

Being Green and Being Thrifty Can Go Hand in Hand

COVER Home Repair, White River Junction

COVER Home Repair’s Executive Director, Rob Schultz, describes the organization as one that is, “profoundly oriented toward saving people money.” The side effects of such a simple mission are many, including keeping families in their homes, bringing community members together and promoting sustainability.

COVER accomplishes its goal of helping people save money by offering low-cost education programs that teach basic skills like carpentry and car repair; by selling used appliances, furniture, and other household items in its ReCover Store; and through its home repair and weatherization program, which brings community members together to make homes safe, warm and dry. What COVER does by focusing on home repair and weatherization, Schultz says “is to squeeze as much life out of homes as possible to save homeowners from the human and financial costs of moving. The old homes and trailer homes will work for a little bit longer.” The home repair program depends on volunteers who help the homeowners to make repairs. In the process, people from all walks of life work together and communities are strengthened. As Schultz describes it, “It’s about taking care of each other.”

A side effect of taking care of each other is that the local environment is taken care of as well. All three of COVER’s programs — the educational classes, the ReCover Store, and the home repair and weatherization — help to divert items from landfills by fixing and using things longer. So while COVER is in the process of building knowledge, community and structures, it’s also in the process of reducing costs and human impacts.



Image provided by COVER Home Repair

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Library Serves as a Sustainable Living Hub of the Community

Hartland Public Library, Hartland

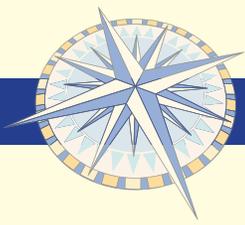
The basic concept of a library — a place that promotes the sharing of books and information rather than the purchase of them —illustrates that good environmental practices have been part of our communities for a long time. The Hartland Public Library takes its job as a hub for sharing resources very seriously, and it sees promoting sustainable living as one of its primary goals.

When you visit the Hartland Public Library, you’ll find that they actually have a sustainable living bookshelf devoted to information on weatherization, organic gardening, saving energy, and other related topics. This shelf also includes a Kill A Watt meter that library patrons can borrow to measure the energy use of different appliances in their homes. Basically, if you’re looking to find ways to reduce the environmental impact of your home, the sustainable living bookshelf at the library can help.

Additionally, the library offers programs that deal with sustainable living. Examples of past programs include composting, canning, seed starting, seed saving, and raising chickens as well as discussion groups on food and healthy kids. According



Mary Danko



to Mary Danko, the library’s director, all of these initiatives are just a start. She says, “I am very, very interested in continuing in this direction for the library. Our community loves it!” Mary has ideas for even more sharing. She’d like to offer things like post hole diggers and food dehydrators for people to borrow, and the library has the infrastructure to do so. The Hartland Public Library clearly has recognized that libraries in and of themselves promote environmental literacy, and they’ve chosen to take that several steps further.

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From Tree to Table

Shackleton Thomas Furniture and Pottery – The Naked Table Project, Bridgewater

While it’s not uncommon these days to know the names and faces of the farmers who sell vegetables at the local farmers market, it is unusual to know the landowner and the forester responsible for growing the tree that becomes the table on which you eat those vegetables. The Naked Table Project celebrates the table owner and all those involved with growing, harvesting, milling, and crafting the table.

During a Naked Table Project weekend, participants build their own tables out of locally grown lumber, and while doing so, they learn about each step from tree to table. They learn about the forester who manages the woods where the tree once grew, the logger who cut the tree six months earlier, and the local craftsman who dried and machined the wood into table parts. Participants then spend a day working with furniture makers from Charles Shackleton Furniture and finishers from Vermont Natural Coatings to construct and finish their tables. As the weekend comes to a close, the group enjoys eating a meal of locally grown food on their very own tables. Finally, they take those tables home, where, as Charles Shackleton notes, they “will age, gathering history and conversations; breakfasts, lunches and dinners; games and projects — the sustenance of daily life.”

Charles Shackleton believes, “The least of what the weekends are about is furniture. Rather, it is about connections.” Some of those connections are between people. Some participants construct their tables in memory of someone. Fathers and sons or husbands and wives work together on tables. Whole families may work on them, and the children especially seem to be quite proud of what they do. Additionally, the project is about a connection with the place where the trees for the tables grew, a connection to the land, the sunlight, the water and the dirt that are a part of each table. And one might imagine all the additional connections made by participants for years to come as the tables become a part of their homes and their daily lives.



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