

# ECOLEADER NEWS

Leadership Institute For Ecology and the Economy: Summer 2003

## INSTITUTE GRADUATES FELLOWS FOR 2003



May 7 was graduation day for the Leadership Training for a Sustainable Future class of 2003, a program of the Leadership Institute For Ecology and the Economy.

This year's participants included Mary Balcerak, *Roseland*; Steve Benjamin, *Santa Rosa*; Jenny Blaker, *Cotati*; Susan Briski, *Santa Rosa*; Kelly Brown, *Santa Rosa*; Paul Carroll, *Santa Rosa*; Kathy Coldiron, *St. Helena*; Una Glass, *Sebastopol*; Anne Hudgins, *Santa Rosa*; Robert Judd, *Guerneville*; John Kinsella, *Petaluma*; Pierre LaBerge, *Santa Rosa*; Nona Leone, *Santa Rosa*; Alex Mallonee, *Santa Rosa*; Ann McGee, *Santa Rosa*; Bret McNulty, *Bodega Bay*; Lisa Moore, *Cotati*; Leif Noble, *Rohnert Park*; Maria Peluso, *Santa Rosa*; Miguel Ruelas, *San Rafael*; Anna Sears, *Sebastopol*; Phebe Sorensen, *Sebastopol*; Allen Thomas, *Santa Rosa-West End*; Michael Topolos, *Glen Ellen*; Ted White, *Graton* and Greg Young, *Forestville*.

"These are people who are interested in affecting public policy for a sustainable future," said Institute Founder Rick Theis. "They are a group of remarkable leaders. They come together with a rich diversity of backgrounds, interests, and political-points-of-view, while they share a common desire to make sure we keep California's North Coast a great place to live, work, and play."

Participants met one day a month for nine months to learn from experts and community leaders about the connection between environmental, social justice, and economic issues, and the need to balance them all to create public policy for a sustainable future.

This year's graduates join a pool of more than 75 participants in the Leadership Training Program. Their knowledge about sustainability, their leadership skills, and the network they are creating among Fellows provides hope and inspiration for a brighter future.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A SNOWFLAKE

Larry Robinson, an eco-psychologist, poet, and Sebastopol City Council Member delivered an inspirational message to the graduating class of the Leadership Institute.

He acknowledged the loss of integrity in many leaders who hold public office, and the sense of powerlessness and despair that can overwhelm activists, especially in these dark times. But he reminded the class that individuals do have the power to make a better world and that every act, no matter how insignificant it seems really does make a difference, as he pointed out in one of his own poems.

"What difference can one person make any way?  
The juggernaut's out of control, the fox is guarding the hen house, and we are all just snowflakes in the wind.

"The Mountain asks: which snowflake, falling, will be the one to trigger the avalanche changing the entire landscape."

## ELDERS SAY, "DON'T GIVE UP."

A panel of environmental elders regaled the Leadership Institute graduating class with stories of their struggles to be leaders and campaigns to affect change.

With rapt attention, the class listened to Kay McCabe, a life-long neighborhood activist and founder of the Russian River Celebration; Bill Kortum, the dean of Sonoma County environmentalists and state-wide leader to save the coast; and Ernestine Smith, a life-long Sonoma County environmental activist.



Kay McCabe, Bill Kortum, and Ernestine Smith

Kay McCabe said it was having children that got her to organize neighbors to provide a playground for kids and open a swimming pool. She said not to be discouraged by a lack of money. "Just get a bunch of people together and go to work."

As she grew older, she was involved in the civil rights movement and then environmental movements.

# Leadership Institute

For Ecology and the Economy

50 Santa Rosa Ave. #308

Santa Rosa, CA 95404

707 578-9133

[www.ecoleader.org](http://www.ecoleader.org)

## MISSION

Educating leaders to create public policy that is environmentally friendly and socially equitable for a healthy economy and a sustainable community.

## DIRECTORS

Rick Theis, Steve Rabinowitsh, Carolyn Johnson, Jake Mackenzie, Noreen Evans

Recently, she's been working on developing community appreciation for the Russian River.

Bill Kortum joked that he was born with the activist gene, and his work as an inventor helped him be effective. "Ideas are cheap," he said. "What's important is to act on ideas."

As an inventor, he knows that 9 out of 10 ideas will come to nothing. But it is the occasional victory that provides enough satisfaction to continue.

Grassroots organizing is critical to the sustainability movement. He said, "We can never raise enough money to compete with interests driven by profit. Grassroots organizing is the only way we can win,"

As a youngster, Ernie Smith was interested in why things in nature were the way they were. So, she studied biology and became a biology teacher.

When she saw a development proposed for the coast, she didn't think it was appropriate. She wrote a letter to her legislator that began a long campaign that turned that land into a state park.

Smith has been in the forefront of most Sonoma County environmental movements ever since. Now 88, she says she's slowing down. "Don't give up," she said. "We need more activists."

## "FELLOWS" MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Alex Mallone ('03) becomes the first paid employee of the Sonoma County Central Labor Council. Lisa Moore ('03) elected to the Cotati City Council. Allen Thomas ('03) appointed chair of the Santa Rosa Planning Commission, Nona Leone and Anne Hudgins ('03) elected to the Sierra Club Executive Committee. Eric Storm and Beth Meredith ('01) launched the Sustainability Management System Coaching Program with Petaluma Poultry and Gallo North Coast Vineyards. Susan Gorin ('02) appointed to the Santa Rosa Board of Public Utilities. Congratulations.

## SOLNIT LEAVES INSTITUTE

It is with deep regret that the Institute loses its executive director, Daniel Solnit. For three years he managed the Leadership Training program and other activities of the Institute.

The Board of Directors acknowledges his enormous work in launching the Institute as well as his personal commitment to create a more sustainable world.

The training program will continue with past graduates organizing the course.

## RON SUNDERGILL NAMED PRESIDENT

Ron is the new president and CEO of the Institute. Before moving to Windsor, was a lobbyist on energy policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington D.C., and was elected President of the Frederick County Board of Commissioners in Maryland in 1990.

He will focus on educating elected and appointed leaders on public policy for a sustainable future, and fundraising to financially sustain the Institute.

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