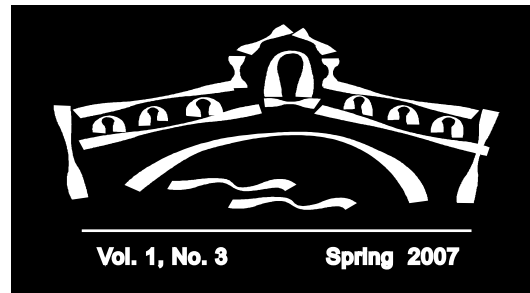


BUILDING BRIDGES



THE MICHIANA COMMUNITY CURRENCY NEWSLETTER

WWW.MICHIANACURRENCY.ORG

Celebrate Earth Day with Local Green!

By Jackie Smith

Chairperson of Michiana Community Currency

This issue of Building Bridges recognizes Earth Day (which should be every day!) by considering how a community currency can help us protect our natural resources while we strengthen our regional economy and community. The Michiana Community Currency (MCC) project plans to issue our own regional money that will encourage more of us to do business locally rather than through retail chain stores. One shocking statistic shows that the typical meal travels more than 2500 miles from farm to plate! What is worse, it can take a hundred times the energy content of the food to produce and transport it.*

The U.S. dollar system ties our local economy to the national and global economies, thereby devaluing our natural and human resources. We're constantly forced to cut jobs and lower our environmental standards in order to remain "competitive" in the global economy. Hundreds of communities around our nation and world are coming together to demand an end to this "race to the bottom" competition for outside corporate investment. They want to draw from resources within their communities while reclaiming control over their local and regional economies and their natural environments. The South Bend region is part of this trend, since we believe that our region has a wealth of talent and natural beauty that a community-based currency can nurture.

In this issue we identify how community-based currencies can benefit the environment and support community involvement in environmental stewardship. Jessica Mikels-Carrasco, MCC treasurer, explores how a community currency could reduce the negative environmental impacts of our everyday activities. Also, Friends of the St. Joseph River board member Bob Glidden discusses how river clean-ups such as that held in South Bend March 30 can benefit from a community currency.

By linking our local economy to the global one, we allow outside corporations and investors to determine the value of our people and the natural environment. A complementary regional currency

would help us place value on things that matter to people who live here.

MCC volunteers are now developing new activities to help people learn about the benefits of a regional currency, and as you'll see in this issue, this summer and fall we will host "Unplug your iPod" parties to celebrate local musicians and bring neighbors together. We need new volunteers to help us build a network of residents and businesses who share our goals. If you can help in any way, or if you want to be added to our email contact list, please get in touch! ❖

*See Michael Pollan *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin Press)

Can You See My Carbon Footprint?

By Jessica Mikels-Carrasco

There's a lot of talk these days about your carbon footprint. That is, your personal contribution to the accumulating carbon gas in our atmosphere, the leading culprit in global warming. If you go to British Petroleum's website there is a link where you can calculate your carbon footprint. Mine was 17 tonnes/year. The average in the United States is about 18.5 tonnes/year, so mine was not as much below the average as I would have hoped. Issues concerning global warming, the loss of species diversity, and the general well being of our planet become more disturbing to me the more I learn. Sometimes I begin to feel that the problem is just too big. But that is not an attitude that does anyone any good, and there is so much that each of us can do that together makes a big difference. So what does this have to do with community currency? Community currency, and the purchasing of local products, is just one of the many things that you can do to reduce your carbon footprint.

It is a bit funny to be writing about global warming right now in Indiana, where it is snowing on this April 7th. A little warming may not be a bad thing, right? But what we all must realize is that just warming up our home is not what is going to happen as the planet continues to warm. Rather, weather patterns will change. The tropics will be hardest hit with much of the tropical rainforests turning to deserts. (continued on pg. 2)

Community Money Can Nurture and Reward Environmental Leaders

By Bob Glidden

Member of Friends of the St. Joe River (<http://www.fotsjr.org/>)

"If you want people to fight, throw them a bone; If you want them to cooperate, have them build a tower."

Saint-Exupery, Citadel

Communities have not always been interested in protecting the environment in which they live. In the ancient past, nomadic cultures just "moved on" when the waste piled up and the soil was depleted. Today's more complicated problems involve community interest in environmental degradation, but we are more inclined to rely on the "experts" for solutions.

Instead, many folks would rather take matters in their own hands when it comes to the development of community spirit and taking care of the area in which they live together. Recently, many groups in Michiana have participated in volunteer efforts to help our local environment. For example, coinciding with Earth Day, Michelle Verges, assistant professor of psychology at IUSB organized "Bagfest" on April 14 to promote awareness of how our use of plastic bags impacts the environment and to introduce ideas about recycling and conservation (see <http://www.conserveplasticbags.blogspot.com/>). Other local Earth Day events are held to provide education, clean-up local waterways and plant trees. (continued on pg. 2)

"Local currencies can discourage over-extraction of natural resources, unmanageable growth, and unnecessary consumption."



Money does grow in communities! What should our local money be called?

Should we call the money "Bridges" in honor of our river crossings-- or is "South Bend Bucks" a better name? Should a child's drawing be featured on the money? What about picture of our local landmarks? Historic businesses? Local heroes? Let us know what you think the money should be called. Or suggest pictures or designs the money should feature. Then, in 100 words or less, tell us why your submission should be selected as the winner of the NAME THE MONEY contest! Send your submissions to michianacurrency@sbcglobal.net or mail to Michiana Community Currency; P.O. Box 114, Notre Dame, IN 46556

(Carbon Footprint from pg 1)

This would be a hugely tragic loss, since these areas have so many species, we have yet to discover the vast majority of them. The poor will be disproportionately affected by global warming, even though their consumption of fossil fuels is small. This inequity was tragically illustrated in New Orleans with Hurricane Katrina. These climate trajectories are not set, we can work to change them. Buy energy efficient light bulbs, reduce your usage of fossil fuels - car pool, walk, ride a bike, turn down your thermostat. But, also buy local.

"Mine was 17 tonnes/year. The average in the United States is about 18.5 tonnes/year, so mine was not as much below the average as I would have hoped."

If you check out the carbon footprint calculator you will notice that notably missing from the calculator is any mention of where products you purchase come from and the varying impacts of different kinds of products on the earth. This is a place that I think many of us could vastly improve our overall impact on the environment. Wal-Mart, notably, has the largest carbon footprint of any retailer, with high levels of transportation for the delivery of products from factories overseas to the trucks shipping those products to the stores. Most U.S. produce travels between 1500-2500 miles before being sold! This seems unconscionable, when we know that the burning of fossil fuels is a leading culprit of human caused global warming, and there are farmers right in our area with high quality product that is there for us to enjoy, if only we choose to. In addition, the deforestation and land-use changes needed to produce much of the food that is imported into this country contributes more to total carbon in our atmosphere than do cars. Conservation International, a leading and highly regarded non-profit conservation organization, suggests buying local produce and meats as one of the top ten things you can do for the environment.

Community currency works to increase the links between local production and local consumption. Because the script can only be spent locally, when you purchase something from a vendor with community currency, they can then turn around and purchase any number of things needed to run their business that are also provided locally, ensuring that the reduction in transportation and degradation in the production of their products does not end with your purchase. Local currency empowers you, the consumer, to know where your purchases come from, and it reduces the negative ecological impact of those purchases. If you have been thinking of reasons why a local currency may or may not be the thing for you, certainly the good of the planet and the future for our children is a good reason to consider this economic option. Our ecological footprints here in the United States are enormous. A community currency allows you to know that you are helping both your local economy as well as your home planet. There is so much we can do to mediate the damages to this planet, so add community currency to the list of ways you are doing your part. ❖

Shopping Your Way to a Healthier Planet: Green Pages launches in Michiana



Perhaps Earth Day inspired you to take the time to consider the impact you are having on this planet. If you had the chance to attend the festivities at Howard Park in South Bend, you may have noticed the "Michiana Green Pages." Recently compiled, these pages empower you the consumer to make informed choices in the purchase of services and products that are environmentally friendly. It is often difficult for consumers to feel as if we have the power to make informed choices; particularly when we are surrounded by the convenient, yet usually socially unanswerable, box stores that offer the convenience of one stop shopping at the expense of environmental and social justice concerns.

As the Green Committee states in the first pages of the Michiana Green pages: "With each green step you take, you help solve our planet's problems. When you buy Fair Trade, you ensure a fair wage for producers around the world. By choosing local, organic food and organic cotton clothing, you reduce the dangerous pesticides used on conventional crops and support local producers. By making your home more energy-efficient, using public transportation or by utilizing low carbon output modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling or driving hybrid automobiles, you curb climate change and create a more secure energy future."

The directory not only informs you about retailers and service providers that offer green services in the area, it also includes sections on community building, recreation, health and good eating. Green means social justice, economic justice, and environmental sustainability. Linking consumers to these types of services is a goal of community currency. We hope that you check out the Michiana Green Pages. They are available at Just Goods, 1211 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend, IN 46615, and an online version will be available soon at www.michianagreenpages.org.

For more information,
email: greenpages@justgoods.net. ❖

Planet Earth: Dying of Consumption

The number of planets needed to sustain the world at different countries' levels of consumption:



According to the New Economics Foundation, total consumption levels had already exceeded the planet's ecological capacity by the late 1970s.

(Environmental Leaders from pg 1)

While the value of these activities seems obvious, there are few economic incentives for this kind of participation. Are there ways in which a local currency could promote more frequent interactions and interdependencies between neighbors to generate positive environmental outcomes? Well, of course there are!

Our community benefits from the activities of hard-working volunteers who lead and participate in these and other environmental initiatives. A community currency could be used to encourage and reward community service. The global market place does little to fund projects that are in the interest of local communities. However, there are many projects that could be created with community investments in local food production, renewable energy, durable clothing, and education which benefit not only the local environment, but also have a larger impact. Helping to protect local ecology encourages economic responsibility, and the reverse is also true. Local currencies can discourage over-extraction of natural resources, unmanageable growth, and unnecessary consumption. Local production means less transport, hence less use of fossil fuels to get products to consumers. The point of local currencies is also to boost the value of resources, such as local labor, that are undervalued in the dollar economy. ❖

Learn More! Check Out These Links:

- "Is Local Better than Organic? Learn More about the Debates" : http://www.smallisbeautiful.org/local_currencies.html
- Northern Colorado Community Currency: <http://nocohours.org/>
- Complementary Currency Resource Center: <http://www.complementarycurrency.org>

Food transportation across the globe is making a significant contribution to climate change.

- * Food in the UK travels 65% further than it did two decades ago.
- * Heinz ketchup eaten in California is made with California-grown tomatoes shipped to Canada for processing and returned in bottles.
- * In one year, the port of New York City exported \$431,000 of California almonds to Italy, and imported \$397,000 of Italian almonds to the US.
- * In 2004, the UK imported 17,200 tonnes of chocolate-covered wafers and exported 17,600; imported 43,993 tonnes of potatoes whilst exporting 85,652; and imported 25,720 tonnes of milk and cream, only to export 27,125 at the same time.

Good Stuff? - A Consumption Manifesto: The Top Ten Principles of Good Consumption

By Umbra Fisk, writing for Grist Magazine (as reprinted from www.worldwatch.org)

Consumption is one of life's great pleasures. Buying things we crave, traveling to beautiful places, eating delectable food: icing on the cake of life. But too often the effects of our blissful consumption make for a sad story. Giant cars exhaling dangerous exhaust, hog farms pumping out noxious pollutants, toxic trash heaps nudging into poor neighborhoods—none of this if there weren't something to sell.

But there's no need to swap pleasure for guilt. With thoughtfulness and commitment, consumption can be a force for good. Too long have we consumers been a blushing bride overwhelmed by business suitors. It's time for the bride to assert herself. We've got the dowry; we have the purchasing power. We can require our suitors to comply with our vision of environmental stewardship—or we can close the door behind them on their way out. Through buying what we need, produced the way we want, we can create the world we'd like to live in.

To that end and for the future, a Consumption Manifesto:

Principle One. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This brilliant triad says it all. Reduce: Avoid buying what you don't need—and when you do get that dishwasher/lawnmower/toilet, spend the money up front for an efficient model. Re-use: Buy used stuff, and wring the last drop of usefulness out of most everything you own. Recycle: Do it, but know that it's the last and least effective leg of the triad. (Ultimately, recycling simply results in the manufacture of more things.)

Principle Two. Stay close to home. Work close to home to shorten your commute; eat food grown nearby; patronize local businesses; join local organizations. All of these will improve the look, shape, smell, and feel of your community.

Principle Three. Internal combustion engines are polluting, and their use should be minimized. Period.

Principle Four. Watch what you eat. Whenever possible, avoid food grown with pesticides, in feedlots, or by agribusiness. It's an easy way to use your dollars to vote against the spread of toxins in our bodies, land, and water.

Principle Five. Private industries have very little incentive to improve their environmental practices. Our consumption choices must encourage and support good behavior; our political choices must support government regulation.

Principle Six. Support thoughtful innovations in manufacturing and production. Hint: Drilling for oil is no longer an innovation.

Principle Seven. Prioritize. Think hardest when buying large objects; don't drive yourself mad fretting over the small ones. It's easy to be distracted by the paper bag puzzle, but an energy-sucking refrigerator is much more worthy of your attention. (Small electronics are an exception.)

Principle Eight. Vote. Political engagement enables the spread of environmentally conscious policies. Without public action, thoughtful individuals are swimming upstream.

Principle Nine. Don't feel guilty. It only makes you sad.

Principle Ten. Enjoy what you have—the things that are yours alone, and the things that belong to none of us. Both are nice, but the latter are precious. Those things that we cannot manufacture and should never own—water, air, birds, trees—are the foundation of life's pleasures. Without them, we're nothing. With us, there may be nothing left. It's our choice. ❖

Michiana Community Currency Invites You to Attend:

Community Forum on Economic Development

Uniting to Improve Our Quality of Life

Saturday, May 12, 9 - 4 pm
Indiana University South Bend
in Weikamp Hall 1001

To register, email
 developmentforum@sjvp.org
 or leave a message (including your
 phone number) at 574-287-3834.

"Uniting to improve our quality of life" is the theme of the 2007 forum on economic development in St. Joseph County, sponsored by the Community Forum for Economic Development and a growing list of co-sponsors (listed below). Presentations and workshops will provide opportunities for community members with different perspectives to share information and experiences in the context of our overall goal, the improvement of economic opportunities for all area residents.

The program for the day includes:

A keynote address by **Reverend Christopher Boston**, a board member of the national Partnership for Working Families and the Lead Organizer and Executive Director of the Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope, Inc. (MICAH),

A second morning event will be an analysis of local community development by **Marty Wolfson**, representing the Community Forum for Economic Development.

Afternoon workshops will focus on topics central to local economic development and provide an opportunity for participants to discuss and develop proposals for change speaker **John Goldstein**, the National Program Director of The Partnership for Working Families.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make our "Unplug Your iPod": night of community music last March at Elva's such a success



Help us plan the summer "Unplug your Ipod" party in June to celebratelocal musicians and artists" Contact michianacurrency@sbcglobal.net or 574 904 7192

WE'RE IN THE MONEY! YOU CAN BE TOO!

WE HAVE THREE WORKING COMMITTEES, AND VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED TO HELP MAKE LOCAL MONEY.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP RECRUIT LOCAL BUSINESS PARTNERS, HELP WITH ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS SUCH AS FUND RAISING , WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT, DATABASE MANAGEMENT, ETC., OR TO BE A REGIONAL COORDINATOR OR VOLUNTEER FOR TOWNS OUTSIDE SOUTH BEND, CONTACT JACKIE SMITH AT JACSMITH1037@SBCGLOBAL.NET OR 574 233-3928. TO WORK ON PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PUBLICATIONS, CONTACT WALDO MIKELS-CARRASCO AT WAMCAR@GMAIL.COM.

Contact Us: MICHIANACURRENCY@SBCGLOBAL.NET ☐ ☐ 574 233 3928