

Building Community Resilience

Transition Charlottesville-Albemarle

Q: Are you guys “doomsday preppers”?

A: Well, sort of. A lot of people out there are preparing for a rainy day or decade. With the economy looking unreliable at best, the environment continuing to degrade, and the government not doing much to fix anything... folks all over the place are working on their own little lifeboats. But scattered little lifeboats won't be the answer if & when that big storm comes. We need a Noah-style solution, with room for all the animals. (And how about all the people while we're at it?)

We need homegrown systems of food, water, transportation, housing, clothing, and culture that can outlast our crumbling, oil-dependent infrastructure. We need to face global challenges with local solutions that make the most of our existing assets and skills. We need a vibrant local economy that values everyone's contributions. In short, we need community resilience.

Well, here's the good news: there's already a global movement of communities who are prepping their cities, towns & neighborhoods to thrive no matter what the future brings. My dear friends and neighbors, welcome to Transition Town.

Q: How did the Transition Movement get started?

A: The Transition Movement started in 2005 with a permaculture educator named Rob Hopkins and his students in Kinsale, Ireland. They had just watched “The End of Suburbia” and were struck with a bad case of what he calls “post-petroleum stress disorder.” It's a natural reaction when you realize that fossil fuels gave us virtually all the modern conveniences of our 21st-century lifestyle - and the world's reserves of fossil fuels are just plain running out. And as we race to exploit the remaining resources, we risk permanent harm to the planet. Yikes!!

After the initial panic, Rob Hopkins and his students decided to cure their distress with positive action. After all, “worrying is like praying for what you don't want!” So they wrote out a plan for exactly how their town could thrive without relying on fossil fuels, touching on everything from food and energy to youth and community. The document, called an Energy Descent Action Plan, set out a vision for a powered-down, resilient, re-localized future - with a series of practical steps for how to get from here to there.



Now for the best part: the town council adopted their plan. Word spread, and as other communities took up similar work, the Transition Movement was born.

Q: How did the group get started in Charlottesville?

A: Our local group started in early 2011 when the founders of Transition Staunton-Augusta came to Charlottesville and said “hint, hint, don't you think a city as awesome as Charlottesville should be doing something too?” We decided that the answer was “Yes. Yes we do.” We've meeting monthly since then, getting to know each other, sharing ideas, and laying the foundations for the work ahead.

Q: What have you all been up to lately? What can we expect to see from you in the months ahead?

A: Last month, we hosted a two-day workshop called “Training for Transition.” While we practiced many skills, the majority of the weekend focused on one simple message: the key to building a movement that supports community resilience is building relationships.

So we're working to deepen our relationships - among our core group and with our local allies & neighbors. Our next task is to start community conversations and raise awareness about the potential effects of peak oil, climate change, and the current economic crisis. We'll screen films, organize solutions-oriented panel discussions, host work parties to transform each other's yards, and have a lot of hands-on fun with “reskilling” - reclaiming forgotten arts from natural building to baking from scratch.

Where things go from there is up to you. Transition's purpose is to act as a catalyst, to connect and amplify good ideas. The solutions that emerge, Charlottesville's blueprint for a more resilient future, will be a community-wide effort. It's going to take all of us to row this boat.

**Join us 4th Mondays of the month, McIntire Room of the Central Library, 6:30pm to find out more!
www.transitionville.org**