

## UNCOMMON SENSE:

## Business Leadership for a Sustainable Future



**SUSTAINABILITY** has been a major program goal of the Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP) since its inception in 2003, reflected both in its mission statement and long-term strategic plan. At its inaugural conference in 2004, YBP featured an array of speakers who shared their views on “A Sustainable Future for the Yellowstone-Teton Region.” We were fortunate to hear from Ray Anderson of Interface, Inc. and Janine Benyus, author of *Biomimicry*, who together inspired much of YBP’s sustainability philosophy and program activities from that point forward.

At that same conference, plenary speaker Daniel Kemmis of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West challenged the YBP membership to “take on the mantle of citizenship, knowing it is in our enlightened self-interest to take care of this place. We must see to it that the places we inhabit work well, and that means they must work sustainably. We [in the business community] have to make it happen since no one else is going to do it.”

Our two national parks – Yellowstone and Grand Teton – have led the way for sustainability in the region by responding to several federal Executive Orders to improve their own environmental practices while requiring higher performance standards for their concessionaires. The major concession companies – Xanterra Parks and Resorts, DNC Yellowstone General Stores, and the Grand Teton Lodge Company – have instituted aggressive environmental management programs and served as beacons for the businesses operating outside park boundaries. Julie Klein, of Vail Resorts, and Jim Hanna, formerly of Xanterra, helped design the *UnCommon Sense* program, and all three concessionaires now have liaisons active on the Leadership Team.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*UnCommon Sense* is a two-year leadership program that is helping businesses become more sustainable in all aspects of their operations. Responsible businesses in our region are recognizing that a healthy environment and strong communities are vital to their long-term prosperity. By adopting sustainable practices, each business can help preserve the region’s social and natural assets, strengthen the local economy, and enhance the growth potential of its own business in the process. The program encourages its participants to incorporate environmentally-sound and community-friendly practices that make long-term business sense for a variety of enterprises within the Greater Yellowstone area.

Eight businesses have recently completed their *UnCommon Sense* commitment and have reduced waste and pollutants, decreased water and energy consumption, and expanded purchases of local and nontoxic products. Participants also have introduced concepts of social cohesion for the workplace and explored how their business can enhance overall community progress. Read their inspiring stories in the following case studies.



Because of changes implemented during the *UnCommon Sense* program, Montana Yellowstone Expeditions Foundation students got their hands in the dirt as they learned the importance of buying and eating locally grown produce. The youth wilderness program purchased 65-70% of their food last year from several local Paradise Valley farms.

*See story on page 3*

### PROGRAM OUTLINE

*UnCommon Sense* integrates education and peer-support by requiring businesses to attend four group workshops over a two-year period and participate in monthly teleconferences. Each training module explains how to conduct self audits, make operational improvements and measure and communicate results. In addition, participants are assigned to a “learning team” led by an experienced advisor who serves as a resource and coach.

#### Module 1: Leading the Way

In *Leading the Way*, businesses gain knowledge about initiating and managing organizational change: they learn how to organize a sustainability working group, identify internal champions, create a sustainability mission statement, and communicate that mission with employees and clientele.

#### Module 2: Waste-Stream Management

Module 2 looks at effectively reducing waste, segregating the waste stream, and cost-effectively transferring waste to its next destination. Businesses learn how to identify local and regional waste management resources, and how to audit and measure their waste stream. They create a system for reduction, reuse and recycling and communicate their waste management policies with their employees.

#### Module 3: Responsible Purchasing

Responsible purchasing means to consider what is in the products that are used to operate each business and from where those products come. Businesses learn how to create a purchasing tracking matrix to track information on purchasing habits. They create a purchasing policy and communicate with vendors the implications of their new policy. They also identify products to analyze for preferred alternatives.

#### Module 4: Social & Community Investment

Module 4 helps businesses build strong social structures to strengthen their businesses AND enhance the social fabric of their communities. Businesses learn how to define social sustainability both inside and outside their organizational walls, and develop a work plan for social sustainability.

#### Module 5: Resource Management - Energy Efficiencies

In module 5, businesses learn how to complete baseline energy audits and create a system for tracking their usage. They plan for and implement facility improvements, and track the results over the course of the program.

#### Module 6: Resource Management - Water Efficiencies

Water use is an important, and sometimes overlooked, component of sustainability. In Module 6, businesses learn how to complete a baseline for water usage and track utility data, and how to identify areas with the greatest potential for improvements.

#### Module 7: Transportation Efficiencies

The Transportation Efficiencies module looks at how people and goods are moved across the region, and how customers access each business. Businesses perform a baseline audit to identify transportation needs, and they learn about CAFÉ standards, local alternative fuels and transportation options.

#### Module 8: The Business Response to Climate Change

The Business Response to Climate Change is the “Closing the Loop” module. Businesses learn about Greenhouse Gas Inventories, Carbon Offset programs, species extinction, and other environmental issues not yet addressed. From that point they decide, “What next?”

#### Program Review and Graduation

Learning Teams report on their individual and collective progress; participants receive certificate of program completion. Completion of the course does not “certify” businesses as sustainable, but provides all the tools should a business want to proceed with Green Seal or similar certification.

Create positive change while benefiting  
your business and the bottom line →

## BRIDGER BOWL

Nonprofit Community Ski Area, Bozeman, Montana



### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Mike Riley, former president of the board of Bridger Bowl, knew first-hand the benefits an organization can reap from the *UnCommon Sense* program: his contracting company, On Site Management, was nearing graduation from the program when he encouraged Bridger Bowl to sign up for the second class. Such a top-down decision can sometimes meet resistance at lower levels of an organization, but according to Paul Bockus, the former Director of Food Service who oversaw the process, the decision was met with enthusiasm. "Getting people on board down through the general manager to the staff was easy because the culture here is a good fit for sustainability."

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

While Bridger Bowl had already been recycling, Bockus admits it was done in fits and starts. The city of Bozeman kept changing what they would and wouldn't recycle due to shifting contracts. *UnCommon Sense* helped the ski area formalize their waste management program, and with three lodges, large cafeterias and a bar and grill, they had a lot to manage. They found a reliable recycler to take their recyclables off site and made stations more accessible for visitors out on the floor. Signage gave clear directions to patrons and staff. The efforts were successful: In 2008 Bridger Bowl diverted two 20-yard dumpster loads from the landfill, even though it was a record season for snow and ski visits. Sent to recyclers: 1,520 pounds of electronic waste, 16 cubic yards of plastic, 20 cubic yards of steel/aluminum, 1,400

pounds of office paper, and 6.5 tons of cardboard.

The focus on recycling dovetailed into their purchasing practices. "We eliminated all glass from the cafeteria, because Bozeman doesn't recycle glass," says Bockus. They now crush the glass from the bar with a newly purchased glass crusher, and in 2008 they ground 1.2 tons. They also have a cardboard crusher and baler on site, and have switched from tin canned food products to those that come in pouches, which save fossil fuels. While they considered eliminating plastic bottles, Bockus had to consider customer service, since skiers like to take them off site.

Because transportation issues are chronic in the Gallatin Valley, the ski area had to focus on creative ways to alleviate congestion. In 2008, Bridger Bowl initiated their first employee bus system to run every single day, with well over 5,000 riders taking advantage during the year. For Bridger Bowl and its visitors, transportation and parking have always caused problems. Several days over the last couple of years, skiers were turned away because of a lack of parking. For their annual birthday celebration, a much-anticipated and well-attended event, they did not want to turn away business. The seed for a carpooling program was planted at a brainstorming session in the transportation module of *UnCommon Sense*. The final outcome was the creation of the "Three on the Wheel" discount program implemented for the birthday event. To get the \$15 lift tickets, visitors had to car pool with three people per car. A 70% compliance rate was estimated.

The proceeds for that event go to Montana State University's athletic programs. As a nonprofit orga-



An on-site cardboard crusher helps with recycling efforts.

nization, social investment is part of their mission, and the *UnCommon Sense* program reinforced what they were already doing right. The Bridger Bowl foundation supports a youth ski racing team, as well as Eagle Mount, a nonprofit offering therapeutic recreation opportunities to people with disabilities.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Diverted 40 yards of garbage from the landfill in 2008, despite record ski visits
- Initiated employee bus system, with over 5,000 cumulative rides during the 2008 season
- Recycled 1,520 pounds of electronic waste, 16 cubic yards of plastic, 20 cubic yards of steel/aluminum, 1,400 pounds of office paper, and 6.5 tons of cardboard
- Created discount carpooling incentive for visitors at annual birthday event, achieving 70% compliance

## FOUR SEASONS RESORT JACKSON HOLE

Year-Round Mountain Resort, Jackson, Wyoming



### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Laura Cuddie, Director of Residences for Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole, decided to join the *UnCommon Sense* program because the year-round resort was just starting to tackle the issues of sustainability. Being part of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, an umbrella corporation with 75 hotels in 35 countries, the Jackson Hotel resort is expected to adhere to the corporate values, which include supporting sustainability, local communities and cancer research. For Cuddie, the *UnCommon Sense* program was a perfect fit for upholding those values. According to Cuddie, the program provides "a good framework to follow. I liked the way it broke the various components into manageable pieces, and how all those pieces are related and build upon each other. This program has given us very specific tools that any company can apply to their unique situation."

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

A direct benefit of participation in the *UnCommon Sense* program resulted in several reductions in Four Seasons Jackson Hole's waste stream and the costs associated with it. They were one of six companies included in a pilot project for food composting. The year-long program, meant to establish the financial feasibility of a community-wide composting effort, helped Four Seasons divert 25 tons of pre-consumer food waste from the landfill between March 2008 and February 2009. As head of the resort's Green

Team, Cuddie has been invited to present what she's learned from *UnCommon Sense* at national Four Seasons Resorts Residence Conferences.

Four Seasons Jackson Hole also increased the amount of their recyclables, while decreasing their solid waste tipping fees between 5-10%. They eliminated 7,000 water bottles a month from their waste stream and reduced their purchasing costs by not giving bottled water at turn-downs, offering pitchers of water instead. Based on the success of this effort, they have recently eliminated bottled water for skiing guests going through their base camp, and instead offer water coolers with biodegradable cups.

For Cuddie, though, awareness and education of the staff has been the biggest change. While Four Seasons Jackson Hole had a Green Committee before *UnCommon Sense*, the program helped them to formalize their efforts. The committee meets once a month, and after each *UnCommon Sense* module, Cuddie shared what she had learned with them. The committee represents all divisions within the resort and all levels of employment. Each department is responsible for completing a checklist every month on all facets of sustainability, and the departments are accountable for reaching goals every year. Department heads are given financial incentives for meeting those goals. An orientation presentation on sustainability has been developed at the resort and sustainability is part of every job description. Cuddie has also developed a four-hour class on sustainability



Staff volunteers helped clean up Grand Teton National Park.

for managers at the Jackson Hole resort.

Cuddie is most proud of a new social investment program Four Seasons Jackson Hole has started as a result of the *UnCommon Sense* program. While Four Seasons has always given back to their community, they now allow all managers one paid day a year to volunteer at an organization of their choice. The program further strengthens Four Seasons' commitment to social investment, while also providing for positive employee engagement.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Diverted 25 tons of pre-consumer food waste in a one-year period
- Reduced solid waste tipping fees by 5-10%
- Eliminated 7,000 plastic bottles a month from the waste stream
- Increased employee engagement and social investment

## MONTANA YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITIONS FOUNDATION

Private Foundation and Youth Wilderness Program, Emigrant and Bozeman, Montana

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Montana Yellowstone Expeditions (MYE) is a youth wilderness program for socially and economically under-served youth from select areas of the United States. According to Andy Leider, Executive Director, the environmental curriculum taught prior to joining the *UnCommon Sense* program was a more traditional science-based education: ecosystems, plants, flora, and fauna. But the changing climate and times prompted them “to include the larger sustainability conversation. Our students were hearing about climate change and global warming, but had no idea, no sense of how it was connected to them. We decided to make sustainability a core element of the youth summer courses.” To do that, they joined *UnCommon Sense* to focus both on developing a sustainability curriculum for the summer program and making the MYE Foundation more sustainable as an organization. Leider says, “We didn’t want to just teach it, but live it.”

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

The dual reasons for joining *UnCommon Sense* meant extra work for MYE, but work that could potentially effect more cultural change than some of the other organizations. Cari Hanson, a private consultant hired to go through the program with Leider and help develop the curriculum, says they had to approach each module from two perspectives: that of an *UnCommon Sense* organizational participant and as a teacher, which often meant melding the modules to better fit the organization: “Every time we entered a module, we would look at organizational operations and make the changes that fit our program. Then we looked at the educational opportunities for our students, staff, vendors and suppliers. We’d have to ask ourselves, ‘Based on our program, how does this fit in

the back country, on the river, or in the mountains? How do we teach it?”

Because MYE doesn’t have the structures of a traditional organization—they lease their site and vehicles briefly and seasonally and have no access to the background data that a typical *UnCommon Sense* participant might have—they creatively combined modules to see results. For instance, they chose to look at transportation issues through the lens of purchasing and decided to focus on local and sustainable foods. Leider says, “We looked at what we could do – drive less – instead of what we couldn’t. Students fly in to Montana, that’s not going to change. But we used to drive a lot to make purchases. So instead of driving to Bozeman to Costco, we began purchasing from the six or seven local farms in Paradise Valley.” They set a goal to purchase no less than 50% of their food locally. To achieve that, they went through the menu and created a system for the kitchen coordinators to use each year for their purchasing. Last season they bought 65% to 70% locally, which they define as the state of Montana. The results: MYE saw a decrease in the food budget by 18% in 2008 with similar food volumes to 2007. They also reduced their rental vehicles from seven down to five by using trailers attached to the passenger vans, instead of renting pick-up trucks to haul equipment. As a result they dropped their mileage by 7,000 miles and reduced fuel consumption.

MYE also linked waste, consumption, personal purchasing and energy conservation. With each youth group, they do a waste sort, which is always a “big eye-opener for them,” Hanson says. “As a result we’ve revamped our whole recycling program and changed providers for all paper products to a local vendor. We now buy 100% post-consumer paper, toilet paper, paper towels, and all office papers from a Montana supplier.”



65-70% of food was purchased from local Paradise Valley farms.

But according to Leider and Hanson, the biggest change has been the cultural shift in behavior in staff and students. Because of the MYEarth program they developed, an alumnus named Zach has reenergized the recycling club for his high school and connected with the local university to develop a sustainability curriculum that high school and college students can teach to elementary students: a direct result of both *UnCommon Sense* and the MYE curriculum that came out of it.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Educating a new generation of sustainability leaders
- 65-75% of food purchases made locally
- 100% paper products purchased through local vendors
- Reduced food budget by 18%
- Eliminated two rental vehicles
- Reduced miles driven by 7,000 miles per season

## SUN RANCH GROUP

Agriculture, Development and Eco-Tourism Enterprise, Bozeman, Montana

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

As a fully sustainable conservation enterprise built around environmentally credible practices in real estate, agriculture, construction and recreation, the Sun Ranch Group’s reasons for joining the *UnCommon Sense* program was partly altruistic. Sun Ranch Group’s founder and Managing Partner, Roger Lang, sits on the YBP board. Yet, according to George Sporn, Operations Consultant, they also “wanted to see what we could learn further and to hopefully contribute to the program.” Their knowledge gleaned from running the first eco-lodge in the United States and sustainably conserving and developing ranch lands would fit well within the peer-supported format of *UnCommon Sense*.

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

The *UnCommon Sense* format of systematically covering all business operations ensures that no practice is overlooked. Sporn acknowledges that “We learned quite a bit. The various modules helped us focus on those practices (such as purchasing, facility efficiencies, etc.) more closely and reinforces what we had, quite honestly, already been doing.” While Sun Ranch Group was measuring electric usage as a business, they were not doing

it in the formal, more thorough method *UnCommon Sense* encourages. The program prompted them to do some renovations like installing new energy efficient heating units, solar panels and lighting systems that will pay off in the long run. Due to the relocation of two lodging portions of the company, a before and after comparison of energy use is impossible, but the Group will continue to monitor their usage closely.

For Sporn, the social investment module was one where the Sun Ranch Group could best share their best practices. Investing in the local community is the basis from which the Group grew. Lang’s agricultural programs follow the same process: acquire overgrazed ranchlands, implement new practices, and turn them into ranching operations that focus on being good stewards of the land. Another creative program started by Sun Ranch Group is meant to reintroduce native grasses and reduce noxious weeds on a long-term, large scale basis. An annual Weed Fundraiser sponsored by the Group raises money to purchase more environmentally-friendly chemicals and provide staff to do weed abatement in Madison County. The event attracts over 1000 people and creates community good will.

For the Group’s staff, largely focused in the lodg-

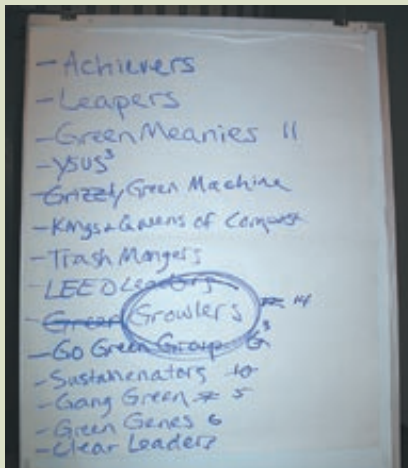
ing and hospitality portion of the business, a “hire locally” policy was already in place. On the food side in the lodge, the Group has always focused on buying local and regional products in season, and buying as little as possible from large institutional suppliers.

Still, Sporn says, “Overall, we benefitted from *UnCommon Sense* by going through the process of rethinking everything we do. The exercises helped us to systematically go through all our practices.” The process helped them to see what could be improved and reinforced what they were already doing right.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Formalized methods for tracking and measuring usage in operations
- Installed energy efficient heating units, solar panels and lighting systems
- Sponsored annual Weed Fundraiser





## Growlers begin second year of *UnCommon Sense*

Eleven regional businesses have completed the first year of the Yellowstone Business Partnership *UnCommon Sense* two-year program. Members of the Growler Class will graduate in April 2010.

- Billings School District  
Billings, MT
- Buffalo Bill Historical Center  
Cody, WY
- CTA Architects and Engineers  
Billings and Bozeman, MT
- Greenspace Landscaping  
Bozeman, MT
- Harmony Design and Engineering  
Driggs, ID
- Intrinsic Architecture  
Bozeman, MT
- Livingston School District  
Livingston, MT
- Plan One Architects  
Driggs, ID
- Snow Creek Saloon  
Red Lodge, MT
- Silver Star Communications  
Freedom, WY and Driggs, ID
- Yellowstone Association  
Yellowstone National Park, WY



The Growlers attend their first workshop in West Yellowstone in April, 2008



## Regional Experts Teach Sustainable Business Operations

The *UnCommon Sense* Leadership Team.  
Rear (l-r): Heather Burdette, Deb Holmstrom-Friedel, Beth Pratt, Arthur Kull, Basil Barna  
Front: Allison Collins, Stacey Kersens

Companies dependent on unsustainable business models are dropping as fast as ice shelves in the Arctic, but other small and medium-sized companies face increasing strains on their bottom line if they don't plan for a carbon-constrained future now.

Regional experts in sustainable business operations share their extensive knowledge through the Yellowstone Business Partnership's (YBP) *UnCommon Sense* training program.

### BETH PRATT

**Director of Environmental Affairs, Xanterra Parks & Resorts at Yellowstone National Park**

As Director of Environmental Affairs for Xanterra Parks & Resorts at Yellowstone National Park, Beth Pratt develops sustainable business programs for the concessionaire's operations. She describes herself as an "environmentalist capitalist" and says they are not mutually exclusive, but "absolutely united principles. To be a good capitalist, you need to run a sustainable enterprise." She points out that good capitalism is an efficient use of resources, which is also the principle behind sustainability. As a Learning Team Advisor for *UnCommon Sense*, she experiences firsthand the real benefit of the program in helping businesses become more efficient in their operations. In terms of how the training program compares to others, she sees an important difference: "We all learn from each other. The sharing process makes it unique. The class dynamic is such that the participants come up with so many ideas that I take notes as well. I see myself as a coach and facilitator, but the classes are a two-way street. Great ideas happen when everyone gets engaged."

### GINA MACILWRAITH

**Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Grand Teton Lodge Company**

Gina MacIlwraith directs the Environmental, Health, and Safety program for Grand Teton Lodge Company. Her responsibilities include management of the concessionaire's Grand Teton National Park environmental management system and health and safety program, along with maximizing operational sustainability, developing interpretive programs, and maintaining overall regulatory compliance. She is the Lead Instructor for the Waste Stream Management module in *UnCommon Sense*. Her significant past experience with air, water and solid waste in the manufacturing industry helps participants to better understand the responsible way to take care of their waste and water.

"Most businesses don't have a full-time environmental compliance officer, so this information is very important, but it's not usually knowledge they come across in their daily life." About the program itself, MacIlwraith agrees with Pratt: "This program is way above and beyond anything I've ever seen. I'm really impressed. The commitment from businesses is the most impressive. They are held accountable and given homework to implement what they've learned. The program lasts two years, so companies need to be committed. And you get to see the cultural change over those years. They're not going to class and then life goes on as usual. Everyone's trying to do the right thing and to do it well."

### DAN OLSON

**Senior Consultant, Ecos Consulting**

Dan Olson, senior consultant at Ecos Consulting, an energy efficiency and sustainability consulting firm, has returned to *UnCommon Sense* after a brief sabbatical. Olson was one of the original volunteers who helped in the initial brainstorming of the program and then was hired by YBP to develop the curriculum and teach the modules. He says "For small and medium-sized businesses, this is a really good format. The value is almost obscene for some of the other programs that are out there."

Not only is the program affordable, he says, "The peer-supported format creates strong connections between businesses that have the same goal of becoming sustainable. Pushing forward an idea can be difficult if you're in a business where no one else is thinking about it. So YBP fostered this means of connection through *UnCommon Sense*." He says that watching businesses stand up in class and present their stories to their peers, the successes and failures, "really gets at the heart that this isn't straightforward or easy, but they're still going forward. And it's helpful for them all to hear how others are experiencing the same thing."

### LAURIE FRANCIS

**Executive Director, Community Health Partners**

Laurie Francis, Executive Director for Community Health Partners in Livingston, MT, is the Lead Instructor for *UnCommon Sense*'s Social and Community Investment module. "This is the social piece of the triple bottom line of sustainability," she says, adding that it's the piece that is often overshadowed by economic and environmental concerns. But she argues that "with 35% of the community living on the margins, you do not have the foundation needed for a sustainable community. You

can't talk about sustainability without talking about social issues." Francis's module is most often cited as being the biggest eye-opener for participants. She makes the connections between an empowered and engaged employee and how that engagement relates directly to their health and well-being: "When employees have decision-making abilities on the job, they experience less stress, have fewer chronic diseases, and higher levels of well-being." Organizations that invest in their employees and communities, she says, are leading the way to a sustainable future, because "when the person serving your food can't afford to live in the community, can't afford to send their kids to the cool camps, they are not engaged, they have little power over their lives, and it's the beginning of a community that's on a downward spiral."

#### DEB FRIEDEL

Director of Sustainability,

Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts

Deb Friedel is Director of Sustainability with Delaware North Companies Parks and Resorts in Bozeman. She oversees the environmental management system and develops interpretive messages and experiential retail programs for Yellowstone General Stores. She is the Lead Instructor for the Responsible Purchasing module, and is a Learning Team Advisor for the Seeker class. She says "I haven't seen any training program like *UnCommon Sense*. The program continues to evolve and advance. I became involved when the first class graduated. Now the participants come in more educated, because more companies have gotten more involved. So the program has evolved in terms of training and the people coming in." She also points to the networking that goes on among the participants as an added benefit: "The first module may be pretty quiet, but by the second one they're sharing resources and having significant conversations. They'll share vendors

and push them to get greener; they'll share info on recycling and resources. The info is always practical and fits in the budget. While businesses may be different and in various locations, they share similar problems. *UnCommon Sense* brings them together to find solutions."

#### ALLISON COLLINS

Manager, MacKenzie River Pizza Company

Allison Collins and Stacey Kersens of Bozeman serve as a good example of Friedel's point. They came to the *UnCommon Sense* Leadership Team as graduates of the pilot class, graduating together in 2007. While both come from very different industries, they shared the same hard work of implementing changes in their organizations and figuring out a lot along the way.

Collins, General Manager of the 19th Street MacKenzie River restaurant, advises the second class that's about to graduate in April. She says she brings "the experience of having been on the other side. I help advise participants how to organize their efforts, where should they spend their energy, where they shouldn't, and what the *UnCommon Sense* program needs from them. The program requires that they collect hard data, to prove that they are saving money, be able to show real results." For Collins, the peer-support offered through the program is its biggest strength: "We're not professors handing down info. We're working with participants to help them solve problems, and holding them accountable so that the work gets done." Collins knows all too well how hard it is to find the time to incorporate changes while still maintaining normal job duties. "It's really challenging, which is why the peer support is so important. Your class members keep you motivated and inspired. And the collaboration between businesses, even competing businesses, is truly a unique experience."

(Continued on page 8)



## Jim Hanna Delivers Keynote Speech: *Stay on the Path! Sustainability in Tough Economic Times*

Jim Hanna joined Starbucks Coffee Company in November 2005 and serves as the corporation's Director of Environmental Impact, lending his expertise to the Starbucks initiatives to minimize its environmental footprint through green building, energy conservation, international procurement, waste minimization and collaboration with partner corporations and NGOs. Prior to Starbucks, he served as Director of Environmental Affairs for Xanterra Parks & Resorts at Yellowstone National Park. In the position, Jim oversaw Xanterra's many progressive environmental initiatives in its operations as the primary concessionaire in the park, including an ISO 14001-certified Environmental Management System. Jim was an original creator of the *UnCommon Sense* program while he worked with Xanterra. A native of Olympia, Washington, Jim earned a BS in Environmental Sciences from Washington State University and is a U.S. Green Building Council LEED-accredited professional.

## UnCommon Sense Program Sponsors 2007 - 2009

- ★ Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- ★ Idaho Small Business Development Center
- ★ New Belgium Brewing Company
- ★ Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center
- ★ Wyoming Energy Office

## Workshop Hosts:

- ★ Mountain Sky Guest Ranch (\$15,000 in-kind)
- ★ Holiday Inn Sunspree
- ★ Teton Mountain Lodge
- ★ The Pollard
- ★ The Murie Center
- ★ Bridge Creek Backcountry Kitchen



*UnCommon Sense* participants get a tour of the energy conserving swamp cooler at the Regis Café in Red Lodge

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## GRAND TARGHEE RESORT

Year-Round Mountain Resort, Alta, Wyoming

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Christina Thomure, Director of Sustainable Operations at Grand Targhee Resort, knew about YBP and found the expertise of the leaders in the *UnCommon Sense* program impressive. She decided to participate because Grand Targhee wanted to formalize its sustainability program: "We were doing some things, but not at the detailed level that *UnCommon Sense* helped us to do. The program gave us a strategic process to follow – A has to happen before B – which ensured we wouldn't miss anything. I knew other ski resorts would be involved, and I knew that the leadership, along with the peer support, would help us become a leader in the region." Her early excitement hasn't waned after two years; she continues to be buoyed by what YBP and its members are doing to transform the Greater Yellowstone region.

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

For Thomure, all the *UnCommon Sense* modules helped build a solid foundation for their sustainability program. To help facilitate a seamless cultural change in the staff, she brought the appropriate manager to participate in the module that related to their department. For instance, for the purchasing module, she brought the food and beverage director; for facilities she brought the facilities maintenance manager. She found this inclusion to be more valuable than anything she could have told them at a staff meeting. By participating, they could learn the theory behind the practices and feel the energy behind making the changes. "It is positive peer pressure," Thomure says with a laugh, "This is happening all over and the program has helped us to realize that and



find ways to go beyond the status quo."

For the waste management module, Grand Targhee focused on reducing waste first, and then on purchasing less or purchasing more items with recycled content. They started with a waste audit, which was "really eye-opening." They then tracked the waste stream via a spreadsheet and stepped up their recycling efforts. The results showed that between 2007 and 2008 they reduced their overall waste by fifteen percent. Forty-two percent of the reduction was attributed to recycling, the rest through smarter purchasing practices that brought less disposable "stuff" up the mountain.

Thomure was so impressed with the transportation presentation done by *UnCommon Sense* facilitator Basil Barna she had him present directly to their green team. As a result, Grand Targhee implemented an employee carpooling program for last year's ski season, paying drivers five Targhee Bucks a trip for three or more people. Each car pool or shuttle rider received one Targhee Buck. While the program has since ended, the cultural change clearly stuck and employees continue to carpool. A carpooling incentive program for patrons gives a \$10.00 discount on day passes on Sundays for drivers with three or more people in the car. Carpool riders get a free coffee or hot cocoa. "The goal with this program," Thomure says, "is to get people carpooling more often. While we can't hand out coupons every day, we hope that people realize how easy it is to carpool and that it's the "in" way to travel these days."

The social justice module helped the resort's management team think more about Targhee employees. The resort conducted a survey on employee satisfaction that showed employees either didn't know about



*The Kavu veggie oil bus distributed information to resort guests.*

or didn't understand the benefits they are offered. This prompted management to create and distribute a list of all the benefits, including fringe benefits such as discounts on gear and food, free rafting and hang gliding trips, to raise awareness. The overall positive response to the list suggests increased employee satisfaction with what Grand Targhee offers its employees, something they wouldn't have gotten credit for if they hadn't asked for feedback.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- ➔ Seamless cultural change across several departments
- ➔ Reduced total waste stream by 15% between 2007 and 2008
- ➔ Achieved 42% recycling diversion rate
- ➔ Implemented employee and patron carpooling and shuttle incentives
- ➔ Added value and greater purpose to employees' roles
- ➔ Reduced use of disposables, saving the resort ~\$12,000/year

## MADISON ARM RESORT

RV Resort and Campground, West Yellowstone, Montana

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Madison Arm Resort owner Jack Clarkson has always been concerned about the environment on a personal level, and through various renovations over the last 30 years has incorporated energy saving elements into the Madison Arm Resort and Campground. But as one of the first business members of the Yellowstone Business Partnership, he saw the merits of what *UnCommon Sense* provides its participants. Timing was the only reason he wasn't in the pilot class, and he brought an enthusiastic spirit to learning about sustainable operations and passing that information on to others.

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

Because the staff consists of only himself, his wife and six seasonal employees, Clarkson put everyone on a newly formed Green Team. He found the most resistance came from his wife, who viewed the impending changes from a traditional bottom line view of the costs of implementation in terms of dollars and employee time. Clarkson convinced her to stick it out for the long-term returns.

The team set a goal of reducing square yards of waste by 10%, which translates into eight dumpster loads fewer than normal. They implemented a recycling program to achieve this and immediately came upon their first major obstacle: finding bear-proof recycling bins. Through some fortuitous relationship

building, not only did Clarkson find a manufacturer, he also got the Forest Service enthused, which prompted them to unearth a grant program administered through Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In the end, Clarkson received \$1,600 worth of bear-proof bins for free; something that got his wife more enthused as well. The next obstacle for the team was their inability to recycle glass, a problem Clarkson solved by buying his own glass crusher. While he hasn't figured out what he's going to do with the crushed glass yet, the Madison Arm Resort was able to get very close to reaching their goal: during the 2008 season, they reduced their solid waste by 8.6% or a total of six dumpster loads.

The team also audited all 11 buildings at the resort, making changes such as putting in CFL light bulbs, installing tankless hot water heaters and becoming diligent about turning equipment and lights off when not in use. The changes resulted in a decrease in the electricity bill by \$400 after the first year and by \$4,000 in the second. While Clarkson points out that the second year included one month of very little business and electricity use due to a dam break, the significant drop in costs cannot be attributed solely to the reduction in business.

More significantly, Clarkson's participation in *UnCommon Sense* has resulted in his ability to influence change within the local business community of West Yellowstone and the state of Montana. As the Chamber



*Bear-proof recycling bins were obtained through a grant program.*

of Commerce President, Clarkson started a program called "Green Up West Yellowstone" to educate the public on the proper disposal of hazardous materials. He also had an *UnCommon Sense* facilitator and a graduate of the program give a presentation to the Chamber, and then held a West Yellowstone Green Conference to educate more on sustainability. As a result, town employees have instituted initiatives within their offices, without any direction from the town council. Grocery stores now carry cloth bags for their customers. Clarkson's efforts haven't gone unnoticed. Clarkson and Heather Burdette, Sustainability Programs Manager for YBP, have been invited to present at the 2008 Montana Governor's Conference on Recreation and Tourism.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- ➔ Reduced solid waste by 8.6% in 2008
- ➔ Reduced electricity costs each year
- ➔ Influenced cultural change in West Yellowstone

## MOONLIGHT BASIN SKI AREA

Ski and Summer Resort, Big Sky, Montana



MOONLIGHT BASIN

### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Bordered by wilderness and conservation easements, Moonlight Basin has focused on conservation and reducing its impact on the environment from its inception. Jonas Grenz, Director of Environmental Stewardship, acknowledges that the ski and golf resort “depends on the climate, and if that climate is changing then we need to do something about it, we need to be leaders.” With environmental scorecards already happening in the ski industry, participation in credible third-party programs like *UnCommon Sense* means Moonlight Basin is able to show that what they’re doing is genuine. The in-depth knowledge offered through *UnCommon Sense*, along with the requirement to implement changes, were the main reasons they chose to participate. Grenz points out, “You can go to a weekend conference and have all the same information thrown at you for about the same price, but when you get home, implementation gets pushed aside.” With Josh Bowden helping with research and data development, the *UnCommon Sense* two-year format and extensive resource tools allowed Moonlight Basin to implement change and see results quickly.

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

With 8,000 acres, a ski resort, golf course, food service operations and two offices, Grenz acknowledges that the sheer scale of the Moonlight Basin project means that implementation will be an on-going process. But reducing its waste stream was the easiest, and changes were made immediately. Fifty new recycling bins were strategically placed throughout the resort. Bowden’s waste audit of the two offices was well received and got the staff thinking about what

exactly could be recycled. The small investments paid off: the Ennis corporate office diverted 69% of its waste, while 79% was diverted at the administration office. The resort also started a composting program for their restaurants by partnering with a local water reclamation facility, which resulted in 5,600 pounds of food waste being turned into compost.

According to Grenz, one of the most beneficial results of the program was the encouragement of developing mutually beneficial relationships with vendors and other entities in the community. Without that encouragement, the composting program wouldn’t have happened, nor would some of the energy efficiency initiatives at the resort. The program forced them to really look at their energy use, which pushed them to seek help from their utility company and to create a comprehensive energy plan. Bowden points out that understanding their bill helped them save \$15,000 almost immediately by more accurately pinpointing their peak demand usage. They also reduced the energy used by the ski lifts by ten percent after adding a harmonic filter. Changing their maintenance schedule reduced their energy use even more during peak demand periods. While acknowledging that buying energy credits to offset their energy use isn’t a perfect answer, they have chosen to offset 100% of the energy used by the lifts until they can find a better way.

To help solve the always troubling transportation problems in the Gallatin Canyon, Moonlight Basin subsidizes a bus system and provides carpooling incentives for employees and patrons. In January of 2007, an estimated 2,482 one-way trips through



A subsidized bus system provides transportation for patrons.

Gallatin Canyon—equal to 34 trips across America—were eliminated through the bus system.

The early paybacks realized with the help of *UnCommon Sense* prompted Grenz and Bowden to do a cost benefit analysis on future retrofitting as well as on hauling their own waste. Both showed how much the resort can save while also reducing its impact on the environment, giving the resort a solid business case for continuing what they’re doing.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Best score in Montana on Environmental Scorecard done by Ski Area Citizens Coalition
- Reduced office waste by 69% to 79% in two offices
- Diverted 5,600 pounds of food waste from the landfill and turned it into compost
- Saved \$15,000 by accurately gauging peak electricity demand
- Reduced ski lift energy use by 10%
- Offset 100% of the energy used to operate the lifts
- Subsidizes bus system and provides carpooling incentives for employees and patrons
- 2008 Montana EcoStar Recipient

## CHICO HOT SPRINGS

Year-Round Mountain Resort Lodging, Pray, Montana



### REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Chico Hot Springs General Manager Colin Davis understands that “we are in an industry that generates a disproportionate amount of waste, and we have an ethical responsibility to try and minimize that waste.” Hotel Manager Machele Jones adds that the decision to join the *UnCommon Sense* program was based on the knowledge that their business relied upon the environment. According to Jones, “We realized that we have a great natural resource – the hot water – and that we really needed to take care of what takes care of us.” They also realized that sustainability is the future of their industry, and they wanted to be ahead of the curve and in a leadership role. While they knew they had a lot of improvements to make, they didn’t know what first steps to take. Already a member business of the Yellowstone Business Partnership, they saw the advertisement for the second class and believed *UnCommon Sense* would give them the tools to make progress.

### BENEFITS RECEIVED

While that initial decision was environmentally based, Jones quickly learned that the environment is only one part of a triple bottom line focus. Finding out about the social and economic aspects of sustainability helped them make positive changes throughout the organization.

With 32 buildings on 15 different electric meters and 16 propane tanks, reducing and tracking electric consumption at the resort is a long-term process. They decided to focus on select buildings. They switched to CFL light bulbs in all guest rooms and lodges, replaced 80% of the windows in the main lodge, added radiant floor heat in the main lodge lobby and now partially heat three buildings with the spring water that is the resort’s main draw. As a result of these and other changes, they’ve seen a definite decrease in consumption in the buildings they focused on, while seeing an increase in the buildings they didn’t, largely due to age and weatherization issues. Still, they decreased consumption overall by 1.7 kilowatt hours, which gives them a clear business case to continue the process because of the economic and environmental benefits.

Prior to *UnCommon Sense*, Chico had erratic recycling practices, but they now recycle all cardboard, paper, glass and aluminum through the county and a recycling cooperative. Purchasing decisions have also changed significantly as well. Instead of focusing on price, the environment is considered. Guest amenities come in either unbleached cardboard packaging or corn starch-based bottles. The Poolside Grille now uses eco-friendly cups, bamboo containers and biodegradable potato forks instead of plastic.

One of Chico’s success stories actually shows how the social, environmental and economic benefits of



An organic greenhouse supplies much of the resort’s food.

sustainability can work in unison. An employee survey showed that satisfaction with management was already high, but a new program to give employees \$25 Chico Bucks for any money-saving ideas resulted in a win-win situation. A housekeeping staff member pointed out that the dirty laundry was going out of the buildings in plastic bags, getting only one use out of each bag. By purchasing canvas bags, they could get numerous uses out of one bag. By engaging their employees and rewarding them, Chico has simultaneously taken their investment in their employees to a new level, reduced their environmental impact, and increased their bottom line.

### BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

- Reduced overall electric consumption by 1.7 kilowatt hours
- Increased recyclables 100%
- Increased eco-friendly purchasing
- Increased employee engagement and incentives
- Increased use of on-site renewable energy resources

## JOIN THE NEXT CLASS OF *UNCOMMON SENSE!*

### WORKSHOP I: Grand Targhee Resort April 2-4, 2009

Contact Heather Burdette:  
hburdette@yellowstonebusiness.org, (406) 600-6617  
or go to [www.yellowstonebusiness.org](http://www.yellowstonebusiness.org)

The *UnCommon Sense* program equips businesses to make desired changes in their operations and empowers them to become sustainability leaders in their communities and industry sectors.

To graduate from *UnCommon Sense*, each business is required to complete assignments from each module and prepare a final presentation and written report that summarizes their actions and operational improvements. Businesses achieve points for completing these action items, and a minimum number of points are required to graduate. Examples of the action items include conducting waste stream audits and measuring waste stream, baseline energy and water audits and use tracking, calculating CAFÉ measure and conducting a greenhouse gas inventory.

Businesses are required to document and quantify all action and operational improvements made. Upon completing the course, they compile all documentation and action items and present to the group. This information comes in many forms: spreadsheets and tracking matrices, graphs, work plans, surveys, communications strategies, mission/vision statements, resource lists, job descriptions, photographs, policies, marketing materials. The intent of this reporting is to actually quantify what a business was able to achieve over the two-year period.

Each graduating class is profiled in an *UnCommon Sense* annual report highlighting their accomplishments and positive changes over the two-year course. This report will detail each business' individual accomplishment and how the participants' collective efforts are improving the region's economy, communities and environment.



### PROGRAM FEES YBP MEMBERS \$1,200 Two-Year Program Participant Fee

Participant fees cover all training materials for four workshop sessions for up to two persons per business. Monthly conference calls and ongoing support from the program coordinator and learning team advisors are also covered in part by the program registration fee. Lodging, meals and travel costs are the participants' responsibility.



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## Leadership Team (continued from page 5)

### STACEY KERSENS

**Manager, Grounds and Garden Services Division,  
Blanchford Landscape Contractors**

Kersens, Manager of the Grounds and Garden Services Division for Blanchford Landscape Contractors, advises the third class, which graduates in 2010. She says, "*UnCommon Sense* helped so much with getting our company on the right track, and I know the challenges that come with doing this work, trying to make it work, trying to make a profit. As an advisor, I knew I could help others get through the issues we had to get through." For instance, Blanchford went through the process of changing their waste management, which meant creating a manual for the staff and measuring their waste stream. The landscaping company did a lot of work that paid off; they even found a way to make money off their scrap metal. "Processes are so critical to making the company work," Kersens says, "Participants can come to *UnCommon Sense* knowing that the Leadership Team understands the challenges facing small companies trying to make these changes."

### BASIL BARNA

**Wilderness Systems and Technologies**

Idaho Falls residents Basil Barna and Arthur Kull have been with the *UnCommon Sense* program since its inception. They have been part of learning modules for all three classes and have found that the dynamic, peer-supported forum of the program is what makes *UnCommon Sense* stand out from other training programs covering the same material.

Basil Barna spent 25 years at the Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory before retiring early to start his own business. At the Laboratory, Barna worked on transportation efficiencies and systems infrastructure, planting the seeds for biofuels in the region and supporting the greening efforts

in Yellowstone National Park. He says, "The real value of the *UnCommon Sense* approach is getting different businesses together and making them part of the learning process. There is not a pat answer for how you do any of this. So you start by presenting a basic set of information, but when you get together and talk, you really get more out of it."

Barna points to a class exercise where they asked a business to bring up their toughest problem for the class to brainstorm solutions. Bridger Bowl ski area in the Gallatin Valley of Montana has had to turn away patrons on big snow days due to a full parking lot. The class came up with a carpooling incentive. "I wouldn't have thought up this solution by myself," Barna says, pointing out that a traditional training program typically doesn't offer business solutions to its participants.

### ARTHUR KULL

**Kull Food Technologies**

Dr. Arthur Kull, owner of Kull Food Technologies, a company specializing in developing and marketing innovative products from by-products of the food industry, agrees: "*UnCommon Sense* is unique because it doesn't offer all the information in one week in some remote location like most other training programs. It requires participants to actually implement the information and report back to their peers in the class. Over the two years, the participants have the opportunity to network and exchange information about how they executed the various actions. It's not a one-way teaching exercise, but dynamic and fluid."

Prior to starting his own business, Kull spent 24 years in corporate management working in operations and research and development. His experience with waste water efficiencies, bio-remediation, and supply chain issues at Nestle, S.A. and Basic American Foods brings a high level of expertise to regional businesses.