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GLOBAL, GOVERNMENT, AND NONPROFIT LEADERS GATHER AT THE FIRST ANNUAL REGIONAL CONVENING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RCSD)



The 2018 Regional Convening for Sustainable Development (photos by Julien Jarry)

top row left to right: Grace Farms; Kanni Wignaraja, Director, UN Development Operations Coordination Office; audience during the morning session
bottom row left to right: Panel discussion moderated by Joe DeLong, Executive Director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, featuring Fairfield First Selectman Mike Tetreau, Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi, and Westport First Selectman Jim Marpe; Josh Cohen, Founder of The Junkluggers (speaking) and David Gable, President and CEO of Hocon Gas; afternoon breakout session

New Canaan, Conn., Feb. 9, 2018 – Media Advisory

Grace Farms Foundation and Live Green Connecticut welcomed global, government, and nonprofit leaders to Grace Farms on February 7 to participate in a comprehensive regional convening on sustainable development. As snow fell around the glass walls of Grace Farms’ Sanctuary, speakers and panelists shared insights, projects, goals and new ideas, with an eye toward future progress through collaborations with one another. The day was organized in support of the global effort of the U.N.’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of Sustainable Development, Columbia University; Kanni Wignaraja, Director, UN Development Operations Coordination Office; Catherine Smith, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development; and Jessica Scott, Education Manager, Sustainable Development Solutions Network brought visionary overviews and wisdom from projects accomplished and lessons learned. “Sustainable development is a win-win,” Kanni Wignaraja emphasized. “There are serious economic and social gains to be made...These are societies that don’t leave anyone behind.”

Welcoming fellow Connecticut leaders to his hometown, New Canaan First Selectman Kevin Moynihan stressed the importance of considering sustainability issues as part of the budgeting and early planning process in municipalities. It is a view that was enthusiastically embraced in a panel moderated by Joe DeLong, Executive Director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, that included Fairfield First Selectman Mike Tetreau, Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi, and Westport First Selectman Jim Marpe, all of whom have communities that have been proactive in the area of sustainability.

Catherine Smith, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, highlighted Connecticut's efforts to revitalize and reuse old mills and factories in a changing world, and gave a detailed overview of state sustainability efforts in a wide range of sectors, including transportation and business. Businesses, in fact, have been crucial to sustainability efforts on a national and local level. Tracy Van Holt, Director of Academic Research, Center for Sustainable Business at NYU's Stern School of Business, introduced a panel that included executives from Encon, Quantum Biopower, Hocon Gas, and The Junkluggers. Josh Cohen, founder of The Junkluggers, who started his business as a college student—carting away junk for people in his mother's Dodge Durango—gave a glimpse into the significant amount of unwanted material and furniture that can be recycled and repurposed.

Afternoon break-out sessions on individual projects brought participants together to connect with each other. "The goal is always to inspire," said Daphne Dixon of Live Green Connecticut. "It was an eye-opening day," said Adam Thatcher of Grace Farms Foundation. "These are important conversations to have and we hope to have helped galvanize a community of engaged individuals, organizations, and policy makers in Connecticut and Westchester. As Kanni Wignaraja emphasized, 'there is tremendous strength in local efforts.'"

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About Grace Farms Foundation

Grace Farms Foundation was established in 2009 as a private operating foundation with 501c3 status in New Canaan, Connecticut. The Foundation supports initiatives in the areas of nature, arts, justice, community, and faith, and encourages participation on a local, national, and global level. Grace Farms Foundation carries out its work principally through the publicly available facilities and integrated programs of Grace Farms, an 80-acre property owned and operated by the Foundation, where individuals and not-for-profit organizations can come together to collaborate for good.

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