

Turning the World with David Korten

By Rachel Olivieri

Published in the Willits News – November 17, 2006

How do you get more than two hundred Willits area citizens to come out on a blustery, rainy night and gather for over two hours at the Willits Community Center? You sponsor a speaker event on a timely, controversial subject like our uncertain future and what we might do about it. This past Monday, Author/Lecturer David Korten—whose latest book is titled *The Great Turning: Empire to Earth Community*—presented his world view of Empire vs. Community, metaphorically depicted as the Chalice and the Blade. The event was sponsored by Willits Economic Localization.

In David's tale of Empire—a five-thousand-year-old unfolding—fear, war, domination, competition, control, greed, race fragmentation, sex discrimination, class inequality, excessive force, slavery, revengeful justice, resource over-consumption and unequal distribution of wealth, are the underlying dynamics that dictate a rule-or-be-ruled, kill-or-be-killed world order.

In the world of Empire, the energy of the many is converted into the wealth of the few and real wealth resources are mined unsustainably. Gaps between rich and poor widen; health care and education become an issue of class; poverty is accepted or ignored; diversity in news coverage narrows; social programs are under-funded; military expenditures are over-funded; and the environment is sacrificed for the short term gain of the few at the expense of future generations. Democracy becomes a commodity for those who can afford its high cost of selective freedom. In David's view of Empire, the hungry monkey never sates its uncontrolled appetite. Caught in its self-consuming dilemma, it can only run its course, over-consume itself, and then collapse into what David calls The Great Unraveling. A consequence he hopes to avoid.

On the positive side of pending peak oil, climate change, water and food shortages, and the inevitable fall of Empire, David envisions a metamorphosis from the domination model to a cooperative one. He believes this is a choice we will have to make in our lifetime, or face the consequences of having it made for us. The cooperative choice is Earth Community. In every aspect, it is the complete opposite of Empire. Earth Community nourishes, empowers, feeds, educates, develops, shares, restores, frees, respects, and provides equality, health and wellness to a global society without the use of violence.

Many will doubt that a world without war, poverty and inequality is possible. That our current direction is not sustainable is far less doubted these days, yet, where do we go from here and how do we get there? How do we bridge a world that spends more on war machines and nuclear weapons than it spends on developing, educating, and nurturing its global communities within the global environment? David believes that to change our society, it is necessary to change the story we live by. He suggests that the model of social and economic sustainability needs as many voices and story tellers as possible.

David believes his Earth Community vision is both realistic and achievable. He cites grassroots community efforts such as Willits Economic Localization (WELL) and Renewable Energy Development Institute (REDI) as examples of how the future Earth Community will be built. David believes that the power of story and the nature of the stories told, will determine what is possible and what is not. Earth Community will have its birth in the visions and efforts of the new storytellers, who will bring into being what formerly seemed impossible.