

Neighborhood Non-Profit:

Compost Education Centre supports local food security initiatives

>> MARIKA SMITH

The Compost Education Centre is a fun, friendly place to learn all about home composting, organic gardening and sustainable living. Our environmentally-focused and interactive programs delight children and youth in elementary, middle and high schools, preschools, clubs and summer groups in the CRD. Located at 1216 North Park in Fernwood, we are also your regional "one stop compost shop", selling composting supplies and offering free Composting Basics workshops. Knowledgeable staff and volunteers can be reached on the compost hotline at 386-WORM (9676) or come by and see us Wednesday to Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Our website (www.compost.bc.ca) has our full line-up of community workshops offered on Saturdays 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We are also running an exciting new program for youths at our centre called SLUGS, which stands for 'Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening Skills for Youth'. The program is for youth 15-18 and will



The women of the Compost Education Centre pose outside their North Park Street office. From left: Marika Smith, Nadine Brodeur, Nashira Birch and Kim Watt. Photo: Steve Carey.

run from February to August 2010, covering all the basics of organic backyard farming, as well as touching on topics such as:

beekeeping, urban chickens, canning and preserving, permaculture, and mushroom cultivation. Cost for the whole session is

\$175 (with bursaries and payment plans available). No one will be turned away! For busy teens we also offer a drop-in option for \$5 per Thursday workshop 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Call (250)386-9676 for more information or visit slugsyouth.blogspot.com and www.compost.bc.ca.

Along the lines of local food security initiatives, we are thrilled to partner with Lifecycles Project Society and the Fernwood NRG to launch 'Plant a Row, Grow a Row', a project that is designed to encourage gardeners to plant an extra row of food in their gardens which can then be donated to food banks or other venues designed to help those that are less fortunate. In our first year we will be launching the project in the Fernwood neighbourhood and donate the food to Our Place, a local shelter, and to the Best Babies program which encourages better nutrition for at-risk mothers. Our goal in the first year is to get 100 gardeners to sign-up and donate a total of 1 tonne of food! Stay tuned for more exciting news about this great project! ☺

Fernwood Band Ball Gag 'n' Chain Gang

A tribe that welcomes and wants to rock your universe

>> STACEY CURTIS

On a warm week in the middle of February, I sat down with Fernwood peers and members of Victoria-based ho-tonk band Ball Gag 'n' Chain Gang. The band, still riding the energy wave of opening last summer's Edge of the World Festival on Haidii Gwaii, was beginning day two of a three-day recording session, laying down tracks for their 4-song EP, to be released this March.

"Living in Fernwood means we can afford our rent," says one of two lead vocalists, Adam Zonnis.

"And we have super understanding neighbours," adds bassist Avert Pater, one of three members sharing a Fernwood home that doubles as the band's practice space.

When asked what the central message their band wants to spread is, all five members agreed: "have fun."

"We take our work seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously," says Pater, patterning in halfway through the interview.

"We have a strict no whining policy," lead guitarist Tony Garossino says.

Steve Craik, vocalist number two, describes the group of five as more of a tribe than a band. "Anywhere we go, there's at least three or four people minimum that come along."

After significant success at home and on the road, this untamed band of multi-instrument playing bandits feels ready to open Victoria's *Save on Centre*, but expresses much interest in continuing the festival circuit and touring as far south as Portland, come September. Garossino, imported from Texas, welcomes the movement toward southern gigs.

"[Expanding the tour circuit] is like dropping a rock in water," says Craik. "Concentric circles. The bigger the rock,

the bigger the circle." Craik smacks a fitting metaphor for a band that never fails to rock hard live, shamelessly ordering its crowd to scream outs its love for bacon. Zonnis declares the fantastically overpowering and unapologetic "Didgeree Death" his current favourite to sing live.

With a stage setup that equally highlights Zonnis and Craik, and a guitarist, bassist and drummer who back them up like family, Ball Gag charms its audience with unabashed, confident stage presence and music you can't resist partying to.

"Each member of that band is a character," says new Fernwood resident Mohammed Amine Said of Coco Jafro. "And they have a great drummer [Brendan Pye]. Their drummer knows where the one is. He's got the beat."

While the title of album number two (in the works) is under debate, *Bang* is a strong contender. This comic-book inspired heading is certainly fitting for a band that uses tongue and cheek humour to get a few serious beliefs across.

"We're all working on our stage banter," explains Zonnis between jokes. "Sometimes it's good and sometimes not so good. Sometimes we get the crickets. The tumbleweeds. Sometimes I intentionally tell jokes that are bad just to kill time. Sometimes I ask a joke and instead of telling the punch line just play the song."

"It's a musical joke," Craik explains, highlighting Zonnis' statement.

When asked about their favourite shows, Zonnis named the Purple Witch Party, a gathering full of socialites at a mansion in Vernon. "They reacted by taking off their clothes and throwing their panties at us," Zonnis says, adding, "don't ask me why all the guys there were wearing panties."

"That's how I reacted, too," I banter back. Ball Gag's upcoming Victoria shows include the Fort Street Café (March 6); the Events Centre (March 26); and Centennial Square on the May long weekend. Grab your tickets and join in the party: all are welcome. ☺

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