methods used to produce it are good for your body, your community and your environment.



Tom Eblen

- [Bluegrass & Beyond: Tom Eblen's blog](#)

More Information

- [Tom Eblen's blog: The Bluegrass and Beyond](#)
- [More Tom Eblen columns](#)

Those issues brought more than 100 people to Crestwood Christian Church last Thursday and Friday for the Bluegrass Food Security Summit. Organized by community activist and local dynamo Jim Embry, the summit was a place for farmers, educators, social workers, government

bureaucrats and even clergy to talk about how to make this region better-fed and more environmentally sustainable.

The scientific and economic revolution that reshaped American agriculture after World War II did a lot of good, and a lot of bad. Many family farms were replaced by industrial agriculture that could produce more food cheaper and more efficiently. But cheap food has had other costs.

Pesticides and herbicides have contaminated soil and water. Overuse of antibiotics in animals has led to drug-resistant infections in people. Industrially processed food and fast-food culture have caused a decline in nutrition among many segments of the population.

Cheaply produced meat, vegetables and fruits are trucked great distances to market — something that will be less possible as oil supplies diminish and prices rise.

Controlled-feeding animal operations — such as the hog and chicken farms that plague many parts of rural Kentucky — produce huge amounts of waste that pollute groundwater and create an unbearable stench for miles around.

Things are changing, though, as more people seek healthier and tastier foods. Kentucky is making more progress than many states, thanks to wise investment of tobacco settlement money in agricultural diversification. And the family farm is being re-invented in many parts of the state, thanks to groups like the Community Farm Alliance, which is celebrating its 25th year.

Kentucky has seen tremendous growth recently in organic and naturally produced meat and produce, much of it on small, family-owned farms that sell through farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) plans. The University of Kentucky now even has an organic farm and CSA operation — and a degree program in sustainable agriculture.

Co-op groceries that focus on fresh, locally produced food are becoming more popular. Lexington's Good Foods Co-op on Southland Drive now has nearly 5,200 owners.

There also has been a lot of emphasis on starting school and neighborhood gardens, a focus of such organizations as Seedleaf (www.seedleaf.org) and Embry's Sustainable Communities Network (www.sustainlex.org).

In Lexington, gardens have been created in many neighborhoods; at Bryan Station High School; the Chrysalis House program for women with substance-abuse problems; the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program; and at Employment Solutions, a company that provides vocational training to unemployed people.

Outside Lexington, many organizations are working to promote local food alternatives and environmental stewardship. One notable example is Sustainable Berea (www.sustainableberea.org), which offers workshops in gardening and related skills and helps people in the Madison County community plant berry bushes and fruit trees.

"It's an issue of stewardship," the Rev. Kory Wilcoxson, senior pastor at Crestwood Christian, said at the summit's opening session. "When you read the Bible, the world was started in a garden."

Many of Lexington's community gardens have a strong emphasis on participation by children and youth, and there were many of them at the summit's opening dinner and program Thursday evening. Embry believes that children are the key to steering society back to the local food and sustainability ethics that were the norm in America until the late 20th century.

"The great work of this century is to restore the sacredness of the earth and its connections to ourselves," Embry said. "It means we have to find new ways of doing things. We don't want our children to inherit the problems we created."

Reach Tom Eblen at teblen@herald-leader.com or (859) 231-1415 or 1-800-950-6397, Ext. 1415. Read and comment on his blog, [The Bluegrass & Beyond](#), at Kentucky.com.

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2010/03/21/1190413/eblen-wheres-your-food-coming.html#ixzz0uFCeL3ky>

.....
http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/slow_food/blog_post/building_a_sustainable_community_in_kentucky/

Building a Sustainable Community in Kentucky

The Slow Food USA Blog

[Building a Sustainable Community in Kentucky](#)

Posted on *Fri, April 24, 2009* by *Brian Sinderson*

We sat down with Terra Madre 2008 delegate Jim Embry to discuss his perspective on sustainability, movement building and networks, based on his work as a community organizer in Lexington, Kentucky.



Q: You have a long and strong history as an organizer, dating all the way back to the Civil Rights movement. Can you talk about any connections you see between that social movement and the emerging sustainable food movement?

I have been involved in probably every movement we've had in this country since my birth...and what I feel now is that the movement around sustainability encompasses all those other movements, because you can't be sustainable if you're abusing women, if you're locking kids up in jail, if you are relying on fossil fuels for your energy. That gives me a much broader sense of what we call this effort to transform the country; everything has to be reinvented. So that's what I have grown into, and I was helped along the way by a whole variety of individuals. Back in 2000 when I spent five years in Detroit, when I traveled around both nationally and internationally, my own understanding was enhanced around the need for a sacred earth connection and our integral role as members of the earth family.

Also, I came to realize that... the foundation of our civilization is food, food systems. Only by virtue of growing food can there be engineers, artists, and teachers. Only through food production can we have what we call human civilization. Also, the foundation of our sense of earth connection comes through food. Food is the foundation for how children can learn cooperation, civilization, tranquility, civility, cultural traditions and all that.

And also, being grounded in the civil rights movement, I have come to realize that what is killing black people is what we eat or don't eat. It's killing us physically—high rates of obesity and cancer, diabetes, etc—but also it is killing us psychologically. Earth connection gives you a sense of connection, tranquility and peace.

I feel that this whole sense of urban ag and gardening and outdoor classrooms, are a way to better restore the sense of the American dream that we thought would be there in the large industrial cities, but the large industrial cities are so detached from natural surroundings that it has added to our insanity.

Q: When did you begin to see food, farms, and gardens as elements in the sustainability of a city?

I read a book called [When the Drummers Were Women](#) by Layne Redmond—in her book, I learned about this physicality, that when women are carrying girl babies, at 4 months of gestation, that girl baby has all the eggs she will ever have. That means I was inside of my mother when she was inside of my grandmother, so right there, I might have had 4 generations of vibrations resonating in my egg. I heard the voices of my grandparents, my great grandparents, and their sense of mission, an their purpose in life. I feel that I was called upon to do this work before I was even born. My great grandfather was 4 years old at Emancipation...he went on to [Berea College in Kentucky](#), and he was there when James Bond was there, the grandfather of [Julian Bond](#). Berea was this hotbed of activism.

Every Saturday morning my grandfather would ask: “how much did you pay to get on this bus? I did too, and we’re not moving! “ This was in the 20s , way before Rosa Parks. So that kind of sentiment of transformation, change, and courage has been embedded in my family in all kinds of ways. My mother went on to become a founding member of [CORE \[Congress of Racial Equality\]](#), and I got involved in that from a very young age...and I helped lead the march on the Frankfort capitol with Dr. King when I was 17 years old...and I spent every summer on my uncles’ and aunts’ farms, learning about edible plants and that whole love of land, and also learned how to use my hands a lot, so I had this mentality that when things broke you just fixed them.

So on the one level, I have been involved since before I was born. I believe that in the South, what kept African people from not killing all white folk in the south was the tranquility that earth connection gives you, people were working the land and that provided a certain quality of civility....I have a friend who says that through gardening we find our humanity. Those things help make us a human.

So when I was growing up in the city of Richmond, we had a huge backyard garden, we’d eat potatoes right out of the grown, go out and harvest hickory nuts and walnuts, all kinds of “wild edibles.” So I grew up in that kind of ethos. I think as the whole Slow Food movement has developed, in my view it is a whole continuum that has been going on. Carver laid out the framework for sustainable food systems—crop rotation, cover crops, what we now call organic gardening—biodiesel is big now he was saying that in 1910! We can’t forget what has come before us historically. I call slow food a great “remembering” of what came before us. Everybody eats! We just need to connect with you in a variety of ways, wherever you are. We have to help people realize that, “yeah, I am a part of this movement.”

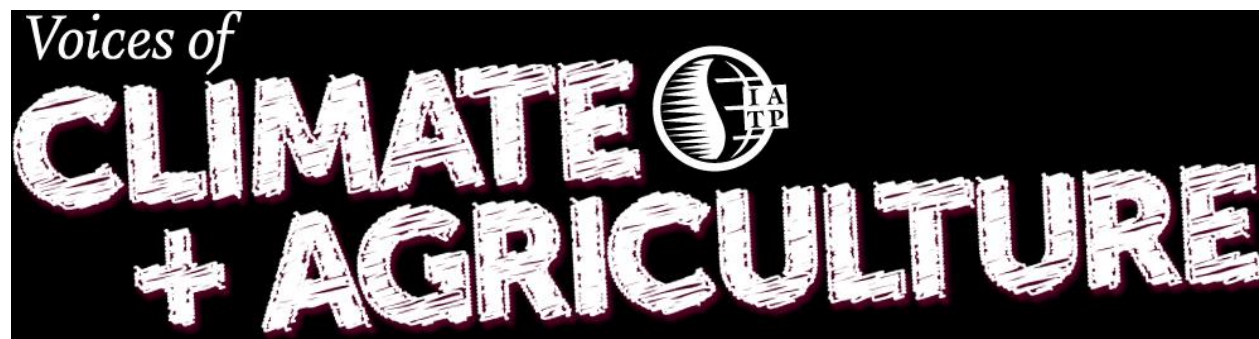
Q: Your organization [Sustainable Communities Network](#) brings different groups and people together who all have at least one common goal: making Lexington KY a more sustainable place to live. Can you talk a bit about the role of networks and partnerships in creating this kind of change?

By using the word network, in many ways we are just mimicking the ecosystem, nature, the environment, which is essentially a network. Quantum is about relationships, it is not about

separate entities/silos. It is fundamental to life, which means that if human beings want to have this sense of spiritual connection, then one of our essential forms of connection is through relationships and networks. I have been an organizer/activist pretty much my whole life so I am always trying to meet people and trying to find ways that we can work together and collaborate.

Every day meet a stranger, is my philosophy. I try to network with the broadest spectrum I can, especially the folks who need—clearly—better quality food, better sense of self esteem, need involvement. Our network can be that sort of outreach that can connect the people who like to eat the finest of food, with those people who don't know where tomorrow's meal is coming from. We don't need to develop a CSA for middle class white people. Let's first develop a CSA for the poor black community out here that doesn't have any other option—let's look at how we prioritize these initiatives. How we better refine, enhance, create different forms of networking is really important work in this next period of time.

<http://www.climateandagriculture.org/index.php?q=video/jim-embry>



Jim Embry

Jim Embry

Lexington, Kentucky, United States

About this video

Jim Embry, director and founder of Sustainable Communities Network in Lexington, KY



http://www.ket.org/cgi-bin/cheetah/watch_video.pl?nola=KCWRS+000318&altdir=&template=

<http://www.ket.org/connections/guest.fwx?topicid=CWRS010101>

Jim Embry, Sustainable Communities Network

Jim Embry of Lexington is the founder of the Sustainable Communities Network. He is a long-time community activist for social justice and helped found the Good Foods Co-op in Lexington. He served as executive director of the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership in Detroit for four years before returning to Kentucky in 2005. He holds a degree in biology and owned a home renovation business for several years.

This guest appears in ...

- [**Jim Embry, Sustainable Communities Network \(#318\)**](#)

Environmentalist and activist Jim Embry of Lexington discusses sustainable living, which the Sustainable Communities Network defines as the ability to meet the needs of a community without compromising its ability to meet future needs.





<http://www.kygreen.tv/channels/i-am/jimembry/>

Episode 09

Jim Embry

Jim Embry of Sustainable Communities Network in Lexington thinks that community gardens are the best way to teach children about life and creativity.

Runtime: 4:13

Tags: [Episode](#), [Gardens](#), [Green](#), [Jim Embry](#), [kentucky](#), [kids](#), [Lexington](#), [Sustainable Communities Network](#), [Urban](#)

<http://www.hobbyfarms.com/farm-industry-news/2009/12/02/lexington-hoop-houses.aspx>

Hoop Houses Connect Community

The goal of building six hoop houses in Lexington, Ky., before the World Equestrian Games has promoted sustainability and united the community.

Rachael Brugger, Associate Web Editor

December 2, 2009

When it comes to living sustainably, it's all about connections—connections to the Earth and connections to the community. At least that's how Jim Embry sees it.

Embry is actively involved in the Bluegrass Community and School Garden Network (BGCSGN) in Lexington, Ky., as a way to promote the growth of a more sustainable city and grow more localized food systems. The network's initiative, Grow Lexington!, focuses on growing green spaces, food spaces and the local economy instead of big industries that contribute to global warming, but aims to involve the community in the process as well.

In November 2009, Embry supervised the construction of Lexington's first community hoop house. BGCSGN intends to construct at least six hoop houses before the city hosts the World Equestrian Games in the fall of 2010, with the help of a grant provided by a local donor.



Photo by Rachael Brugger

The Bluegrass Community and School Garden Network plans to build six hoop houses by the 2010 World Equestrian Games.



Photo by Rachael Brugger

Members of a youth group help build compost bins that will be placed inside the hoop houses.

The Lexington hoop houses, from construction to operation, are meant to be a community endeavor.

“When you build something, not only are you building community, but you are building the community's capacity to build things,” Embry says. “We need things like that to build that sense of community. The hoop house, in a sense, is the urban application of a barn raising.”

People from all walks of life joined in the “hoop house raising,” from a youth group to biomedical engineer university students to long-standing members of the community.

“We had people helping out who had never used a chainsaw,” Embry says, but it gave him an opportunity to teach about citizenship and sustainability.

Modeled after Will Allen's Growing Power in Milwaukee, Wis., the hoop houses will include worm composting and aquaculture systems.

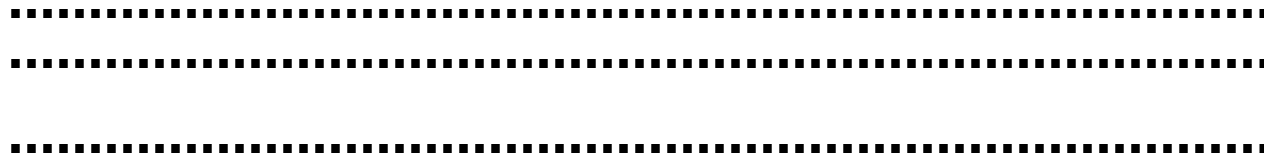
According to Mary Wilson, who led a youth group of 32 students from Hope First Church of God in Mt. Sterling, Ky., to help with the project, by learning about the purpose for the hoop houses they were about to build, Embry learned the importance of self-sufficiency and how composting reduces greenhouse gasses.

The hoop houses will also be used to grow seedlings that will be distributed to school and community gardens around Lexington. The food coming from the hoop houses and the gardens will be sent to the area's food banks and homeless shelters.

"The number of people we are feeding at the shelter has tripled because of the current economic situation," says Frank Brangers, a community volunteer who donated the supplies to build the first hoop house. "We've got to do what we can to offset the people who are marginalized. Lots of [the people we feed] work in the gardens, which gives them a sense of purpose."

The site of the first hoop house sits on the property of Fresh Approach, a facility that processes foods for local restaurants and employs developmentally challenged adults. Fresh Approach will tend to the hoop houses built on its property, says director Walt Barbour.

Eventually, BGCSGN wants to build a hoop house in every council district as part of urban garden resource centers, where people can have meetings, pick up mulch, compost and grow food year-round. Embry expects to begin construction on the next hoop house in January 2010.



http://news.uky.edu/news/display_article.php?artid=3075

UK Joins National Global Warming Teach-in

Media Contact: [Gail Hairston](#) [Gail Hairston](#), (859) 257-3303, x235

LEXINGTON, Ky. (Jan. 25, 2008) – With discussions led by university and government officials, the University of Kentucky will participate in [Focus the Nation](#), an unprecedented national teach-in model on global warming solutions, on Thursday, Jan. 31. The event is sponsored by [UK Residence Life Recycling](#) and [UK Greenthumb](#), the student environmental club.

"This nationwide event will draw students from across the country together to educate themselves and make commitments to a cause that will impact all of us," said UK Residence Life Sustainability Coordinator Shane Tedder.

The full day of teach-in activities will include discussions led by several UK faculty and staff and community leaders, including Tedder; Ernest Yanarella, a professor of political science who specializes in the area of critical policy studies of energy and the environment; and Local Community Activist of the Year Jim Embry, among others. See below for the full schedule.

State and community leaders will participate in a roundtable panel discussion led by U.S. Rep. Ben Chandler, state Sen. Ernesto Scorsone, Kentucky Division of Air Quality Director John Lyons, LFUCG Environmental Quality Commissioner Cheryl Taylor, UK Vice President of Facilities Management Bob Wiseman, and community organizer and advocate Jim Embry. Moderated by students, the roundtable will begin at 6:30 p.m. in 206 Student Center.

During the day in 206 Student Center, speakers will discuss a range of topics such as denial as an obstacle for change and what students can do on a daily basis to reduce their contributions to global warming and green design.

“Focus the Nation offers us an opportunity as students to engage our civic and campus leaders about the local environmental challenges we face,” said Robin Michler, member of UK Greenthumb environmental club and one of the event organizers. “As students, our job is to learn and study how to be productive citizens. Today that includes learning how to live with less.”

The final piece of Focus the Nation’s teach-in model will be the "Choose Your Future" vote. All students, faculty and community participants will be [encouraged to vote](#) on what they think are the top five solutions from a list of 10 to 15 available. Vote results will be presented nationally in mid-February. All students who vote on the "Choose Your Future" ballot will be eligible to win a \$10,000 leadership scholarship for a project to be completed by the end of August 2008.

For more information, contact Robin Michler by [e-mail](#).

Focus the Nation:

A national teach-in model on global warming solutions

University of Kentucky Student Center

Thursday, Jan. 31, 2008

.....

The Kentucky Tomato Project

20.5.09

May 20, 2009

A KY Tomato Project update from Tracy Slone at Lex-Pro

*

Lex-Pro is very excited to be a part of the Kentucky Tomato Project. We began our participation by attending a class at Latitude Artist Community, called *Get Gardening with Jim Embry*. (see videos below) We were able to participate in the making of a video for the web site that would show just how simple planting is a tomato is. Everyone at Lex-Pro who attended was proud to be a part of this project which is really becoming a national movement toward building a sustainable food system.

<http://kytomato.blogspot.com/>

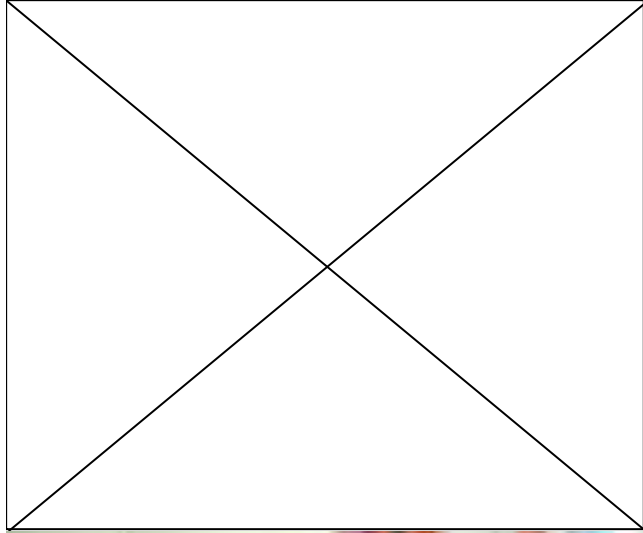
posted by Latitude Artist Community at [4:44 PM](#)

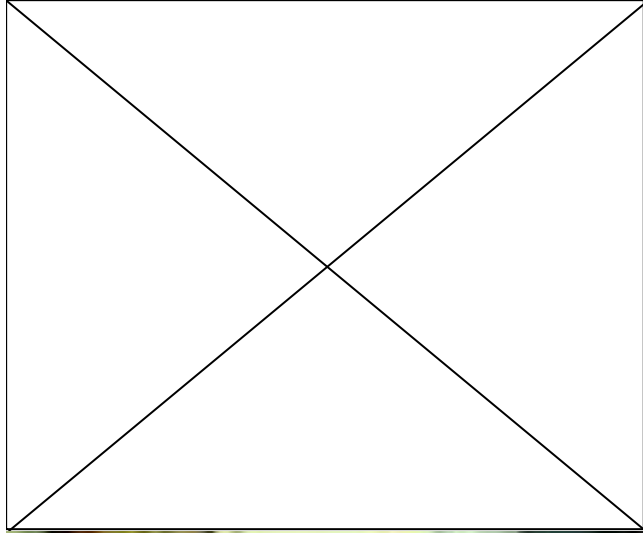
15.4.09



mobile community garden unit #5

We were privileged to have Jim Embry speak about gardening for the Kentucky Tomato Project. In the first video Jim is speaking about the concepts of sustainability and gardening and in the second he demonstrates how easy it is to grow your own tomatoes!







Thanks Jim!

Posted by Latitude Artist Community at [2:40 PM](#)

Teens learn valuable leadership lessons

<http://www.fcps.net/news/features/2008-09/ily-art-garden>

Author: [Tammy Lane](#) • First Posted: **Friday, May 08, 2009**

Gallery (click any photo to view the gallery)



The Leadership Lexington Youth class planted knockout roses, an Eastern redbud tree and ornamental grasses at the Winburn Community Art Garden.



After a year of meeting top-level community leaders, touring benchmark organizations and businesses in Fayette County, and interacting with students from other local high schools as part of the [Leadership Lexington Youth](#) program, Nashwin Laungani has decided “it’s all about networking.”

“The program was about learning to interact properly with others,” said Nash, one of 25 FCPS students who participated in LLY, which is sponsored by Commerce Lexington.

The Paul Laurence Dunbar High School sophomore said he’s always conscious of making eye contact and giving a firm handshake. And he made a lasting impression on business folks, his peers and the LLY committee – walking away with the Distinguished Leader Award at Thursday’s graduation.

“He really took advantage of every opportunity we had and seemed to fit in really well and get the idea of what we were trying to do,” said Marjorie Amon, a 10th-grader at Bryan Station High School.

Nash and Marjorie were among the 40-member group that spent the afternoon at the Winburn Community Art Garden working on their class project – building raised vegetable beds, setting out plants and painting murals to hang on the wooden fence.

“I was really excited about digging in the dirt,” said Marjorie, who explained that the students had gathered donations of plants, paint and other materials from local businesses.

Linda Stampf, vice president for leadership development for Commerce Lexington, said the art garden project was a good way to cap the LLY experience, with the kids figuring out how to work well with others and work together in teams.

“Another piece of the program that’s really a positive for them is going out and shadowing business professionals,” Stampf said. “They’re allowed to explore the various opportunities out there that they may be interested in.”

Nash recalled one particularly memorable activity – a tour of the University of Kentucky campus and the basketball practice facility, where he met officials in the athletics department. Nash made sure to introduce himself, which paid off when he later ran into one of the UK staffers at the mall. Now he’s trying to make room in his summer schedule for a bit of job shadowing at UK.

Majorie, who described herself as driven yet amiable, said one thing she’ll take away from LLY is what she learned about her own leadership style and how to best use it. She’ll also try to share the program’s lessons with others at her school.

“It made me realize there really are people dedicated to participating,” she said. “You can learn so much if you go out on a limb and try new things.”

About Leadership Lexington Youth

LLY is an educational program that enables students to interact with community leaders and talk about issues, careers, business and post-secondary institutions. LLY is open to sophomores and

juniors in Fayette County. More than 100 students have applied for next year's program; 40 will be chosen in June. Applications for the 2010-2011 program will be available in mid-March 2010.

Throughout the year-long program, students participate in interactive exercises and hands-on experiences. Their monthly meetings – which take them out of school for a day – cover such topics as Arts & Media, Growth & Preservation, Health & Human Services, Higher Education & Career Development, and Public Safety & Government.

"I was nervous at first about missing school, but I realized this was worth it," said Ashley Gumm, a junior at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. "By us being so involved, it's going to encourage younger generations to step up and be leaders."

FCPS participants

This year's 40-member class included 25 students from Fayette County Public Schools:

- From Bryan Station High: Marjorie Amon, Cameron Jackson, Logan Jackson, Reina Slaymaker and Rachel Swanson.
- From Henry Clay High School: Allen Michael Moore and Jay Schrader.
- From Lafayette High: Kenny Demus, Bethany Kirk, Rhiannon Mobley, Pooja Patil, Sharon Rodriguez and Cameron Sallee.
- From Paul Laurence Dunbar High: Thayer Burgess, Rachel Chlebowy, Scott Drake, Kate Gardiner, Amin Gharad, Mary Guilliani, Ashley Gumm, Dillon Hickman, Nashwin Laungani, Elizabeth Osbourne and Anuj Patwardhan.
- From Tates Creek High: Jaelyn Coles.

About the Distinguished Leader Award

This award recognizes the class member who best demonstrates strong principles and dedication to the concept of community service. Class members select the nominees, and the Leadership Lexington Youth steering committee picks the winner. The panel considers such factors as communication and interpersonal skills, creativity and potential to make a difference in the community.

"I've enjoyed it from Day 1," this year's winner, Nash Laungani, said of LLY. "Every month, I looked forward to it."

Nash will receive a \$1,000 scholarship upon his high school graduation.

http://www.deeplake.info/news_&_events.htm

L. Hunter Lovins on *Natural Capitalism*

Friday, October 14, 7-9pm

General Lectures Hall, Wayne State University, Detroit

At the inaugural Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference, Hunter Lovins shared the keynote speech with Jim Embry, where both discussed how Natural Capitalism's core ideas – profitability, environmental responsibility and social responsibility – pertain to Detroit's urban reality. After Jim addressed the need for inner-city leadership, Hunter spoke on creating an environment where people at the local level can support local needs in a sustainable manner, making it unnecessary for international conglomerates to provide assistance. At the Q&A session, both Hunter and Jim took the time to respond to many insightful questions from the enthusiastic audience, which was over 200 strong.

This premiere weekend was such a success that the organizers are already gearing up for next year's Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference. Be sure not to miss it!

*Founded in 1990, Bioneers is a nonprofit organization that promotes **practical environmental solutions and innovative social strategies** for restoring the Earth and communities.*

.....

.....

IVENCIAS: Reports from the field

Latino Studies (2006) **4**, 448–451. doi:10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600219

Rivers that We Cross...Our New Wave of Immigrants from the South

Jim Embry^a

^aSustainable Communities Network, Lexington, KY

.....

.....

<http://southernspaces.org/2007/latinos-american-south-and-future-us-race-relations>

Indeed, as the movement to protect immigrant rights began to grow throughout the South, more activists who had long worked in African American civil rights campaigns began to participate and lead efforts. One such person was Jim Embry from the Sustainable Communities Network in

Lexington, Kentucky, who has been an activist in that community for over 40 years, beginning as a CORE civil rights activist in 1960. On April 10, 2006, he spoke in front of the Lexington County courthouse before a crowd of 7,000 people, and the connections he saw to past struggles:

This Immigrants' Rights Rally here in Lexington is also in a historic place because directly behind this stage is the old courthouse... the building with the clock, where only 150 years ago this area around the courthouse was an auction block where African people, said by whites to be less than human and denied rights, were bought and sold into slavery. During the years of slavery African people would try to escape slavery by crossing the Ohio River to the North. The Ohio River was the border between the free states of the north and slavery states of the south. Even after crossing the Ohio River many of these African people could not produce their freedom papers--or let's say that they were undocumented--and thus, they were rounded up as illegals in the North, were chained and brought back to this very spot in Lexington--whipped and beaten--and often were then sold back into slavery and deported to the deeper South where the conditions of slavery were much more harsh and cruel.

He went on to connect this history to that he saw in the contemporary period:

Those conditions during enslavement of African people--people risking their lives by escaping slavery in the South on the underground railroad and crossing the Ohio River--are quite similar to Mexican people and others today risking their lives by crossing the Rio Grande and the desert on a similar underground railroad seeking a better life for their families. Still today without your "freedom papers" or being undocumented, immigrants can be rounded up and sent back across a similar border and river separating North from South. The denial of freedom, respect and full citizenship rights to African people years ago was immoral and unjust and today the denial of respect and citizenship rights to immigrants from Mexico and around the world is also immoral and unjust. Because of our unique and continuous struggle for freedom, rights and equality, African-Americans should be very supportive and in the forefront of the struggles by other people in this country and around the world who are denied full equality, respect and rights as citizens of this earth.²

While Embry looked for ways of connecting the two histories and time periods, others, of course, looked for differences between the two experiences and histories.

Notes:

¹ Richard Fausset, "Nervously, Latinos Protest in the South," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March 2006, A16.

² Jim Embry, "Rivers That We Cross. . .Our New Wave of Immigrants from the South," *Latino Studies* 4 (2006): 448-449.

³ Sam Quinones, "Migrants Find a Gold Rush in New Orleans," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April 2006, A10.

[4.](#) William Kandel and Emilio A. Parrado, "Hispanics in the American South and the Transformation of the Poultry Industry," in Daniel D. Arreola, ed. *Hispanic Places, Latino Spaces: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004, 255-276.

[5.](#) Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003, 199-200.



Detroit Renaissance

A new Detroit is being born, founded in urban farms, local businesses, green spaces, youth engagement, the arts, greenhouses, fresh foods.

by Shawn Rhea
posted May 20, 2004



Paul Trombley at Back Alley Bikes gets kids involved in rebuilding bikes in the

Detroit, Michigan, a once-thriving industrial center home to auto plants and 2 million residents, now has the third highest unemployment rate among the nation's largest cities and fewer than a million inhabitants.

Cass Corridor

The city has recently broken ground on a massive new world headquarters for Compuware, three new casinos, a new football stadium, and a remodeling of the Renaissance Center, now home to General Motors. But, as impressive as the rebuilding efforts are, this redevelopment push focuses on the city's relatively affluent downtown community. Yet Detroit encompasses nearly 600 square miles of land that is home to middle-class, working-class, and poor African-Americans, ethnic whites, Latinos, and Arabs.

These downtown projects don't begin to address the needs of neighborhoods in a city ravaged by racial conflict, the departure of the Big Three auto makers' plants in search of cheaper labor, and the loss of more than 100,000 housing units since the 1950s. Nor do they provide the space and sustained customer bases for small businesses, which, according to the Small Business Administration, create 60 to 80 percent of new jobs.

A true revitalization of Detroit—one that includes all of its citizens—will require a radical new vision for a post-industrial city, say many of the city's long-time residents, activists, and urban development experts. This vision must include green spaces, urban farms, environment-friendly small businesses, cooperative markets, living wage jobs, art, and intergenerational learning opportunities. Communities must become more economically self-sufficient so that the city and its residents never again rely on a single industry for their livelihood.

Vision for a post-industrial city

Getting city planning officials to consider these needs in a large-scale redesign of Detroit will undoubtedly be a challenge. But Detroiters across the city are not waiting for leadership from downtown. They are creating community gardens and urban farms, starting businesses that serve the immediate population, and turning toxic land into livable spaces. Others are fixing up old houses and painting murals that express the hopes of the city's young people for a revitalized, beautiful city. Alone, each of these initiatives may seem insignificant when compared to the city's vast needs. But the individual projects are starting to form a pattern for change, and with it, a profound rethinking of the future of Detroit and other post-industrial cities.

“We're trying to create a whole new paradigm,” says Jim Embry, one of many visionaries behind this movement. “We have to create a very different kind of vision that's not based on the industrial age, [which is] very top down and disconnected.”

Embry is the director of the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center. Founded in 1995, the center furthers the long-time activism of Grace Boggs and her late husband Jimmy, a labor activist who was instrumental in the city's workers' rights and civil rights movements.

The Boggs Center philosophy views community as the starting point for planning and revitalization activity, Embry says. Residents know their needs and how to address them better than a large bureaucracy.

Located on Detroit's eastside in a neighborhood devastated by the auto plants' mid-20th century exodus, the Boggs Center acts as a think tank for activists and as an agency for grooming grassroots leaders who will live and work in the communities they help shape.

Much of the center's work focuses on getting young people invested in their communities by showing them that they are integral to their neighborhoods' success or failure. Over the past 12 years, Grace Boggs (and now the Boggs Center) has co-sponsored Detroit Summer, which brings together 14- to 25-year-olds to clean up streets, plant gardens, and create public art in neighborhoods blighted by burned-out and abandoned houses and littered and weed-filled lots.

Bootstrap economics is a part of the gospel preached to Detroit Summer's young participants, who learn first-hand what neighborhood-based initiatives can bring to communities. Many Detroit Summer youth go to work at such grassroots businesses as the Back Alley Bikes shop located in the Cass Corridor, an area of the city where drug trafficking is obvious, but so too are efforts to transform the community. Back Alley is one of a growing number of enterprises that are helping to reclaim and revitalize this corridor, which was once home to Motown Records and is on the edge of Wayne State University.

The bike shop teaches young people bike repair skills. The kids are able to keep the bikes they build from salvaged parts, teaching them to appreciate recycling materials—a major goal of community activists who are concerned that the quest for all things new has encouraged rampant urban and suburban sprawl.

The youth from Detroit Summer have also worked with the Gardening Angels, an association of primarily southern-born African-American elders who plant flowers and vegetable and fruit gardens. Working the land together, the teens and senior citizens have cleaned up vacant lots, turning them into thriving gardens, and built greenhouses out of recycled materials. The partnership not only creates a training ground for future community leaders, it also builds transgenerational relationships so that all age groups are invested in the quality of life in the neighborhood, and no one gets left out of the development process. The gardens also produce an immediate benefit for the elderly:

“[Gardening] supplements my income because I don't have to buy vegetables. I can and freeze them for the winter,” says Maxine Turk-Elam, a 69-year-old eastside resident who over the years has purchased several vacant lots on her block and turned them into gardens that help feed her family, as well as senior and handicapped members of her church. And she plans to plant fruit and nut trees on a lot that she and a neighbor recently purchased together.

In her 35 years of living in the same home, Turk-Elam has witnessed her block go from being a close-knit group of homeowners who groomed the block and watched out for each other's children to a community of mostly renters and squatters challenged by a growing number of abandoned homes in various states of disrepair.

“So many people want the homes, but they don't have the funds right away to repair them,” says Turk-Elam. Many of the houses were abandoned because insurance red-lining devalued the property, preventing owners from securing home-improvement loans, she notes.

Nevertheless, Turk-Elam, a member of the Gardening Angels, is encouraged by what she calls growing interest in the neighborhood. Turk-Elam says that children on the block are showing an interest in the gardening efforts: “The younger kids stop by when they don't have anything to do. They enjoy it whenever you can catch up with them.”

When beloved urban agriculture crusader Gerald Harriston died in June 2001, another neighbor bought the plots he'd been farming and continued his work.

These self-determined community improvements are precisely the kind that staff at the Boggs Center feel will play a pivotal role in redefining the future of Detroit. “The efforts might be small, but that's what we think it needs,” says Embry.

Arts, kids, and vision

These efforts are as diverse as the people who dream them up. Arts and Children Creating Community Together (AC3T), for example, uses public art projects to help revitalize and beautify communities. Supported by the Boggs Center, the organization encourages elementary school students to develop pride in their neighborhoods and to become invested in the well-being of Detroit at an early age.

“We want to get them thinking about a new vision for their city,” explains Embry.

AC3T seeks to revitalize older structures and encourage holistic, ecology-conscious community redevelopment of Detroit's neighborhoods. The group has created murals at several elementary schools throughout the city, including one unveiled last June at Thirkell Elementary School on the westside. The project paired a group of Thirkell students with student members of Black Artist Researching Trends from the nearby College of Creative Studies to paint four murals that decorate the school's exterior.

The semester-long project brought a much-needed face-lift to the Virginia Park/Northwest Goldberg neighborhood. It also brought together two groups of future leaders who through their murals created and captured a vision for the Detroit they would like to see. The seeds of these visions can be planted by the older students and nurtured by the younger ones.

One of the most ambitious projects created by Detroit's growing network of community development activists is Adamah, a comprehensive plan to create housing, greenhouses, grazing pastures, food-producing gardens, a shrimp farm, artisan shops, a tree farm and lumber mill on 3,000 acres of blighted eastside property. No price tag has been put on the proposed redevelopment, but the design calls for turning an old Packard car plant into housing and small business spaces, uncovering a paved-over stream called Bloody Run Creek, building an irrigation system for farm land, constructing windmills to generate electricity, and covering freeway overpasses with ivy to help clean the air.

Dan Pitera, director of University of Detroit Mercy's design center studio, sees Adamah's village-within-a-city design as a way to address the needs of Detroit's disenfranchised poor and working-class populations. “Architecture is a political act,” says Pitera. “It can provide social justice. If a

child grows up in a space that's beautiful, that space can help begin to mold the child in a positive way. Architecture shouldn't be only for the rich.”

Still in its visionary stage, Adamah began in 1999 and grew out of collaboration between the Boggs Center, the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, visiting architect and urban design specialist Kyong Park, and Detroit residents. A year previously, Park, who was guest lecturing at the university, moved to Detroit and purchased a house in an eastside neighborhood that would be encompassed into the Adamah design. Park set up in his home the International Center for Urban Ecology, a nonprofit center that focused on developing ecologically conscious designs for urban areas. He and Steve Vogel, Dean of Mercy's School of Architecture, began discussing ideas for redeveloping the neighborhood where both Park and the Boggs Center were located. Located just a half-mile from downtown, the neighborhood is in a good location for small businesses to attract customers. Eastern Market, a popular downtown farmers' market that draws restaurant chefs and patrons from all over the state to purchase meat and produce, is also nearby, offering an opportunity for urban farmers to sell their goods. They talked about how uncovering the creek would create a water source that could be used to support agriculture.

The colleagues' discussion soon took on a life of its own, and they found themselves posing a series of questions: What type of housing and services were needed in this community? What type of goods-producing businesses would create jobs?

Their brainstorming quickly turned into a challenge for University of Detroit Mercy architecture students to create Adamah—a model community that would show one possible future for communities within post-industrial cities. The students began working with the Boggs Center to get a sense of the community's demographics, needs, and history. They canvassed the eastside neighborhoods, asking residents what they wanted to see the community become.

The Adamah design grew out of those conversations, and in July 2002, the students, university faculty, and the Boggs Center staff created a walk-through installation detailing an economically thriving ecological urban community on the site of the proposed redevelopment.

“Detroit is an example of how post-industrial cities will end up,” says Vogel. Cities worldwide, such as Berlin, Germany, St. Petersburg, Russia, and Manchester, England, are experiencing similar declines due to loss of industry, Vogel notes. Small-scale redevelopment that encourages localized economies will be needed to revitalize former industrial meccas, Vogel believes.

There is evidence that the Adamah design is spawning serious dialogue about such an approach. A video of the installation has garnered substantial interest. Dutch filmmaker Boris Gerrets was so taken by the Adamah concept and by similarities between post-industrial Detroit and post-industrial St. Petersburg, Russia, that he has begun filming a documentary about the two cities. When Vogel gave a lecture about Adamah at Harvard University, university officials became excited about its implications and asked him to author a chapter about the plan for inclusion in a forthcoming book on urban development.

“There are two ways to take the project,” says Grace Boggs. “One is to get a piece of land and begin developing the vision. The other is to look at the activity already in Detroit.”

Many Detroiters are taking the second approach. At monthly meetings of the Adamah committee at the Boggs Center, a growing number of residents and activists assist each other with realizing these redevelopment dreams. Instead of awaiting large-scale city funding to begin rebuilding their neighborhoods, these activists are moving ahead with the building of the self-sufficient communities that will meet resident's needs.

Fresh-baked bread, coffee, pizzas ...

There is indeed a litany of activities spread out over Detroit's vast land tracts. The 30-year-old Cass Corridor Food Cooperative has anchored a renewal in parts of the Cass Corridor neighborhood. The cooperative, which started as a neighborhood buying club, has grown into Detroit's largest natural foods store, offering hard-to-find, nutritious products to inner city residents as well as jobs.

Now, the one-block strip along Willis Street right off of Cass Avenue—where the food coop was located until when it moved for increased space—has become home to a collection of thriving businesses. Among them are a small bookstore, an art gallery, a boutique, and an old world bakery.

Motivated by the grassroots development manifesto promoted by Grace Boggs and others, business partners Ann Perrault and Jackie Victor opened Avalon International Breads in the Corridor in 1996.

“What I really liked about what Jimmy and Grace talked about is that it was a very practical approach to revolutionary concepts,” says Jackie Victor. “They had a big picture vision for the city and planet, but very tangible methods for reaching it. You can actually see the results of your labor after four years, not four decades.”

Serving fresh-baked organic breads, pastries and focaccia pizzas, as well as coffees, Avalon serves area residents, suburbanites, and city restaurants that feature the bakery's breads on their menus.

Perrault and Victor believe that community-based businesses must economically and spiritually uplift their neighborhoods. The bakery keeps money circulating within the Cass Corridor community by hiring at least 50 percent of its racially diverse staff from the neighborhood. It recycles, and, though it is a small business, offers full-time employees health insurance and average wages of \$9.00 an hour.

Perrault and Victor's success flies in the face of nay-sayers who predicted that the business would fail because of the duo's insistence on locating it in a rough-and-tumble area of the city and placing a large plate-glass window on the storefront.

“People felt like we were crazy,” says Victor. “Even the landlord said the neighborhood wasn't ready for windows.”

There are so many other projects in the works. Brother Rick Samyn, head of the Capuchin Monastery Soup Kitchen, is working with The Greening of Detroit (a nonprofit group dedicated to reforesting the city) and a southwest Detroit neighborhood to create a five-acre farm and orchard inside Romanowski Park. Students, parents, and faculty at nearby O.W. Holmes Elementary School were involved, too, holding design parties to create a framework for the farm's development.

“I see this [project] as a business model, not just a farm park,” say Samyn, who believes that the project's success will be measured in large part by community members' willingness to put in the sweat equity needed to produce bountiful harvests that can provide food for the entire neighborhood.

In addition to providing food to the community, Samyn believes that the work of building and maintaining the farm park will create a cultural bridge in a highly diverse community that has nearly an equal number of blacks and whites, and a large population of Latinos.

The Romanowski farm park project is but one effort among a growing list of alternative development projects flourishing inside Detroit's city limits. Others include The F.A.R.M., a teen agricultural program started by John Gruchala; a hands-on farming curriculum that is teaching agricultural skills to pregnant teens and young mothers attending the Catherine Ferguson High School; and ecovillages and co-housing in neighborhoods in southeast Detroit. If successful, these grassroots efforts may well convince residents' that they are a part of Detroit's rebirth—that they are in fact creating a new kind of life-sustaining post-industrial city that may be a model for the world.

Shawn E. Rhea is an award-winning journalist. You can learn more about these initiatives from the Boggs Center at www.boggscenter.org or www.adamah.org, or call 313/923-0797. This story was produced under the George Washington Williams Fellowship for Journalists of Color, a project sponsored by the [Independent Press Association](http://www.independentpress.org).

On Common Ground

by Grace Lee Boggs
posted Sep 30, 2001

Over the last 45 years, many social movements have been challenging us to transform ourselves and the ways we relate to one another—the civil rights movement that began with the Montgomery bus boycott, the free speech, black power, and anti-Vietnam war movements, the Native American, Latino, and Asian American movements, the women's, gay, and lesbian movements, the environmental, consciousness-raising, and self-help movements, and the anti-globalization movement that announced itself at the Battle of Seattle in November 1999.

Should we view these as separate movements, mainly concerned with single issues or with the interests of a particular identity group? That is the conventional wisdom. Or can we see them as multiple facets of an evolving cultural revolution that is creating a new civil society?

I was inspired to do this reframing by the recent State of the Possible Retreat in the Cascade Mountains. To begin with, retreat participants were from so many different backgrounds and wore so many hats that the boundaries between groups appeared to be dissolving before my eyes.

The welcoming presentation was made by David Korten, Positive Futures Network board chair and a former faculty member of the Harvard School of Business who is now a spokesperson for the anti-globalization movement. Kevin Fong, also a board member and a Feng Shui teacher, opened several sessions with soul-stirring rituals. African Americans included Verlene Wilder, lead organizer for the Seattle King County AFL-CIO Labor Council, and Jim Embry who marched in civil rights protests as a child growing up in Lexington, Kentucky, and now directs the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership. Native Americans included Tom Goldtooth, veteran coordinator of the Indigenous Environmental Network and youth leader Clayton Thomas-Muller of the Swampy Cree Tribe. Among the many outstanding women were Mary O'Brien, ecosystem projects director of the Science and Environmental Health Network, and Nina Simons, executive director of Bioneers, whose goal is to unite nature, culture, and spirit. Many of the men had been active in the anti-Vietnam war movement in the 1970s.

Two workshops especially expanded my sense of the new world that is struggling to be born. "The Role of the Activist in a Transforming World," led by European futurist Marc Luyckx, began with a graphic tracing the 10,000-year rise and fall of agricultural and industrial societies (both patriarchal) to the present period, when we are experiencing the crisis-ridden transition to a post-industrial world based on partnership. Although many Europeans view Bush as the last gasp of industrial society, Luyckx says, the transition is not guaranteed. The danger is that activists are still stuck in protest struggles against the dominating practices of industrial society instead of engaging in the positive struggles that empower people to create the new society.

This workshop was followed by one on "Civil Society Redefining Itself," led by Filipino activist and theoretician Nicanor Perlas. Perlas is a member of the steering committee of People Power II, the social movement that recently ousted the corrupt Filipino president, Joseph Estrada. (The 1986 revolution that overthrew Marcos is now known as People Power I). Perlas gave a firsthand account of how the various Philippine social movements came together at this key political moment. About 2,500 people representing different movements responded powerfully to the first call. They elected a committee of 100 that met weekly, which in turn elected a steering committee of 17 that met daily. Because of years of hard work at building trust and creating collaborations, they were able to quickly agree on leaders and strategy. Eventually, they issued the call for the mass protest that brought 1.5 million people into the streets and forced Estrada to step down.

Paul Ray, executive vice-president of an opinion-polling firm researching American lifestyles and values and coauthor of *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*, brought Perlas' story home with a graphic showing how the American population now lines up culturally. "New Deal liberals" make up 10 percent; 18 percent are "traditionalists"

supporting the “moral majority” and nuclear power; 10.5 percent are “dot.coms,” the emerging moderns; 20 percent don’t give a damn. But remarkably, the largest segment, 35 percent, has been active in or supportive of the various social movements that have exploded in the last 45 years.

Once we stop viewing these movements as separate, single-issue movements and reframe them as facets of an evolving cultural revolution, their members and supporters can be recognized as a social force embodying the more democratic, self-reliant, and life-affirming values of a new post-industrial civil society. When the opportunity arises, as it did recently in the Philippines, this civil society can replace our present hierarchical, commodifying, uncivil society.

Reframing the movements in this way can be tremendously empowering. But it can also be frightening, because it asks those who are burned out from previous struggles or have turned a particular struggle into a comfort zone to recommit themselves to building a new, more holistic movement to bring about fundamental social, economic, and political change.

Grace Lee Boggs, is a longtime environmental and civil rights activist from Detroit, Michigan, co-author of Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century, and author of Living for Change.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/yes/issues/respecting-elders-becoming-elders/readers-forum>

Roots in Berea

I copied and sent to friends and family the article in YES! (Summer 2005) on the Berea College Eco-village. We are creating an eco-village here in Detroit, so I knew these friends would want a copy.

I gave all my children a copy, because Berea is close to home. Berea is in Madison County, Kentucky, 15 miles from Richmond, where I was born. All of my five children went to a summer science camp at Berea while in high school.

My radical ways are traced back through my mother, grandmother, and great-grandfather (D.B.). D.B., who was four years old at Emancipation, enrolled at Berea College in 1879. He was in school with James Bond, grandfather of civil rights leader Julian Bond. Quite a few folks were radicalized at Berea in the 1880s. D.B. would get put off the bus every Saturday with my mother for refusing to sit in the back during the 1930s and ‘40s.

Thanks so much from my family for the article on Berea.

- Jim Embry (Detroit, Michigan)

.....

<http://www.public-republic.net/we-are-all-artists-with-multiple-avenues-of-creativity.php>

Public Republic We Are All Artists with Multiple Avenues of Creativity

September 21, 2008 by [Katerina Stoykova-Klemer](#) · [No comments](#)



Jim Embry is a photographer who lives and works in Lexington, Kentucky, where he recently held his latest exhibition. He is well-known for his many years of social activism fighting for racial equality, along with his leadership on issues of environmental sustainability.

Who is Jim Embry?

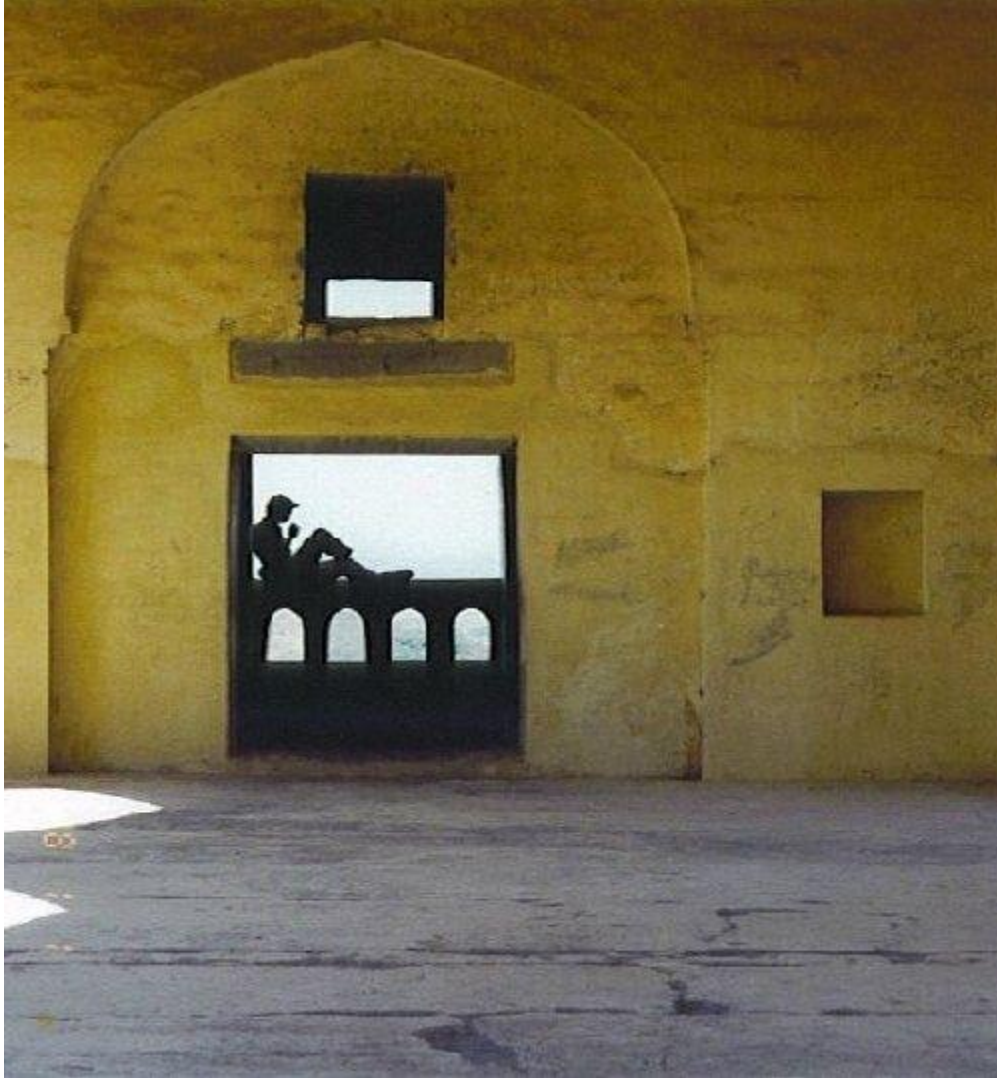
Star dust, congealed in this current form. I represent the millions of years of evolution. We inherit only the small things from our parents. The much profound essence of who we are has

been in the making for millions of years. I am an evolutionary being who also tries to contribute to the conscious turning of what it means to be human, as we, humans, we are still at the childhood stage. At the same time, I am an embodiment of the more immediate presence of my ancestors, who were social change agents for racial equality.



What does photography give you?

We are all artists with multiple avenues of creativity, and photography is one of them. Photography, as any other creative outlet, affects our deeper humanity. It allows us to use a voice from deep within to speak our truth. For me, it began as a way to capture life experiences. Growing up, I took a lot of pictures of family members. After that, as an activist, I captured the events I was part of so that the photos could be shared among people.



What makes a good photo?

A good photo comes from a place of humility. The photographer must not think that his or her picture of a rose will come out anywhere nearly as perfect and beautiful as the rose itself. Furthermore, I enjoy capturing spontaneous pictures, funny, whimsical, human emotions.



What was the most interesting place you ever visited?

I have visited Mexico, Canada, Cuba, the Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil and India, besides various places in the US. I have had very dear and special experiences anywhere I have been. A special memory for me is traveling to Atlanta to Dr. Martin Luther King's funeral in 1968. My friends and I were given black armbands and were assigned as the funeral marshals, which meant we would have to walk in front of both sides of the casket. The funeral began at Dr. King's church. His closed casket was placed on a wagon pulled by mules. We walked 3 or 4 miles from the church to Morehouse College area. It took over an hour and a half. Thousands and thousands of people were standing on both sides of the streets or walking behind the wagon. My friends and I had the job of making way for the wagon.



How did your travel affect your photos?

It certainly diversified the photos. Scenes, clothes, oceans are different around the world. It gives you a much broader perspective.



How do you choose what to take a picture of?

Many times you choose your subject because you feel inspired in the same way as in poetry. You see a composition and you know it will make a good photograph.



What is the message you would like your photos to send to the world?

We human beings are on Earth in order to be creative and to inspire ourselves and other people. There are sacred connections that are there between all of us in the Earth community. And these photos are like the hologram – a microcosm of this sense of connectedness. That's what I am trying to express.









http://www.southernspaces.org/sites/southernspaces.org/files/qt_ref/1a-002-ss-07-gsanch.mov

