

Phoenix Business Journal - October 6, 2008

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PHOENIX Business Journal

Friday, October 3, 2008

Couple looks to build a green foundation

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Patrick O'Grady](#) Phoenix Business Journal

Whether it's music, media or helping the less fortunate, George Brooks is looking to make the business case for sustainability.

"We see green as a tool to help accomplish tasks," he said.

To get the word out, Brooks is tackling the topic in several ways. This month, he's launching a bimonthly electronic magazine called **Southwest Green**. He also has been a sponsor of the Green Jazz series at the **Herberger Theater** and is working on "green survival kits" designed to help low-income households cut their energy needs.

It's all part of his strategy to build sustainability awareness and develop an economic foundation that isn't based so much on construction and cars.

The magazine's first issue will be free, but the goal is to gain subscriptions. Brooks and his wife, Angela, are looking to offer features in a variety of areas for widespread appeal.

The couple has experience with electronic magazines: They created The Ebony Cactus, an online publication that showcases high-end black-owned businesses in Arizona, Nevada and Southern California; and Nxt Horizon, billed as "the voice of minority business." They plan to use the writers they have built relationships with through the years to populate the electronic pages of this new endeavor.

The first goal is to define "green," Brooks said.

"People understand it's not a fringe thing, but they don't know what it means," he said. "If you ask 10 different people, you'll probably get 20 different answers."

Toward that end, Brooks has teamed with the Herberger and Arizona State University's online administration to put on the Green Jazz series, with an event each month featuring a different artist. The series is an extension of one begun last year, but the group will discuss sustainability instead of music before each concert, Brooks said.

Mernoy Harrison, vice president and executive vice provost of ASU and its online programs, said the strategy is a natural progression for the university.

"Sustainability is such a hot topic, and ASU is a leader in sustainability," he said.

Brooks' magazine is a sponsor of the jazz series. ASU, in turn, is working with the magazine on its green survival kit, which features 20 compact fluorescent light bulbs, two low-flow shower heads, a tire gauge and a kitchen thermometer.

With those items, Brooks said an average-size house could save \$300 to \$500 a year on gas and electricity bills. The key is to get the items into the hands of the people who need them, but might not be able to pay \$2 for one light bulb.

"The people that need them the most can't afford them," he said.

Brooks argues it is the little things that can save the most money. He and his wife have whittled



Jim Poulin/Phoenix Business Journal

George and Angela Brooks, who created "green survival kits" for low-income households, now are launching an online magazine focusing on sustainability.

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about \$1,000 a year off their energy bills. He said if 100,000 homes in the Valley did the same thing, \$100 million could be plunged back into the economy.

“All of this money doesn’t stay in your pocket,” he said.

The idea of promoting sustainable endeavors in multiple outreaches is a good philosophy, Harrison said. Recently, the university began to look at its online offerings as a sustainable education effort because of the travel it saves.

The green survival kit also is drawing corporate sponsorship interest, and Brooks said individuals are stepping up to pay for the efforts for multiple households, with each kit costing between \$65 and \$100.

The key is to educate enough people about sustainability to breed more efforts, Brooks said.

One of his next projects will be to look at historical sustainability. Focusing on what people used to do, such as drying their laundry on a clothesline, could have green applications today.

“It connects people with what green actually is,” Brooks said. “It’s something we’ve always done. We’ve just got a lot fancy names for it now.”

Get Connected

Southwest Green: www.sw-green.com

Green Jazz Series: www.herbergertheater.org

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