



Small Business Spotlight

The red rocks are going green

By Jessica MacLean for the City of Sedona



SEDONA, Ariz. – Retiring from her professional career as a sustainability consultant, Sedona resident Darcy Hitchcock formed **Sustainability Alliance** in 2014. Later joining forces with Lisa Voss, who earned her Master of Business Administration degree in Sustainable Solutions from Presidio Graduate School, the duo now volunteers pro bono to help guide the region.

Nonprofit members

Hitchcock and Voss run Sustainability Alliance, a collaborative coalition of local and regional nonprofit members that work together to drive Sedona and the Verde Valley toward sustainability. Members include Friends of the Verde River, Gardens for Humanity, Keep Sedona Beautiful, Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance, Oak Creek Watershed Council, Healthy World Sedona, and Sedona Recycles.

“There were some great nonprofits doing their own thing, working on issues like water, waste, food, hunger, and climate change. But it’s all connected,” says Hitchcock. “We now have 10 different nonprofit members, representing a wide range of issues.”

Together with their nonprofit members, Sustainability Alliance created a Sustainable Business Certification for organizations and a Zero Waste program for local events. They provide technical advice for going green along the way.

Business Certification

Certified businesses, organizations, municipalities, and schools go the extra mile for the environment, the community, and for their employees. Based primarily in Sedona and the Verde Valley, many organizations

that complete the short online survey accessible at sustainabilityallianceaz.org/business qualify for a Sustainable Business Certification.

“We currently have about 75 businesses certified,” says Voss. “A lot of businesses can see a path going forward by using the certification as a roadmap for the future.”

Four certification levels encourage organizations to make additional changes that further reduce their carbon footprint. In the first half of 2019, Snap Fitness and Blue Meets Greens in Sedona both made improvements and qualified for a higher certification level.

“Part of the certification is asking about

Sustainable Entrepreneur Award

Sedona and Verde Valley entrepreneurs who have created and implemented a method to reduce waste can win up to \$1500 at an upcoming event. As part of Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization’s (VVREO) Moonshot AZ Pioneer Pitch competition in March 2020, Sustainability Alliance is sponsoring an additional Sustainable Entrepreneur Award for waste minimization.

Demonstration projects, new revenue streams, and new services or infrastructure that help the region reduce, reuse, and recycle on a significant scale are eligible to win. Applicants must participate in the Shark Tank-reminiscent VVREO Moonshot

to countless paper cups with plastic film that prevents recycling and practically halts biodegradation. Surprisingly, the solution was a number five plastic cup, accepted by Sedona Recycles.

“When Sedona was having its election last year for the council, we held a candidate forum on sustainability at the Mary D. Fisher Theatre. It was packed,” Hitchcock recounts. “They donated the space for that, which was great.”

Sustainable tourism initiative

Travelers will always be making their way through Sedona, so Hitchcock says legitimizing Sedona as an environmentally responsible destination may mean the majority of visitors, “actually do leave no trace, do recycle when they’re here, and do protect the beauty that’s here. The community can’t just say we’re sustainable; we act as a third part certifier.”

City of Sedona

“We conducted an assessment for the city of Sedona and helped them create a sustainability plan,” says Hitchcock. The city has now earned their own certification.

Sedona Sustainability Coordinator McKenzie Jones says after receiving the city’s sustainability certification, “we conducted extensive energy and water conservation upgrades of city facilities through a partnership with Midstate Energy. As a result, in July 2019 we used 19 percent less electricity and 16 percent less water compared to July 2018.”

“I consider the city of Sedona one of our partners,” says Lisa Voss. “I saw Molly Spangler’s economic development presentation at the Citizens Academy when I got to town. Molly’s the one who pointed me to Darcy. She really sees the whole picture, the whole dynamic of this place and she’s very proactive with introductions.”

The Sedona Economic Development Department helps businesses create and keep jobs and opportunities in our community. For information on revolving loans, business education, and other business support resources, contact Director Molly Spangler at mspangler@sedonaaz.gov.



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your building and energy efficiency,” says Voss. “One of the businesses we assessed did three or four other things to improve energy efficiency several weeks after they got certified. It gets people thinking and learning.”

According to Hitchcock, pursuing sustainability may reduce long-term business risk, attract and maintain talent, and save money in the long run. Businesses can get ahead of competition and future regulations.

“And, as businesses become healthier, they’re in a better position to grow and provide stable income for workers. We think of sustainability as economic development,” says Voss.

Pioneer Pitch process to ensure financial viability. Businesses can visit vvreo.com to learn more about the pitch process and sustainabilityallianceaz.org/sustainable-entrepreneur-award for award criteria.

Events

Further keeping trash from landfills, Sustainability Alliance and its nonprofit members developed a Zero Waste program for local events. They provide resources and tips that can reduce event waste to nothing.

Sustainability Alliance helped Sedona VegFest achieve Zero Waste. And with their advice, RunSedona found a better alternative