

Earth Club helps local entrepreneur

Elizabeth Strick
Features Editor

Northview's Earth Club recently invited local entrepreneur Lawrence J. Ohlman to speak about his company, EcoLogic Products LLC.

"I have long considered myself to be an eco-conscious person and also have a passion for business. Recently I figured, 'Why not do both?', 'Why not create a business that can make a difference and be successful?'" said Ohlman.

It was this type of thinking that allowed Ohlman to form his company, which is currently developing products made from earth friendly plastics. The plastics are made from natural plant fibers and starches.

Through research, Ohlman discovered that businesses in Europe had the same ideas as he did and were successful. He was able to find an overseas company, which specialized in this technology and built a partnership with them.

In 2007, Ohlman traveled to Hong Kong to meet with manufacturers and develop a manufacturing process. Ohlman has created prototypes of biodegradable flowerpots and tableware using earth friendly plastics. He also hopes to soon create a biodegradable toothbrush.

Ohlman anticipates his products will hit store shelves during the third quarter of 2008.

"Today there are over 4,000 Independent Natural Food Merchandisers around the country, not to mention retailers such as Bed, Bath & Beyond, The Whole Foods Market, Target and Ikea which are actively pursuing a more eco-minded product line," said Ohlman.

Ohlman aims to make EcoLogic's products "environmentally beneficial as well as affordable". A tableware set may sell for \$25-\$29 dollars depending on the retailer.

Ohlman also wants to use his company to create awareness about the world's dependence on petroleum-based products and their negative effect on the environment.

"I hope that EcoLogic will help to educate and inspire consumers on the importance of caring for the environment. We've all got to do our part in minimizing our environmental impact," said Ohlman.

A portion of EcoLogic's revenues will be used to fund earth based non-profit organizations through the 1% For the Planet Program. 1% For the Planet is a program that has "inspired members of the business community to contribute 1% of sales to environmental groups around the world. In return, this growing alliance of companies is given the opportunity not only to see their self-worth rise, but their net worth climb as well," he said.

With over 1500 non-profit organizations to choose from, Ohlman asked the Earth Club for help. He gave them a "homework" assignment of picking which organization EcoLogic will contribute to for its first year.

Earth Club decided to keep the money local and picked the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA). It "was formed in 1979 and is a membership-based, grass roots organization, dedicated to promoting and supporting sustainable, ecological, and healthful food systems."