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Share Tompkins Touts Barter System

By Shira Golding

This is the latest installment in our Signs of Sustainability series, organized by Sustainable Tompkins. Visit them online at www.sustainabletompkins.org.

Bring what you can, take what you need. It's a simple but powerful concept that inspired the formation of Share Tompkins in May 2009. Since then, the volunteer-run group has been organizing monthly events that enable people to share and barter goods and services from foraged mushrooms to massage and everything in between.

Community Swap Meets have been hosted in people's homes and public spaces around Tompkins County, including Ithaca, Newfield, Trumansburg and Lansing. Open to anyone and everyone, the swaps are fun, social happenings that often include potluck food and live music.

After putting their offerings into "for barter" and "for free" areas,

participants go around in a circle so that each individual or family can express what they have to offer and what they need. This is an opportunity to let people know about services like photography and gardening as well as goods that might be too big or inconvenient to bring like lumber for a wood stove.

At one swap, three different people expressed that they needed help moving in the coming weeks. They arranged a three-way trade in which they all helped one another on moving day. Another person at the event offered free use of his truck in exchange for a hand-knitted hat from Teresa Porri, one of the movers.

"Everyone involved seemed pleased and excited about how well this system worked. I have no idea how we would have managed our last-minute move if not for Share Tompkins," Porri says.

At the group's first Holiday Swap, hosted by the Southside Community Center last December, a creative trade between two families ended up bringing them together in ways they never could have expected.

Danielle Klock of Wishing Well Magazine swapped a cello with McKenzie Jones-Rounds, a cellist who'd been looking for a new instrument, in exchange for a year of guitar lessons for Danielle's son. McKenzie's husband Jamie, who is providing the lessons, is passionate about the benefits of this kind of sharing.

"Share Tompkins strives to bring Tompkins County an alternative to the normal monetary capitalism that has made our current economy so difficult to thrive in," he says. "The real heart of this project is to demonstrate to ourselves that we are each wealthier than we realized, even if we don't have the money to buy all the brand new objects and services we want and need."

Since their musical swap, the two families have become close friends and the weekly guitar lessons provide a welcome excuse to get together.

Building on the success of Community Swap Meets, the group decided to take the sharing spirit to another level by organizing a series of Really Really Free Markets (RRFMs), a concept that was created by G8 protestors in 2001 and has been duplicated by like-minded groups around the country.

In the tradition of the Diggers of San Francisco who opened Free Stores in the late 60s, everything is free at a RRFM, providing an alternative to consumerism and helping to redistribute surpluses. Share Tompkins has held three RRFMs to date including one as part of the Southside Community Center's weekly Congo Square Market and another in partnership with the North Star Market, a new farmers' market that takes place Saturdays in Fall Creek.

Organizer Ari Moore is one of the first faces you see at a Share Tompkins RRFM, sitting at the welcome table. "I love explaining to people that 'Yes, everything is free!' Their faces light up and they immediately feel included. In so

Please turn to page 11

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Bookstore to Showcase Local Authors

By Ann Krajewski

The Ithaca Borders bookstore in the Shops at the Ithaca Mall is hosting a "Spotlight on Local" special event on Saturday, Sept. 18, from noon to 4 p.m. Borders, which carries a selection of local authors, books on the local region, locally-created postcards and music, has turned the spotlight on the talent of this region.

During the afternoon, the public will have an opportunity to meet their favorite local artists, purchase autographed copies of their work and enjoy live free demonstrations, performances and readings.

"The event fair will feature over 25 local authors, artists and musicians and will have something for all ages," says Borders sales manager Linda Hendricks. "Many of our local authors often don't have the opportunity to promote themselves and we thought it would be a wonderful thing for us to do."

Children will see that math can be fun with Suzanne Kuntz and her "math mats." Richard Kissel of the Paleontological Research Institution and author of "Cecil's Colossal Journey Through Time Coloring & Activity Book" will demonstrate how he draws dinosaurs and share his scientific knowledge.

Local romance and mystery author Stevi Mittman will give a reading from her work at noon. Says Mittman, "Ithaca has been the perfect place from which to lampoon Long Island, as I do in many of my books. It's the antithesis of Long Island and I'm not sure I could have seen it without moving here."

At 1 p.m. fans of Moosewood Restaurant will enjoy a live demon-



Photo by Ann Krajewski

Borders welcomes readers of all ages to its upcoming event focusing on the wealth of talent among local authors. Pictured is a recent gathering at the bookstore.

stration from the staff based on their newest cookbook, "Moosewood Restaurant Cooking for Health."

Independent reader and young adult favorites Anne Mazer, author of the "Abby Hayes & Sister Magic" series, Shannon Delany, author of "13 to Life" and Diane Zahler, who penned "The Thirteenth Princess" will be in attendance. Zahler will give a reading from her book at 2:30 p.m.

"I grew up in Ithaca and still have strong ties there," Zahler says. "The years I spent working in the children's room at the Tompkins County Public Library fed my love for the genre and my desire to write

them myself. I visit Ithaca as often as I can and will always consider myself an Ithacan, so even though I now live in the Hudson Valley, I'm really a local at heart."

Local author of "A Soldier's Diary", Alfred Di Giacomo, will be at the event to talk about his book, which is a personal diary he kept during his three years in the U S Army Air Force during World War II.

Authors will also be on hand to provide a look into the area's history: Mary Ann Kane, author of "Images of America: Cortland" and Tony Ingraham, who wrote "A Walk through Watkins Glen—Water's Sculpture in Stone" will be there.

Liz Bauman, who wrote "Ithaca—the City, Gorges, and Colleges," and Michael Turback, author of "Surrounded By Reality: 101 Things You Didn't Know About Ithaca—But Are About to Find Out," will help shed light on the local region as we know it presently. "As an Ithaca author, it's always a special pleasure to participate in a local event and I'm looking forward to meeting the readers who appreciate my books the most," Turback says.

Lovers of the outdoors in the Finger Lakes can meet members of the Cayuga Trails Club, creators of the "Guide to Hiking Trails of the Finger Lakes Region," along with Bill Bowers and Eileen McNulty-Bowers, authors of "50 Hikes in Central New York's Leatherstocking Country."

Science fiction fans will be able to meet Nick Sagan, author of "Everfree," "Idlewood" and the upcoming graphic novel "Shrapnel 2." Local publisher Mark Goldberg, who just released "A Blueprint for Success, Cornell Men's Basketball 2009-2010," will also be in attendance.

Amy Dickinson, who put Tompkins County on the literary map with "The Mighty Queens of Freeville," will be at Borders at 3 p.m. along with her sister Rachel Dickinson, Tim Gallagher, Michael Bend, Kenny Luck and Ted Sobel.

Local performers After Eight, Jennifer Marshall, Cheryl Chalmers, Last Call and Elisa Sciscioli will entertain throughout the afternoon.

For a complete schedule or more information on this event, call 257-0444.

Barter

Continued from page 10

many forms of activism you are trying to get people to do something. It feels great to be able to offer something to the community with no strings attached," he says.

While participants in events are encouraged to take back home with them any goods that aren't scooped up, there are inevitably leftovers and Share Tompkins volunteers make sure they are delivered to charitable organizations and sustainability-focused groups

like the ReUse Center.

One of the group's goals is to point people to other resources that they might now know about. They have invited groups including Ithaca Carshare, Birthnet of the Finger Lakes, Ithaca Health Alliance and Free Clinic, SewGreen, IthaCan and Alternatives Federal Credit Union to table at events, helping them to reach even more people in a context of sharing.

Many of the Share Tompkins organizers are also very involved with the Ithaca Freeskool, an all-ages, anti-hierarchical educational initiative that invites anyone to teach classes on topics that foster

self-reliance and creative expression. Freeskool calendars are always on offer at Share Tompkins events.

In addition to in-person gatherings, the group is active online using Facebook, Twitter, e-mail lists and its own blog to let people know about opportunities for sharing. Members of the group's list-serv regularly post haves and wants and get rapid responses from others

in the community.

Share Tompkins' website (<http://sharetompkins.wordpress.com>) features a directory with over one hundred and thirty resources organized by categories like Food and Housing. In May Share Tompkins celebrated its one-year anniversary and is looking forward to many more years full of sharing.

Shira Golding is a co-founder of Share Tompkins (www.shirari.com).

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