No conflict

An organization at Rutgers Business School is out to show that conservation goals do not have to come at the expense of business growth.

Gary Cohen, a 35-year veteran of medi- cal technology company Becton Dickin- son & Co., founded the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation to pro mote the idea that sustainability does not conflict with economic growth.

“Corporate social innovation inte grates a company’s full range of capa bilities and assets within innovative business models to achieve positive societal impact while advancing the success and sustainability of society,” Cohen said. “You will find yourself with a purpose-driven life.”

Jeana Wirtenberg, the institute’s asso ciate director, explained at a sus tainability conference held March 1 at Rutgers Business School in Newark that the goal is to help the whole world win.

The sustainable development goals are about creating a better future for every one on the planet.

“Unlike the goals that preceded them, those were focused on developing coun tries,” Cohen said. “There are chal lenges. These problems are too big for any one sector of society to solve on its own. Any company in any industry can contribute to the global development goals.”

“In order not to leave anyone behind, we want to achieve them by the year 2030,” Wirtenberg said. “Today we are focusing on fostering global develop ment goals through community de velopment in Newark. You are the pion eers locally and internationally. This is all about collaboration across sectors.”

“This is a preview of what the Rutgers Institute is going to do,” Cohen said. “Human rights work is not at odds with businesses.”

A vast problem

Rutgers University students Katie Parrish and Krishna Gotur are part of the Rutgers Sustainability Coalition and helped organize the sustainability con ference. Parrish is studying microbiol ogy in New Brunswick and has been helping to create a similar conference on that campus.

“My mantra for the past two years has always been sustainability,” Gotur said. “When it comes to building sustainable solutions, it is about understanding the problem, the people behind the prob lem, the community you are imple menting it in, and the resources available. It requires a holistic top-down view. Sustainability is a vast problem that requires people from a variety of disciplines.”

Sustainability can co-exist with busi ness, Gotur said.

“Business is a vital part of our soci ety today,” Gotur explained. “Much of our society runs around financial busi nesses. The markets are how resources get moved around. It is important for sustainability to enter the discourse of business.”

Nathaly Agosto-Filion is the chief sus tainability officer for the city of Newark. She is tasked with advancing the sus tainability agenda.

“A lot of the ideas that are going to play themselves out will have to align with what the city is doing,” Agosto Filion said.

Her goals for 2020 include making Newark cleaner and better prepared to face climate change, ending a legacy of contaminated industrial sites known as brownfields and reducing stormwater run-off.

“Newark is an urban heat island,” Agosto-Filion said. “All our work is focused on improving the quality of life for Newarkers. … A lot of kids spend more time indoors than outdoors. Indoor air quality is important.”

Tobias Fox said he worked in book publishing until October 2011 when the Occupy Wall Street movement began in New York. He then founded New ark Science and Sustainability Inc., a nonprofit organization that aims to in crease awareness of environmental, ecological and wellness issues. “The word sustainability is often defined as the development of social systems to exist within the capacity of earth,” Fox said. “Most food grown in Newark is un fortunately wasted.”

The Environmental Protection Agen cy estimates more food is brought to landfills than any other type of trash, Fox said. Yet more than 42 million Ameri cans live in food insecure households. “There are a wide range of other or ganizations that are being presented to us,” Fox said. “Get involved.”

Walking the walk

Jens Molbak founded WinWin, a non profit funded by the Robert Wood John son Foundation. WinWin uses a data driven approach to align the resources available in the private, social, and pub lic sectors to generate better societal and financial outcomes for everyone.

“We all contribute to all the sectors,” said Molbak, who also founded CoinStar. “Our philosophy is we need the best re sources from all three sectors: nonprofit, government, and private sectors.”

“With all the problems out there, funding is a problem,” Molbak said.

Rutgers student Joyce Jones, who is earning an MBA with a concentration in leadership and strategy, said she has been a dedicated consumer of sustain able products. She patronizes busi nesses that align their strategies toward sustainable development goals.

“I am proud to say now my partici pation toward achieving a better and healthier environment will include teaching local business owners how they can also become a business that supports the [sustainable development] goals,” Jones said via email. “As an MBA student at Rutgers Business School, I was introduced to the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation by the ever-passionate and dedi cated Professor Jeana Wirtenberg.”

In February, Jones volunteered to be a part of the Collective Impact for the Global Goals in Newark. She is on one of the 12 teams that will work collabor atively across sectors on a seven-week project within the Newark community to help create a model that will build a more sustainable future for Newark.

“I am excited to be a part of this great initiative and personally thankful to Professor Wirtenberg and Gary Cohen for making this opportunity possible at Rutgers Business School,” Joyce said.

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