

## Gunter Pauli speaks about sustainability at Cambridge College

By Kim Dunbar

Fold your arms across your chest. Taking note of the arm that is on top (usually the right one), now try to cross your arms with the opposite arm landing on top. Feels strange, right? Well, that is exactly what Gunter Pauli told his audience how he wanted them to feel during his presentation on Wednesday, July 25<sup>th</sup> at Cambridge College, which was co-sponsored by the College, ZERI and the Marion Institute.

“My goal is to make you feel uncomfortable,” said Pauli, founder of Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI) educational initiative which focuses on teaching for sustainability. Pauli, who leads over 50 major ZERI projects throughout the world, is a renowned sustainability education expert whose entrepreneurial activities span business, culture, science, politics and the environment.

“There are certain things that you anticipate for a long time and when it finally comes you are very excited. This is one of those times,” said President Sharma, in reference to Pauli’s presentation. “Where will this lead? We have no idea, but it is a great beginning.”

“We would like to make Cambridge College not only a place for higher education, but a part of the community, a part of the larger community,” said Pauli. Pauli introduced his ideas on sustainability to many members of the Cambridge College faculty, staff and administration, as well as to several members of the Cambridge community. One of ZERI’s goals is to help students discover the relationships between the five kingdoms of nature and how these kingdoms inhabit every ecosystem.

“I am inspired by this College’s mission and see nothing but opportunity in this room, and the chance to make connections,” said Cambridge City Councillor Henrietta Davis, who works with environmental issues. In fact, one of Pauli’s major talking points was the importance of making connections between one’s actions and multiple causes and effects.

“We are too focused on seeing one cause and effect, not multiples. You have to make connections,” said Pauli. He demonstrated this by asking audience members what they consumed for breakfast. He then ran down a list of connections between the breakfast items the individuals consumed and the causes and effects each item could have on their body and the environment.

“We have to create new wisdom because things change all the time. Wisdom is what we need to have a real sustainability,” he said. Pauli emphasized the importance of beginning to change now, even if it is uncomfortable. “We have to work with what we have. We can’t get the mindset of 2050 if we don’t do something now. We have to leave the atmosphere of comfort,” he added.

Pauli said that working with children on these issues is an important and necessary step in the right direction. “We have to create a space for children to create things we can’t imagine. When children are asked to cross their arms with the opposite arm on top, it is something they can do with ease,” he explained. “As we get older, we settle in our ways. We don’t like to change and we don’t like to shift,” he said.

Pauli asked the audience to rethink the basics of physics, in their own lives and in education. “They always tell you how the apple fell, but not how it gets up in the tree,” said Pauli. “If there is much disconnect on education, children will never have sustainability,” he added, pointing out that children are taught linear math and system science in schools, but everything in nature is non-linear. “Why do we only teach linear? We forget how natural things work.”

Now try crossing your arms, with the opposite arm falling on top of the other. It might not be so hard after all.