

CREATING AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

March 30 2011 2:26 PM

Notable guests to speak about Social Enterprise topics at Alton Marketplace seminar

(30 March 2011 – Alton, IL) A movement is on the rise among shoppers and those who provide commodities that the public needs. As an increasing number of Americans become aware of the drawbacks from an economy based on consumerism, social entrepreneurs are emerging with a new business model which has a triple bottom line that considers profit, people, and planet. Those interested in learning more about social enterprise and how one can get involved are invited to attend a free one-hour seminar on Thursday, April 7th at 6pm. The event will be held at the Riverbender.com Community Center (200 W, 3rd St.), and is sponsored by the Alton Marketplace Association.

The evening will consist of two key themes, the first being to create an understanding of what social enterprise is and how it can be used as a catalyst for social change and sustainable community building aimed at both for-profit and non-profit businesses. Secondly, presenters will identify resources that will enable potential social entrepreneurs to move forward with their own business venture ideas, and speak to the role that minority business owners, particularly African Americans, play in sustainable community building.

The speakers will be examining business practices set within the context of social responsibility. The panel will include: Jackie R. Burns, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology at Principia College, Barbara Levin, Program Coordinator, Alliance for Capacity Building, George Warren Brown School of Social Work Washington University in St Louis, and Eddie Davis, Executive Director of the Center for the Acceleration of African American Business. “Of course environmental sustainability, spiritual fulfillment, and social justice are multifaceted topics and there are as many ways of pursuing these as there are individuals – but the business model is such a predominant thought force in our culture and organizational strategy of community that it is a logical choice as a mechanism for innovation and social change,” says Dr. Jackie Burns.

The Alton Marketplace Association coordinates economic development services to revitalize the historic downtown Alton shopping district. Director Sara McGibany attended the recent “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” symposium presented by LaVista Ecological Learning Center and the Sierra Club, and was inspired to carry its message to Alton’s local business community. “Businesses that adopt social enterprise methods are not only more profitable, but also employ environmental and social benefits that advance the common good and have vast potential to build our community,” McGibany said.

“Awakening the Dreamer” is an ongoing interactive workshop series that delivers a message from members of third world countries to first world consumers asking them to be more considerate of the earth’s limited natural resources. “The hope is that more and more citizens will realize that

placing convenience and the lowest possible price tag as their top priorities comes at the direct cost to human lives and the environment,” says Christine Favilla, Project Manager of the Sierra Club, “our goal is to empower our citizens and business community to become a part of the solution.”

Some tenets of social enterprise include using environmentally sustainable materials, adhering to socially responsible business practices, forming co-op or employee owned businesses, as well as the promotion of artisanal handcrafted items and small scale farming techniques. Alton Marketplace promotes an existing network of independent business owners and artisans who sell their products at the Alton Farmers’ & Artisans’ Market, as well as the Mississippi Earthtones Festival and the Green Gift Bazaar, which they co-sponsor with the Sierra Club.

The seminar will be offered free of charge, and complimentary refreshments and on-site child care will be provided. Doors will open at 5pm for informal discussion and networking, and the one-hour presentation will start at 6pm. Further seminars will be planned based on the feedback from the local community on their specific interests and needs. For more information, please call 618-463-1016 or visit www.AltonMarketplace.com

[Like RiverBender.com on Facebook!](#)