

*An Applied R&D Lab Serving Solo and Family-based Entrepreneurs
in Rural and Distressed Urban Communities*

The “War College” of the Small Is Good Business Revolution

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SOHODOJO CREATIVE ECONOMY UNCONFERENCE
WORKSHOP TO FEATURE IOWA SOYBEAN WAX
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS**

**Sohodojo and Soyawax Collaborate to Support Statewide Solo
and Family-based Microenterprise Network With Hub In
Des Moines Enterprise Community**

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Des Moines IA – Anita Walker, director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, announced today that Sohodojo’s workshop, “Creative Class In The Small: Economic Fire in Rural and Distressed Urban Communities,” at the Iowa Creative Economy Unconference, to be held March 5th in Des Moines, will showcase Michael and Lynette Richards, prominent Cedar Rapids social entrepreneurs. The Richards are transforming the candle industry with their innovative soybean bio-wax and a creative business model that puts a 21st century spin on a medieval village enterprise and the craft guild.

“Sohodojo’s workshop is about empowering the creative class ‘in the small’, how networks of cultural creative social entrepreneurs can fan the flames of local economic heat in rural and distressed urban communities,” Walker said. “Sohodojo’s ideas contribute a valuable counterpoint to our conference keynoter and special guest, Dr. Richard Florida, whose Creative Class theory focuses attention on the importance of supporting creative class people in urban environments.”

Sohodojo is a non-profit, applied R&D lab in rural north central Montana working with creative folks in the public and private sectors, including the North American Rural Futures Institute, to support solo and family-based microenterprise networks, according to lab co-founders Jim Salmons and Timlynn Babitsky.

“We’re very pleased to be announcing our strategic collaboration with Iowa-based social entrepreneurs, Mike and Lynette Richards,” Salmons said. “These good people are already award-winning entrepreneurs supporting homeless employment and welfare-to-work opportunities. The Richardses will contribute a valuable and inspiring dimension to our Unconference workshop.”

***Sohodojo** is a 501(C)(3) non-profit applied R&D lab with an education and research agenda dedicated to the exploration and development of innovative “Small Is Good” business models and their associated software technologies supporting solo and family-based entrepreneurs in rural and distressed urban communities seeking sustainable futures.*

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“By working with the Richardses to create an Internet-based microenterprise network powered by a story-driven and game-oriented marketplace, Sohodojo will make it possible for them to realize the vision they have that revisits and reinterprets the medieval enterprise of the village chandler, or candle-maker,” Salmons said. “Internet communication technologies, especially freely available Open Source software technologies, make it possible for a small lab like ours to work with an emerging business like the Richards’ Soyawax to create industry-reshaping technical and business model innovations that will have traditional candle making companies going back to their drawing boards.”

“The Richardses have already shaken up the candle-making industry with their soybean-based bio-wax,” said Babitsky. “In particular, Sohodojo and Soyawax are targeting solo and family-based entrepreneurs in our nation’s Renewal Communities, Enterprise Communities and Empowerment Zones. Our first step in this initiative is recruiting micro-entrepreneurs in the Des Moines Enterprise Community.”

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is hosting the Creative Economy Unconference in support of the state’s growing creative entrepreneurs.

“It is important that our creative class citizens meet and learn about the ideas of forward-thinking people like Carnegie Mellon’s Dr. Richard Florida, Sohodojo’s Salmons and Babitsky, and Iowa’s own Mike and Lynette Richards,” Walker said. “These are just a sampling of the many people we’ve rounded up for the Unconference who will present creativity as it applies to any occupation.”

The Creative Economy Unconference will be held Wednesday, March 5, beginning at 10 A.M. For more information and registration, visit: www.culturalaffairs.org

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Press Note: *Sohodojo and Soyawax will be conducting a press conference prior to the opening of the Unconference to make a series of strategic announcements in support of Iowa’s creative solo and family-based entrepreneurs, especially those living in the Des Moines Enterprise Community. Contact Sohodojo for press conference details.*