

Making Ripples

Earning Money from Sustainable Living

by Amanda Bancroft

Do you recycle? Good. Do you ride a bike when possible? Great. But have you considered earning money from your good habits? For my friend Ashley Trull, living a sustainable lifestyle isn't just something she does in her spare time – it's her job. Like many people who have earned money through organic farming, compost sales, and other green ventures both large and small, Ashley found a way to make her hobby into a business.

Ashley has a passion for bicycling. She participated in the Summer of Solutions program through the national non-profit Grand Aspirations, visiting Fayetteville in 2010 during the organization's August Gathering and speaking at the Fayetteville Public Library. Ashley went on to participate in several long-distance bicycle rides for good causes, including a trip with Ciclovida Brazil to help landless farmers save natural seeds, Free Wheel Women (Feminists Cycling for Social Justice) and her current adventure with Bikes Across Borders from Texas to Mexico.

She is originally from Massachusetts and is now living in Providence, Rhode Island, where she is launching a cooperative pedicab business, Sol Chariots, with her sister, Ally. She spent over a year working as an employee of a pedicab business before beginning her cooperative, which is employee-owned. When Ally found used pedicabs for sale in New York, the two sisters pooled their money and bought them.

Sol Chariots is one of the few pedicab businesses run by women, and female employees are scarce in this field. "I've been looking at pedicab companies across the country, and I couldn't find a single pedicab company that was owned by a woman," said Ashley, who emphasized that women *can* do this job. Full of smiles, she said in her online video that she likes her job, and it makes her healthy and happy.

After a 2012 test run, Sol Chariots is seeking to raise \$5,000 in investments to officially launch this spring, and they've already raised almost \$1,500, pedaling their way to success as green entrepreneurs.

If a pedicab business sounds too daunting, why not try something different? Fayetteville's trail system is attractive, so why not organize bicycling tours of Fayetteville, stopping at various places along the trail and having lunch at a trailside restaurant? Yes, I want you to steal my ideas! Take 'em and run – er, I mean cycle – with 'em!

And if bicycling isn't your thing, there are countless other ideas for earning money in ways that help the planet and promote your health. It doesn't matter how small your business idea may be – if you can create any amount of income for yourself in a way that supports the planet, those are dollars which aren't being generated from the planet's destruction. For more information about

how to support Sol Chariots and to watch these cute lime-colored pedicabs in an online video, check out Ripples' blog!

Ripples is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org