

Live Your Values!

Especially this season: buy local, buy American, buy union-made.

by Karen Jeffery

Rebecca Adamson, Cherokee leader, admonishes: "Apply your values to every dollar you spend. We find abundance through hard times when we find each other". When we do these things – live by our values and include others, we're empowered. And we're less fearful about what happens on Wall Street when we take care of Main Street.

Talk to those who have moved their money out of the big banks (that are part of the problem) and into local banks and credit unions (that are part of the solution), and feel their pride in empowerment and good citizenship. Listen to a small business owner, who smiles when she speaks about lifting each employee to a 'living wage'. When we live our values, human dignity and compassion triumph over market forces.

Then there's the economic multiplier effect, where dollars spent locally multiply several times over, creating more economic benefit in our community -- more jobs, more savings, more tax revenue, more charity. I agree with our Mayor, "The best thing you can do for yourself is to strengthen your community."

There are so many small, practical steps both Ashlanders and Occupiers can take that make huge differences in our culture:

- Live within your limits and seasons. Practice the R words: reduce, reuse, repair, restore, replenish, regenerate, recycle, reinvest, reconnect, revision...
- Go green!! Walk and bike, weatherize your home, use energy-saving bulbs and appliances (and turn 'em off), cold wash/hang dry...
- Buy locally from farmers' markets, co-ops, garage sales, thrifts, locally owned markets and shops (doing what you can to shorten the supply chain multiplies benefits, is better for the environment, and re-circulates money through our community)
- Use cash when you shop. That 3-5% the credit/debit card companies (usually big banks) charge local businesses could be the difference between laying off one of your neighbors or keeping the business in profits
- Bank locally (credit unions and smaller banks are more socially responsible than major corporations and keep the dollars here in the Valley, instead of sucking them off to Wall Street)
- Invest locally (have you bought a solar panel? helped a student or a start-up?)
- Communicate with family, friends, community, the land...be in relationship, and share your values
- If you are an employer, hire locally (and pay at least the living wage of \$12.96 per hour)
- Ask your employer and the local businesses you support to re-think hiring, procuring, investing, and banking policies to benefit our community
- Vote your values...and vote with your wallet every day
- Keep informed locally and globally about economic and sustainability issues, and take positive action whenever you can: re-think systems, volunteer, try random acts of kindness, find your passion, light a fire, Occupy

Everything!! ...the list is endless really

And when you've perfected the arts of voting with your wallet, become an influence on your organizations -- your church, your school, your non-profits. When even larger organizations decide to spend and bank locally, the benefits are exponential. Also, with over \$250 million in combined budgets, and employing nearly 2,500 people, Ashland's 'Big Five'* have enormous power to influence outcomes in our small community...and every incentive to do so. Rooted in Ashland, they have self-interest in keeping Ashland healthy, safe, and strong. Ashland is their home too.

If our big five changed some of their practices, more locals could actually go back to college, purchase Shakespeare tickets, keep the multiplier effect affecting. The next time you support one of the big five (or any of our local companies), why not mention how great it would be if they directed their purchases to local businesses, hired from within our community, sourced from the Valley, banked here too (in a bank that keeps the funds recycled in our town). Imagine if each of the Big Five spent just a few million more here in Ashland...and we kept it recirculating. It would be a game changer. Little fixes, even just an awareness in each department and employee, could transform our town...with more jobs, better jobs, fewer hungry or homeless, healthier citizens, restaurants, and shops... and a thriving town.

What if instead of our cities offering lax standards and tax breaks to big companies, they offered incentives to worker-owned businesses, co-ops, start-ups, locally-owned small businesses? What if we mandated a living wage (\$13.53 per hour in Ashland)? Reminded citizens to spend and hire locally? What would happen if we could harness the economic power and impact of our anchor institutions? If we increased earnings in our community and decreased expenditures outside? (then multiplied that by three...or seven...or even more!) Huge value is added as more citizens and organizations rally around supporting our local economy...and keeping the dollars home.

So do your part first to buy, save, and hire locally. And watch the multiplier effect. Then encourage family and friends and speak up where you work and shop to help Ashland thrive. Together we can better our future, we can occupy our town, and take the sting out of Wall Street and bought politics. We can create the world we want. Some of the 99% are occupying right here in Ashland (and all over the world) to change paradigms and build sustainable communities.

Join us!

Occupyashlandoregon.org

* Our town's top five economic engines: the City of Ashland, Southern Oregon University, Ashland Community Hospital, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Ashland Public Schools