



**LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE**
for ECOLOGY and the ECONOMY

VANGUARD

INSPIRING LEADERS *for* SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

3rd Tuesday of each month

NOON-1:00PM
555 5TH STREET, SUITE 300A,
SANTA ROSA

Fellows Networking Lunch

A monthly forum for
Fellows and friends
of the Institute to explore
various topics related to
sustainable public policy.
MORE INFO: 707-578-9133

Thursday, October 25

4:00PM-6:30PM
SONOMA MOUNTAIN VILLAGE,
ROHNERT PARK

Fall Fellows Gathering

RSVP required.
RSVP & INFO: 707-578-9133

Friday, November 2

7:30AM-4:00PM, DOUBLETREE
HOTEL, ROHNERT PARK

Healthy by Design

Register online at healthybydesign.eventbrite.com

Wednesday, November 14

Getting to Zero Waste in Sonoma County

A tour of Sonoma
County's Central Disposal
Site and Recycling Facility
MORE INFO: 707-578-9133

Friday, December 14

5:00PM-7:30PM
555 5TH STREET, SUITE 300A,
SANTA ROSA

Leadership Institute
Open House



TRAINING LEADERS IN SUSTAINABILITY

Institute founded on an idea to create a healthy, prosperous and just future

In the early 1990s, Rick Theis participated in Leadership Santa Rosa (LSR), a training program for community leaders. He came away with a profound appreciation for the experience of learning about local issues and the political system. He also gained insight into the importance of networking. If one wanted to run for elected office or be appointed to a board or commission, it helped to be a graduate of LSR.

When Rick spoke about the program with other environmental and community leaders, they wondered,

"Why isn't there something like that for environmentalists?"

Rick (at left) went on to serve on the Santa Rosa Planning Commission. "At the time I was also the



Executive Director of the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association and I was passionate about local wines," says Rick. "I knew it was essential to protect agricultural land from urban sprawl."

As a Planning Commissioner, Rick was an outspoken advocate for urban growth boundaries, smart growth and affordable housing. When he opposed a big box development, he was removed from the Planning Commission. Rick then ran for City Council, losing by 211 votes.

"I was extremely disappointed," Rick recalls, "but I now realize how much more effective I became by not being elected. What really helped me focus on sustainability was being appointed to the Board of Urban Ecology. It was there I began to understand that for there to be a sustainable future, we must plan and develop our communities with social justice and environmental concerns balancing economic interests."

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainable News Monitor

Help the Institute stay at the leading edge of best practices and research related to sustainable public policy. Monitor one or more sources (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and compile paper or online clippings of relevant information.

Healthy by Design Symposium

Assist the symposium planning committee with various tasks leading up to the symposium and/or assist the day of the event (e.g. registration, room setup, etc.).

Call the Institute at 707-578-9133 to learn how to volunteer.

ANNUAL SMART GROWTH SYMPOSIUM

**Healthy by Design:
Planning for Healthy Communities**
November 2, 2007, 7:30am-4:00pm
Doubletree Hotel, Rohnert Park



The Leadership Institute is partnering with the Sonoma County Department of Health Services to present Healthy by Design, our third annual Smart Growth Symposium. We will explore how local communities promote health and safety through design, land use policy, transportation systems and community development.

Symposium Features

- **Innovative tools and models:** Hear how communities across the country are creating healthier communities through integration of public health and planning.
- **Resources:** Gain valuable information about integrating health into planning and development processes.

- **Reception:** Network with symposium participants and browse exhibits from sponsors and other organizations.

Who should attend?

City and county elected officials, planners, transportation engineers, public works staff, public health staff, and other community leaders who want to learn how the built environment impacts individual and community health.

Program overview

Along with keynote speaker Dr. Richard Jackson from the University of California School of Public Health, we will explore existing models and tools for building healthy communities, local initiatives and success stories in Sonoma County, and host a discussion with policy makers and developers to identify what it will take to design and build healthier communities. Continental breakfast and lunch are provided.

TRAINING LEADERS *cont. from page 1*

Rick realized that training environmental leaders to be more effective wasn't enough. "I concluded that we need to train community activists from diverse backgrounds on the need to balance environmental, equity, and economic interests whenever they address public policy issues."

In 1999, Rick's wife, Carolyn Johnson, asked him the always challenging question, "What do you want to do

with the rest of your life?" Without hesitation he said, "I want to create a leadership training program for a sustainable future." Carolyn (CJ) encouraged Rick to develop a business plan. "We incorporated the Leadership Institute for Ecology & the Economy with Steve Rabinowitsh, Noreen Evans, Jake Mackenzie, and CJ serving on the first board of directors. We began our first class in September 2000."

After seven years, there are now more than 200 Fellows of the Institute. They have held elected and appointed offices in every community in Sonoma County, and continue to grow in experience and influence. The vision of training leaders who care about the entire spectrum of community needs—environmental sustainability, a sound economy, and an awareness of social equity—has grown and flourished.

HOW DOES ONE ACQUIRE THE SEED MONEY TO FOUND AN ORGANIZATION?

Rick Theis remembers: "While working for the wine division of The Coca-Cola Company in the early 1980s, I acquired a modest number of Coke shares. By 1999 they had increased in value more than 20 times. It was enough for us to open an office and hire an executive director. I always smile when I think of Coke being the most widely recognized symbol of American capitalism in the world and its stock funding this program. It's a combination of irony and poetic justice, don't you think?"

FELLOW PROFILE: NEWCOMER PLUGS IN

In each newsletter, we will profile a “Fellow”—a graduate of the Institute. In this newsletter, we meet **Maitreyi Siruguri**, a graduate of the Class of 2006-2007.

Each Fellow of the Institute comes away with a different set of experiences. Many Fellows are longtime Sonoma County residents, passionate about protecting a place they love. Other Fellows are seeing the area for the first time. Such is the case with Maitreyi Siruguri, who moved to Sonoma County in January of 2006, and attended her Institute orientation seven months later.

Born and raised in Hyderabad, India, Maitreyi had experience with the United States from boarding school. After two years of high school in Southern California, she returned to India and completed her education, eventually receiving a Master’s Degree in Social Work with an emphasis on Urban and Rural Community Development. “My schooling gave me direction about my role in the world,” she says.

Maitreyi pursued her interest in education, managing adult literacy programs in rural areas and eventually working with elementary-age children. Sometimes she traveled alone in remote areas, but she never felt afraid. “It was an amazing experience, and it taught me there is much less fear in the world than we think.”

In 2005, Maitreyi married a man she had known since second grade, and in 2006 relocated to Sonoma County, where her husband is employed as an engineer with a technology firm. Her first instinct was to seek community. “I was looking for people I would connect with,” she explains. Some of her new friends were involved with the Leadership Institute for Ecology & the Economy. She was encouraged to apply for the 2006-2007 class, and was accepted.

“I got so much out of it,” she says. “I got a broader understanding of the issues. The people I have met in

the class have become the backbone of my new community.”

The class allowed Maitreyi to examine myths about Sonoma County and understand what lay beneath them. “You have an image when you come to a place, especially a place like Sonoma County. The world knows this as the beautiful, rich wine country. They don’t know how much has gone into preserving this beauty and sense of closeness to nature.”

“ We all get caught up in the details of our lives. You sometimes need an excuse to go out and explore the place where you live.”



Maitreyi was also offered an internship with the Institute. In addition to the day-to-day office chores, such as copying and post office errands, Maitreyi developed the new Fellows Directory, which allows Fellows of the Institute to learn about and connect with each other. “It helps us network across classes and years,” she says.

The positive impact on her life continues. Maitreyi was hired to manage the “Cool Schools” program of the Climate Protection campaign, which will allow her to use her skills in education and outreach. Barry Vesser, another Fellow of the Institute, encouraged her to apply for the position, and the Climate Protection Campaign staff assisted Maitreyi with the paperwork for a work visa, which was granted in early September.

Does she have any advice for those considering an application to the Institute? “Do it. We all get caught up in the details of our lives. You sometimes need an excuse to go out and explore the place where you live.”

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NEWSLETTER

Ray Holley, Fellow, Class of 2007
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WORD POWER

VANGUARD

Its origin is Late Middle English, and was a shortening of the Old French “avant-garde”—literally, “going before the army.” Nowadays, Vanguard refers to those who are in the forefront of new ideas, who lead new intellectual or political movements. We named our newsletter Vanguard to acknowledge that being out in front of change can be exhilarating and rewarding.

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SUSTAINABILITY MINUTE

Take a minute and learn how to create a sustainable future



Leading scientists are calling for swift and decisive action to avert climate crisis. The question for us as leaders is: “How do we move the needle on climate change in the next 5 to 10 years?” With transportation accounting for roughly 50% of Bay Area CO2 emissions, transforming our transportation system must be a top priority. We must stop funding projects that increase fossil fuel emissions and shift our spending to those that reduce emissions, such as public transit options, walkable communities, and bike paths.

We have an opportunity to influence this funding shift right now as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission works to update the Regional Transportation Plan, a \$100 billion-plus blueprint for how transportation funding will be spent in the Bay Area over the next 25 years.

The Leadership Institute has joined organizations throughout the Bay Area to support a platform of 10 recommendations. To view the full list of recommendations, go to www.transcoalition.org. *To find out how you can join us in supporting the platform, contact the Leadership Institute at 578-9133.*

Changing our transportation system and the design of our communities is absolutely necessary and will take a number of years to achieve. What can we do today that would dramatically reduce transportation costs and emissions in Sonoma County?

“How do we move the needle on climate change in the next 5 to 10 years?”



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