

LOCAL WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

DEB MORSE:

Living the green life

Deb Morse is best known in her southern Vancouver Island community as the driving force behind the “green living” festival which has become the largest outdoor eco-marketplace in Canada.

Since she started the festival four years ago, it has showcased hundreds of green producers and sustainable companies to more than 15,000 people.

“Back in 2005 I was inspired by the many forward-thinking businesses doing their part even before climate change was on the public radar,” says Morse. “I wanted to do something constructive to help people understand the choices that were available locally to enhance our health and reduce environmental degradation.”

The festival, July 4 and 5 at Glendale Gardens & Woodland, attracts attendees and exhibitors from all over North America and is a popular event for Islanders seeking to bring green living into their everyday lives. It showcases everything from eco furniture to landscape design, clothing to alternative energy sources, and delights attendees with samples of tasty new organic foods and beverages.

Many exhibitors have been propelled into the media spotlight with television, radio and newspaper coverage, and have gained sales advantages in their markets, Morse says.

“I love seeing great companies like Saanichton’s Level Ground Trading achieve success. This year Level Ground Trading plans to import more containers of direct fair trade organic coffee. This increase in sales not only benefits our local economy; it helps coffee producers in developing countries dealing with the economic downturn.

Level Ground Trading has been an exhibitor and sponsor of the festival. “When I see growth like this, I feel like I have helped make a difference.

“I put in so many hours and for sure some days I feel like I would rather stay in my very comfortable organic bed,” laughs Morse about the ups and downs of being a social entrepreneur. “But at the end of festival weekend, I know my time has been well spent.”

Along with directing and programming the festival, Morse is passionate about her consulting work. “I help businesses and non-profits harness the creative potential in their organizations by developing decision-making circles based on ‘dynamic governance’ principles. The results are amazing with less time spent in meetings, improved work relationships and increased efficiency.”

Morse considers herself a social entrepreneur because entrepreneurship for her is about more than profit; it’s about driving social and environmental change.

You can do the right thing and be successful in your business, she says, recommending business owners start by implementing a ‘triple bottom line’ approach which includes economic, ecological and social factors.

For more details, visit: www.organicislands.ca



Shari MacDonald photo

Debra Morse, executive director of the Organic Islands Festival and Sustainability Expo, and social entrepreneur.