

**In Business Magazine, November/December 2002**

**Living Economy Business Models**

*Latest news of groups, events and services on how BALLE is creating a national alliance of local business networks*

***Business collaborations – Feature news about local networks***

On a recent November evening members of the NW Washington BALLE network, Sustainable Connections, came together for their first annual All Members Meeting in Bellingham, Washington. The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) is a national alliance of local business networks working together to build and strengthen the sustainable enterprises and communities that *In Business* has long worked to showcase. This new movement is about building profits while maximizing relationships.

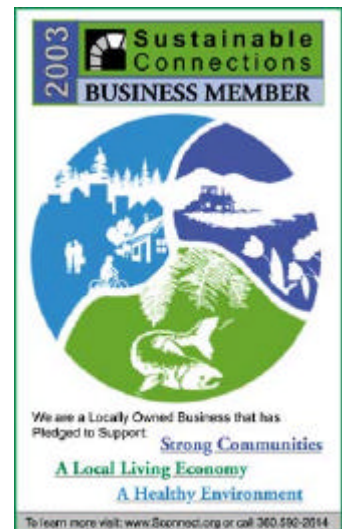
From Washington to Massachusetts, and from Texas to Minnesota, grassroots BALLE networks are revitalizing their local economies. The community-based businesses that make up the local networks are committed to working together to preserve the unique character and natural environment of their hometowns.

Rather than complaining about the problems in our current corporate system or simply listening to speakers that bring inspirational (if not always relevant) examples, these business owners from Northwest Washington have committed to “Be the change that we wish to see in the world”.

At this All Members/Pledge meeting, business owners sat grouped by industries, such as building, retail, restaurants and farmers, service providers, and non-profit organizations. A facilitator guided the members through a process of thinking about what their businesses could do to benefit the local economy, environment, their workplace and community in 2003. Energetic, loud discussions occurred at every table and by the end of the night the majority of business owners had created a unique pledge appropriate to their industry and personal values. According to SC member Mauri Ingram, owner of the Calumet Restaurant and executive director of the Downtown Renaissance Network in Bellingham, Washington, “During the night our table got so excited about the potential we have to work together as restaurant owners to support local farmers and sustainable agriculture in our county, that we concentrated more on next steps as a group than on our individual pledges!”

Members left with a professionally designed window decal, meant to create brand recognition for independent, locally owned businesses that are working to support their community. For more information see [www.Sconnect.org](http://www.Sconnect.org).

***New services and upcoming events –***



BALLE is working closely with the Social Venture Network to host regional Social Venture Institutes with local BALLE networks. Since 1996, SVI's have offered business leaders a confidential and collaborative forum in which to discuss their business challenges and learn from successful colleagues. SVI's provide expert advice and counsel from successful, approachable, socially responsible "master" business leaders. These programs often result in long term mentoring relationships and business partnerships.

An East Coast regional collaboration was held in Philadelphia in mid-November with the Social Business Network, Philadelphia's BALLE group. At their SVI, over 100 regionally-owned startup and second-stage business and non-profit leaders participated in case study analyses of local businesses; expert panel-led small-group discussions on improving the triple-bottom line; and "True Confessions" of regional business leaders Judy Wicks, Seth Goldman and Kenny Gamble.

Connecting capital to Living Economy enterprises is a critical BALLE objective and a fundamental building block of a Local Living Economy. A living return, in contrast to a maximum return, accounts for the value derived from enjoying a healthy and vibrant community and a sustainable global economy.

On January 23, 2003, BALLE, the Investor's Circle and the Calvert Fund are co-sponsoring a Living Return Finance Symposium in Boston. Invited attendees are leaders in socially responsible investing and are in a position to implement new models. The participants will explore new vehicles for delivering a "living return", including the creation of a "Living Return Fund" for local investments.

On May 28-31, 2003, Portland, Oregon - BALLE will host its first annual conference, in conjunction with the Oregon Sustainability Forum. More information to come!

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