

Greens and turned into soup. Along with 40,000 pounds of squash and pumpkin, Pete's bought 2,000 pounds of High Mowing's cucumbers this year and turned them into pickles.

For the past two years, many of these farmers and businessmen have met informally once a month to share experiences for business planning and marketing or pass on information about, say, a graphic designer who did good work on promotional materials or government officials who've been particularly helpful. They promote one another's products at trade fairs and buy equipment at auctions that they know their colleagues need.

More important, they share capital. They've lent each other about \$300,000 in short-term loans. When investors visited Mr. Stearns over the summer, he took them on a tour of his neighbors' farms and businesses.

To expand these enterprises further, the Center for an Agricultural Economy recently bought a 15-acre property to start a center for agricultural education. There will also be a year-round farmers' market (from what began about 20 years ago as one farmer selling from the trunk of his car on Main Street) and a community garden, which started with one plot and now has 22, with a greenhouse and a paid gardening specialist.

Last month the center signed an agreement with the University of Vermont for faculty and students to work with farmers and food producers on marketing, research, even transportation problems. Already, Mr. Meyer has licensed a university patent to make his Vermont Natural Coatings, an environmentally friendly wood finish, from whey, a byproduct of cheesemaking.

These entrepreneurs, mostly well educated children of baby boomers who have added business acumen to the idealism of the area's long established hippies and homesteaders, are in the right place at the right time. The growing local-food movement, with its concerns about energy usage, food safety and support for neighbors, was already strong in Vermont, a state that the National Organic Farmers' Association said had more certified organic acreage per capita than any other.

Mr. Meyer grew up on a dairy farm in Hardwick and worked in Washington as an agricultural aide to former Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont. "From my time in Washington," Mr. Meyer said, "I recognize that if Vermont is going to have a future in agriculture we need to look at what works in Vermont, and that is not commodity agriculture."

The brothers Mateo and Andy Kehler have found something that works quite well at their Jasper Hill Farm in nearby Greensboro. At first they aged their award-winning cheeses in a basement. Then they began aging for other cheesemakers. Earlier this month they opened their new caves, with space for 2 million pounds of cheese, which they buy young from other producers.

The Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese at the University of Vermont is helping producers develop safety and quality programs, with costs split by Jasper Hill and the producers. "Suddenly being a cheesemaker in Vermont becomes viable," Mateo Kehler said.

Pete Johnson began a garden when he was a boy on his family's land. Now his company, Pete's Greens, grows organic crops on 50 acres in Craftsbury, about 10 miles north of here. He has four moveable greenhouses, extending the growing season to nine months, and he has installed a commercial kitchen that can make everything from frozen prepared foods and soup stocks to baked goods and sausages. In addition he has enlarged the concept of the C.S.A. by including 30 farmers and food producers rather than just a single farm.

"We have 200 C.S.A. participants so we've become a fairly substantial customer of some of these businesses," he said. "The local beef supplier got an order for \$700 this week; that's pretty significant around here. We've encouraged the apple producer who makes apple pies to use local flour, local butter, local eggs, maple sugar as well as the apples so now we have a locavore apple pie."

"Twelve years ago the market for local food was lukewarm," Mr. Johnson added. "Now this state is primed for anything that is local. It's a way to preserve our villages and rebuild them."

Like Mr. Johnson, Mr. Stearns of High Mowing Organic Seeds in Wolcott, who is president of the Center, knew he wanted to get into agriculture when he was a boy. His company, which grew from his hobby of collecting seeds, began in 2000 with a two-page catalog that generated \$36,000 in sales. Today he has a million-dollar business, selling seeds all over the United States.

Woody Tasch, chairman of Investors Circle, a nonprofit network of investors and foundations dedicated to sustainability, said: "What the Hardwick guys are doing is the first wave of what could be a major social transformation, the swinging back of the pendulum from industrialization and globalization."

Mr. Tasch is having a meeting in nearby Grafton next month with investors, entrepreneurs, nonprofit groups, philanthropists and officials to discuss investing in Vermont agriculture.

Here in Hardwick, Claire's restaurant, sort of a clubhouse for farmers, began with investments from its neighbors. It is a Community Supported Restaurant. Fifty investors who put in \$1,000 each will have the money repaid through discounted meals at the restaurant over four years.

"Local ingredients, open to the world," is the motto on restaurant's floor-to-ceiling windows. "There's Charlie who made the bread tonight," Kristina Michelsen, one of four partners, said in a running commentary one night, identifying farmers and producers at various tables. "That's Pete from Pete's Greens. You're eating his tomatoes."

Rosy as it all seems, some worry that as businesses grow larger the owners will be tempted to sell out to companies that would not have Hardwick's best interests at heart.

But the participants have reason to be optimistic: Mr. Stearns said that within one week six businesses wanted to meet with him to talk about moving to the Hardwick area.

"Things that seemed totally impossible not so long ago are now going to happen," said Mr. Kehler. "In the next few years a new wave of businesses will come in behind us. So many things are possible with collaboration."

TRIBUTE TO PETER CHERNIN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I yield to no one in my support of the freedoms set out in the first amendment to the Constitution, and I have devoted considerable time and energy to their protection and preservation. On October 21, 2008, I enjoyed a very special evening honoring Peter Chernin, the CEO of Fox News, and a man who shares my belief in the need to vigorously defend the first amendment. That night, I congratulated Peter on receiving the Media Institute's First Amendment Award, an award that he richly deserved for his stand against rigid and unyielding application of so-called indecency rules at the Federal

Communications Commission. I believe that his words in defense of the first amendment should be heard and heeded by all Americans, not just by those who were fortunate enough to attend that event.

I ask unanimous consent that the statement of Peter Chernin from October 21, 2008, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

POLITICS, INDECENCY, AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Thank you so much for that introduction, Senator Leahy. Your strong and unambiguous support for the First Amendment is legendary on Capitol Hill, and I could not be more pleased to have you, a former recipient of this award, as my presenter tonight. And thank you to the Media Institute for bestowing this honor on me. As the head of a media company, I am at times painfully aware of how important the First Amendment is to our ability to create thought-provoking and controversial content. And as a citizen of this country, I am thankful every day for the freedoms that we too often take for granted: the freedom to speak freely, the freedom to pursue our religious beliefs without persecution, and the freedom of the press to criticize our government.

We live in a pluralistic society. One where diversity rules, where disagreement is a constant, and where there is more than one right answer for every question. It's messy. And for creators of content, if we're doing our jobs right, we sometimes offend people. It's that simple. And, believe me, we wrestle with that fact. We struggle with complex issues every day. Are we guilty of contributing to the vulgarization of our society or simply of mirroring it? Is it our responsibility to be the arbiters of good taste, or is it our duty to push boundaries? Is it even possible to create innovative programming for a mass audience that is diverse on every level—from age, to religious affiliation, to ethnicity?

We don't take these issues lightly. We are constantly thinking about the important role we play in shaping our culture. Whether we're creating television shows, making films, or working at a newspaper or publishing house. Certainly, we must entertain, we must inform and we must provoke. But, at the same time, we must take very seriously the power we have to affect millions through our work. That's why we stress the importance of individual editorial responsibility across all of our businesses. But, yes, sometimes we do make mistakes. Everyone does. The alternative? Well, it's chilling. If the media is ruled by fear of crossing an ambiguous line, our product will be less vital and more homogenous. Our ability to create news and entertainment that is thoughtful, provocative, and accurately reflects our society will be compromised. And Americans will have far fewer choices. That's why it's so critical that we don't chip away at the First Amendment until it becomes toothless. It must remain absolute in its protections.

Two weeks from today the U.S. Supreme Court is hearing arguments in *FCC v. Fox Television Stations*, the first indecency case it has heard since the "7 Dirty Words" case was decided in 1978. At issue is whether Fox violated the indecency law when it aired two live award programs in which actresses blurted out one or two so-called "fleeting expletives." While a case with Cher and Nicole Richie at its center is probably not one we would have chosen to argue before the Supreme Court, the truth is, we don't get to

pick our cases. In fact, if anyone had told me that my company would be before the U.S. Supreme Court defending inane comments by Cher and Nicole Ritchie, I would have said you're crazy. But I would contend that the nature of this speech, and who said it, makes absolutely no difference. Because at the core of this case is an absolute threat to the First Amendment. It hinges on utterances that were unscripted on live television. If we are found in violation, just think about the radical ramifications for live programming—from news, to politics, to sports. In fact, to every live broadcast television event. The effect would be appalling.

There is a certain symmetry to the fact that the oral argument in this case and the election of the 44th President of the United States are taking place on the same day: The Fox case, if successful, is an affirmation of the First Amendment. The election is an affirmation of our democratic process. And the two are inextricably intertwined. The First Amendment is central to our democratic process because it ensures a full and open dialogue about the candidates for office. Without the First Amendment, our democracy could not be sustained.

But the truth is, people don't think about defending broadcasters' right to utter expletives in the same way they think about defending one's right to speak critically of our government. But they should. The First Amendment is at stake in both cases. As a media company, we have not just a right but a responsibility to stand up to the government when it crosses that First Amendment line in the sand—even if the content we are defending is in bad taste. And in the indecency context, that line has not only been crossed, it has been obliterated. That is why Fox is fighting the FCC in this and several other indecency cases.

I'll admit: some of the content we are defending is not particularly tasteful: the expletives, the brief nudity, the carefully placed whipped cream and, of course, the pixels. I would not have allowed my own children, when they were younger, to watch some of these shows. But, I vow to fight to the end for our ability to put occasionally controversial, offensive, and even tasteless content on the air.

Why? Because, if the government gets its foot in the censorship door with respect to unpopular entertainment content, it is the beginning of the steep slide toward censoring unpopular political content. And we have seen the beginnings of this downward slide in a recent case where the FCC initially found indecent content in a news program. If we allow our government to intrude into the creative process to censor the "bad words" at issue in the Fox case, I am afraid we will soon reach the bottom of the slide—to America's detriment.

Groups that claim to be interested in "protecting children" are helping the government along in its attempts to censor television. While I don't agree with these groups, I do fully support their right to criticize what's on television. But the job of protecting children is far too important to leave to government bureaucrats or so-called public interest groups. The job of protecting children lies with parents. The job of the government is to resist the views of interest groups with particular agendas and instead to enforce the law in a way that is consistent, fair, and constitutional. So I don't blame these groups for the degradation of the First Amendment. I blame our government, which has succumbed to the views of a particularly vocal minority.

Look, I am not insensitive to the fact that young children need to be protected. And that's difficult in an era of single parent, or two working parent households. But the pro-

tection of children must be considered in a Twenty-First Century light. Nearly every TV set sold today includes a V-Chip, which allows parents to block content they think may be inappropriate for their children. Cable, satellite, and telco video providers have finely-tuned, comprehensive parental controls. And let's not forget the most powerful technology available to parents: the on-off switch. These tools allow adults to protect their kids while still being able to access shows they love.

We as media companies also have a responsibility: to rate shows accurately and consistently so the V-Chip works as it should. And, as I said earlier, we need to be responsible with our creative output. This is something we do on a daily basis through our Standards and Practices departments, not only by exercising editorial judgment but by constantly fine-tuning and improving our internal controls.

Let's step back for a minute and get some perspective on this issue. The indecency law applies only to broadcast TV: that's a handful of channels. Over 85 percent of the country receives their broadcast channels through a cable, telco line, or satellite signal. Sitting right next to the broadcast channels on these multichannel systems are hundreds of other channels that are not subject to the indecency law.

And those other channels are just a click away on the remote control. Nor does the indecency law apply to video-on-demand, pay per view, DVDs, or the mother of all content providers: the Internet. Does it really make sense to continue government censorship of the occasional bad word, brief nudity, or sexual innuendo on a handful of broadcast channels when we live in an environment of infinitely unregulated choices? In the media-rich world we live in, singling out a few channels for indecency enforcement is not legally sustainable.

Quite simply, it is time for the government to get out of the business of regulating "indecent" speech on broadcast TV. The threat it poses to core First Amendment values cannot be justified in our technologically diverse world. Parents have the tools to decide what is appropriate for their children. Let's let parents do their job and fire the government from the job of censoring speech. The First Amendment is too important to our democratic society—in this and future elections—to allow any encroachments to threaten our country's critical freedoms.

Thank you.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and rec-

ommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

We are glad to hear that at least one of our politicians is concerned about how the gasoline prices are affecting the middle class. Most of us feel that our government is extremely out of touch with the majority of the country.

We are retired on a fixed income and we worked hard all our lives and saved to get a motor home for vacations, but unfortunately we now cannot use it because of the price of gasoline and it just sits there. We try to go out shopping for groceries and any other necessities just once a week, making a list of items and stores, color coding so we do not forget anything. The cost of energy also has increased the price of groceries tremendously, so basic foods and produce are the norm—going away with any treats. We have never seen the price of gasoline increase day by day and a nickel to a dime at a time.

We desperately need to have alternate sources of energy, such as coal, windmills, solar and nuclear. We should have been building new refineries and recovering oil off all of our coasts since the 1970s when this same problem came up at that time, but, to our shame, we did not.

Automobiles should get a lot more than the 35 mpg that we have heard mentioned for future vehicles. It should be at the very least 60 mpg, and there is no reason in this world with our technology that this could not be a reality. Something should be done to increase the mileage on all of the vehicles that are already on the road. This is never mentioned. We cannot just go out and buy a hybrid or other fuel efficient vehicle at the drop of a hat to help the situation. We drive our 2002 Honda 4 cylinder between 55 and 60 mph on the highway to increase our fuel efficiency and you should see the bad looks we get. Highway mileage should be lowered to 55 mph like in the 70s to help conserve.

We do hope that our government does something quickly to improve this situation and that it is not handled like it was in the 70s—all talk and no action. We need to be dependent on no one but ourselves for our energy needs. No one is going to take care of the USA and its citizens but the USA itself.

We need some action now—Please.

ROBERT AND ROBERTA, *Idaho Falls.*

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to your e-letter regarding energy costs and gasoline prices. I agree that we in the US are far too dependent on petroleum for energy. But I think it is a selfish and short-sighted view to defeat the climate change legislation. Our focus should be, as you mentioned, on using less petroleum, not searching for petroleum everywhere we can, no matter the ecological cost. It is true; we do not have good mass transit in Idaho and especially in the more densely populated Treasure Valley. I think tax dollars would be well spent to improve the mass transit situation in the Valley.

We need to give tax incentives to clean, renewable energy sources and rescind the tax breaks given to the huge oil companies who have been reaping record profits at the expense of all Americans. The answer is in conservation which includes improved mass transit and in alternative transportation where there would be improved avenues for bicycling and walking.

It is true. I will not be driving as far for vacation this year, though I would like to explore areas in Idaho I have not yet seen. It