

First Fridays Club

June 6, 2009

Hillview Greenhouse and Life Center

- Contact Information
 - www.hillviewgreenhouse.org, or call Julie Klemond, executive director at 769-2671
- Presenters: Tom Klemond, MD, Board of Directors and Matt Fisher, Director of Operations
- History
 - Greenhouse was built in 1911 by the Jones family. It grew and sold produce locally. It was the first building in the neighborhood and the family lived next door.
 - In the 1920's - 1940's, with the advancement of shipping, the greenhouse started selling flowers and plants.
 - In the late 1980's the greenhouse was having trouble because of old technology and in 1987 was sold to Joel and Jean Olson.
 - Greenhouse thrived for a number of years but then hit obstacles when large chain stores began selling plants and a hail storm destroyed much of the greenhouse.
 - Greenhouse started growing organic produce in 2004-2005 but still had financial difficulties.
 - Dr. Tom Klemond works with geriatric patients who have a lot of free time but not a lot of worthwhile activities and was growing frustrated at not being able assist them more. He talked to Tom Thibodeau from A Place of Grace and was inspired by community groups.
 - Through many discussions, a social entrepreneurship opportunity occurred. The plan was that the greenhouse would use volunteer power and grow produce to pay for the expenses.
 - The business plan was that older volunteers could come to work in the greenhouse, form friendships, and support each other while the organic produce was sold to local stores and restaurants.
 - Julie Klemond volunteers 35 hours per week to run the organization and Sherri, a volunteer naturalist is volunteering to develop sustainable agriculture at the greenhouse.

- Currently, the greenhouse generates two thirds of what is needed to cover the overhead costs and needs to raise an additional \$50,000-\$60,000 per year to cover those costs.
- To assist in reducing greenhouse costs (the heating costs can be more than \$5,000 per month in the winter), Matt Fisher was hired as Director of Operations. Matt is working on alternative energy and plans on using a diverse energy plan and replacing the natural gas boilers (5 500,000 BTU boilers and other supplemental sources) with alternative sources such as vegetable oil, solar, geothermal, wind, etc.
- Many volunteers offer support, time, and expertise. The greenhouse has had 8,000 volunteer hours since it started as a volunteer agency in 2008. It now has its 501 (c) 3 status and partners with Causeway (which is no longer affiliated with Bethany).
- It is an informal social support for people who are older and is looking at partnering with an agency to provide adult day treatment.
- The produce is sold at the La Crosse and Viroqua Coops, Quillin's, Festival, and area restaurants.
- People may volunteer on weekday mornings (volunteer orientation every Tuesday at 10), Saturdays from 8-12, or Monday evenings from 5:00 - 7:30.
- A plant sale is held every spring.
- Project Revamp is happening on June 20 from 1-3 at the Greenhouse. It is a fashion show that takes out of date clothing and recycles it into modern outfits. Tickets are \$10 and outfits will be sold after the show. Tickets are available at Vintage Vogue, The Second Showing, and The Elite Repeat.