

## Promoting social entrepreneurship for a 'sexier' and more sustainable world

Posted by CHRYSTAL TACKER on Sat, Mar 2, 2013 at 6:01 AM



- Top Left to Right: Yolanda Levell-Williams, Nina Stokes, Margret Rush, Ginger Park, Dr. Kevin Main, Bottom Left to Right: Sharon Joy Kleitsch, David Warner, Nerissa Lamison, Linda Sechrist, Councilwoman Lisa J. Montelione.

The moderator for one particular panel, Sharon Joy Kleitsch, believes that "we are all part of nature, we are all one, and all connected" and Linda Sechrist, the senior staff writer for *Natural Awakening* magazine and founder of [ItsAllAboutWe.com](http://ItsAllAboutWe.com) suggests that "environmentalism is not just for tree-huggers" and non-profit organizations.

Beyond sustainability conference took place at the HCC Ybor campus on February 28th and March 1st. **HCC Sustainability** aims to create and maintain harmonious ways for humans and nature to productively live together, as noted by "One College, One Community, One Planet."

At 9am, Panel E gathered to discuss the Tampa Bay Regional Business Plan and Sustainable Opportunities. The panel included Dr. Kevin Main, Ginger Park, Margret Rush, Nina Stokes, and Yolanda Levell-Williams and was moderated by Sudeep Vyapari.

At 10am, Panel F gathered to discuss the Role of Media in Promoting Social Entrepreneurship. The panel included Councilwoman Lisa J.

Montelione, Linda Sechrist, Nerissa Lamison, David Warner, and Sharon Joy Kleitsch and was also moderated by Sharon Joy Kleitsch.

Both panels agreed that the sustainable opportunities and social entrepreneurship are frequently being promoted and pitched incorrectly. Margret Rush, the Sustainability Coordinator of the Environmental Protection Commission suggests that improving branding will be a step in the right direction. The director of Technical Programs at Hillsborough Community College, Ginger Park agreed with the rest of the panel that it is important to “bring together different entities and try to brand a region.”

Park also mentioned the “need to think about how to frame our approach. The social piece is viewed as non-for-profit and we need to create a different language around these [environmental and sustainability] agencies to promote them.”

Many of the panel members agreed that the media can play a huge role in promoting sustainability programs and social entrepreneurship. Former TV anchor, reporter, and current Director of Radio and Television Department at Hillsborough Community College, Nerissa Lamison argues that “media is not in the business of promoting, we are just giving out information.”

Lamison and David Warner, the editor of *Creative Loafing*, acknowledge that they have about 90 seconds to catch the audience’s attention on TV as well as in print. Warner mentions that breweries are making progress in sustainability. “They are making a difference and they are still sexy and fun to read about” as seen in the current print issue of *Creative Loafing*.

The panel members gave a collaborative description of social entrepreneurship, which defined it as a person or group of people that take their ideas and start an organization or company to promote, to create, and to maintain eco-friendly developments regardless of

monetary profits. Sechrist suggested that “social entrepreneurship is trying to bring about change even if it is just a one woman or one man band.”

Lamison claims that the media does not know much if anything about social entrepreneurship, but “they can, there is hope. We just need to find better ways to pitch it. The media requires an element of human interest to hook them like water cooler stories.”

The Program Manager for Florida Energy Systems Consortium (FESC) at Hillsborough Community College, Nina Stokes believes that “raising awareness is the key” and that the main “social problem is changing people’s behaviors about energy efficiency.”

Yolanda Levell-Williams, the Executive Director for Economic Development ICCE at Hillsborough Community College, points out that the business plan is strategic; it “helps layout the resources and share them.” Many of the other panel members agreed that the sharing of resources is essential for making good decisions.

Levell-Williams also mentions that “businesses are aiming to increase sustainability and green jobs. About 20 percent of the previously under employed or unemployed individuals who become certified to work in green jobs open their own businesses.”

Tampa City Councilwoman Lisa J Montelione also believes that green jobs are important for Florida’s economy because “people want to live in eco-friendly and green cities.” The panel agrees that promoting awareness and education about eco-friendly opportunities will boost the economy.