

Network lets users swap items

Eugene's chapter of Freecycle.org started on Oct. 23, allowing members to recycle unwanted things

By Caron Alarab
News Reporter

To someone else, it was just a bag of random plant bulbs. But to Eugene resident Lisanne Dickenson, it's a gift she was more than happy to receive.

"I don't even know what they are," the 38-year-old said. "We'll just have to see next spring."

Dickenson received the bulbs through the Eugene chapter of Freecycle.org, an international network that connects individuals who want to "recycle" their stuff by giving it away rather than throwing it out. After hearing about the network through an article in The Oregonian, Dickenson founded the local chapter on Oct. 23 because she wanted to help lighten the flow to local landfills.

"It's a give and get for everyone," she said. "And the whole idea makes it all so much fun."

Through a Yahoo listserv at <http://www.freecycle.org>, each registered member posts a request or an offer for a specific item and then waits for telephone or e-mail responses from other members. Participants can post anything their hearts desire, from used furniture and appliances to second-hand clothing and musical instruments.

The only catch: Everything is free and no one can post a price.

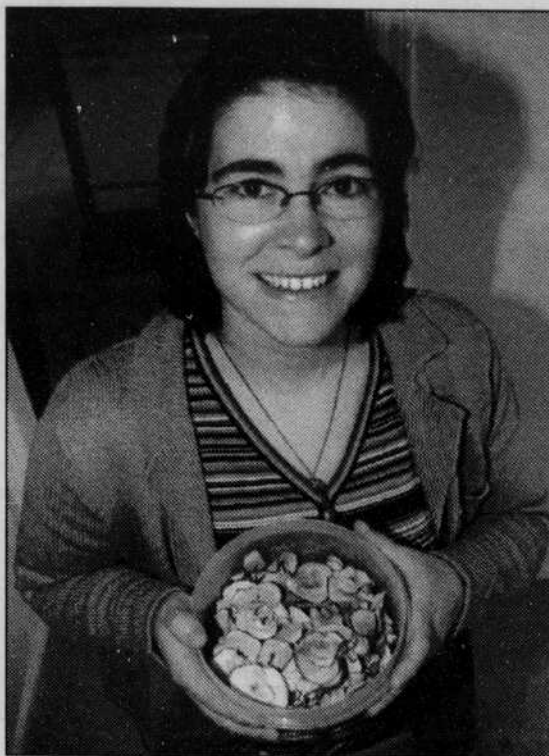
As a Freecycle group moderator, Dickenson said she has been considering several new ideas for the Eugene chapter, including free pets, carpool rides and weekend getaways.

Dickenson said she was thrilled when Eugene chapter membership jumped from 38 to 210 local participants thanks to a small article in the Nov. 6 edition of The Register-Guard.

And she's not the only one. "I'm absolutely tickled," Freecycle Network founder Deron Beal said.

The Tucson, Ariz., native created the Yahoo listserv in May to help give away extra junk for Rise, a non-profit transitional employment organization in his area. Beal turned to the Internet as an international venue for trade after realizing that calling around to offer junk to people took too much time.

"It has enabled a lot more people



Eugene resident Maryanne Obersinner got a used food dehydrator through the Freecycle network, which she used to make dehydrated apple slices.
Tim Bobosky
Photographer

to give stuff away," he said. "And the more people who have fun with this, the better off we all are."

In less than six months, the Tucson chapter has grown from one to 1,500 members due to media attention, while new chapters have sprouted in cities worldwide, from Maui, Hawaii, to New York to Tokyo. The recent establishment of the London chapter marked the 50th city to participate, and Beal said the number rises everyday.

"It really is going well," he said. "Everyone is pulling together all over the place."

With plans to separate from the Yahoo listserv and eventually establish an independent Freecycle Web page, Beal has started to raise funds for the site, which will not have pop-up advertisements like Yahoo.

"I'd like to take it up to the next level," he said. "And a free-standing Web page, to me, is synonymous with the crystallization of Freecycle as an international movement."

After giving the bag of plant bulbs to Dickenson and receiving a much-needed food dehydrator through Freecycle.org, Eugenean Maryanne Obersinner said she thinks the local chapter will be a great success.

"I think Eugene is a town where something like this will really take off," the O'Hara Catholic School teacher said. "People are just freely

giving to their neighbors and it feels good to do that, but it's still anonymous."

After joining the Portland and Eugene chapters, Obersinner said she feels the organization is a true "community builder" because people are helping other people without any monetary profit.

Beal said he is eager to hear about growing student membership in the University area considering the general rapid member growth spurred by newspaper articles.

"There are all kinds of possibilities with students," he said. "They can even meet with fellow members to trade at a central location, like campus."

As he watches his creation grow, the self-proclaimed "hopeless optimist" said the success of Freecycle.org reinforces his positive outlook for the future of the organization.

"One member phrased it best when he said, 'It's changing the world one gift at a time,'" Beal said. "Hey, maybe that will be our motto."

Those interested in joining the Eugene chapter can visit: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/freecycleeugene>.

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at caronalarab@dailyemerald.com.

PEACE

continued from page 1

South during the height of the civil rights movement. He also participated in the Freedom Rides.

Hubin said the Office of the President invited Lewis to the University because he has broad appeal as a speaker.

"His focus on nonviolent social change, justice and peace are themes we knew the University community and the community broadly would benefit from engaging in," Hubin said.

In the spring of 1965, Lewis helped organize a march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., with more than 600 people. According to Lewis' Web site, state troopers attacked the marchers, and the event became known as "Bloody Sunday." That march and a subsequent march between Selma and Montgomery, Ala., led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Lewis was first elected to Congress

in 1986 as a representative of the 5th Congressional District, which encompasses the entire city of Atlanta. For the past 17 years he's served in that position and is now in his ninth term.

Lewis has been given numerous awards and honors for his civil rights work, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Non-Violent Peace Prize and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Spingarn Medal. He was also a recipient of the John F. Kennedy "Profile in Courage Award" and the National Education Association's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Award. Lewis co-authored a novel in 1998 entitled "Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement."

The free event is open to the public.

More information about Lewis can be found at <http://www.house.gov/johnlewis/>.

Contact the people/culture/faith reporter at jaredpaben@dailyemerald.com.

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