

Presentation by Ron Thomas:

<http://www.dctc.edu/visitors-community/sustainability/index.cfm>

This afternoon, I intend to quickly scan what is happening in the emerging green job market, and share with you some of the employment opportunities in this growing field.

There is an old saying—the first axiom of business—“Find a need and fill it.”

Today, most public agencies, communities and businesses are familiar with the importance of the green sustainability movement. Survey the Web sites of your local and state government offices and you will see very quickly that our public entities are making a concerted effort to address green sustainability through such programs as better environmental planning, use of alternative energy and required recycling.

And most recently, the higher education community in the United States joined the green movement by launching the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment to address global warming. To date, more than 570 colleges and universities have signed this agreement.

Take a look at the *Wall Street Journal*, or our own *Star Tribune* and *Pioneer Press*, or any newspaper, and you will see regularly articles about sustainability. I am also pleased to see that the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are committed to the Green Movement. And, when you see the city of Denver, Colo., going green as part of hosting the national Democratic Convention, the green concept is clearly a national referendum.

But are we finding real job opportunities, or are the jobs being created as the result of compliance and regulatory issues usually associated with the green movement?

Darin Painter suggested in an article, “Sustainability can impact the wallet, not just the water and air.” Regardless of whether an entrepreneurial venture is a green-green business such as Ben and Jerry’s, or simply a green spinoff from an

existing business, the opportunities for the green entrepreneur hold great promise.

Let's look at some specific green jobs in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. A special report in the *Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal* dated April 11, 2008, indicated a total of 519 green companies in Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka and Dakota counties that support 10,425 green jobs in wind, solar, geothermal and biomass.

Let's review an article by Sherrie Negrea, in the summer edition of *Trustee Quarterly*: "While green jobs are being created in a variety of fields, the largest number of new positions in sustainability development likely will relate to the area of energy efficiency, which includes retrofitting and auditing buildings and installing energy-saving appliances."

An article entitled "Go Green" in the September 2008 issue of *Entrepreneur Magazine* describes the following 10 green business ideas: Green Home Remodeling, Ecotourism Travel Guide, Green Business Consulting, Eco-Salon, Green Cleaning Services, Green Startup Finance Broker, Green Bed and Breakfast, Green Advertising Agency, Eco-Friendly Furniture and Low Water-Use Landscaping. It's clear; the small business owner sees the green opportunities and is quickly moving to fill the need.

And, I was pleased to read in last Thursday's *Star Tribune* an article entitled, *Greener Pastures for Job Seekers*. This is an excellent resource and if you are interested in the green job market, read the article and take advantage of the available resources.

Finally, permit me to share with you an article written by Chris Dannen in *FAST Company Magazine*. He stated, "While so-called green jobs haven't made the Bureau of Labor Statistics report to date, some career experts believe that they will proliferate in 2008, shaking up the list of the 'fastest growing' jobs.

"More and more companies are adding dedicated staff to focus their environmental efforts,' says Alison Doyle, About.com's Guide to Job Searching. Citing the increase in the number of green-centric job listings Websites, Doyle advocates her belief that green jobs are arriving in two breeds: some green jobs, she predicts, will be positions at specialized firms whose business is reducing

human environmental impact; others will simply be jobs at environmentally-friendly companies looking to improve their eco-friendliness or image.”

And, most recently in an article entitled, “Workers Needed in All Energy Sectors,” from the *Community College Times* indicated that the U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$10 million to regional partnerships that include community colleges to train workers in energy. The energy industry accounts for 4 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product and employs more than one million workers across the country.

The article continues by stating that impending retirements and fewer workers entering energy-related careers have created a need for innovative training strategies, according to Department of Labor officials. Growth in the industry is stunted by a shortage of skilled trade and construction workers needed to build new infrastructures, install equipment, operate facilities and repair existing systems.

Let me share some specifics with you about this job training grant:

- In Sonoma County, Calif., they are focusing on renewable energy as it seeks to infuse a worker pipeline for its expanding solar energy industry. The number of jobs in the sector is expected to increase by as much as 17 percent—or 1,200 jobs—over the next year.
- In Minnesota, through a partnership with MnSCU and four other colleges, a program will be developed to ensure entry-level workers have the basic skills needed in the energy industry. The colleges will help develop associate degrees and certificate programs in sustainable energy fields, customized training modules and professional development for instructors.
- In Maryland, they are facing similar worker shortages. Southern Maryland, in particular, will need 4,300 skilled trade workers in energy facility and utility construction in five years.
- In Georgia, they have problems promoting job opportunities in the fossil and nuclear energy sector. The Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education will increase the capacity of 23 energy programs at nine regional technical colleges and create a distance-learning energy course.

Experts agree that the potential for growth in green-collar jobs is enormous. Issues surrounding our changing climate are not going to be resolved without

massive investments in education, technology, research, renewable energies, infrastructure and the power of human effort and invention.

Going green is a double-edged boon: we are preserving our global environment *and* developing fresh industrial and commercial frontiers that will sustain economic expansion far into the foreseeable future.

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