

Locals Only

Unique Eugene shops are more than just a motto BY JORDAN TICHENOR

You've probably noticed the logo, displayed proudly across the advertisements and storefronts of 22 local retailers. Maybe it looked like an affirmation of the area we live in, a sort of twist on "Keep Eugene Weird."

But "Unique Eugene" is more than just a motto. It's a network and a movement with the intention of sharing their "collective goodwill in the community," as their member application puts it.

Unique Eugene started in 1999 and represents businesses as varied as Eugene Toy & Hobby, Smith Family Bookstore, The Kiva, Sundance Natural Foods, Harlequin Beads, Goldworks and Tactics Boardshop, among 15 other Eugene businesses.

If you want to keep your money local, you can trust Unique Eugene shops to fit that bill. Unique Eugene

shops must conduct all of their business in Lane County or prove that 25 percent of their entire revenue comes from business done in Lane County. Members are required to meet guidelines on how employees are treated, environmental impact and partaking in community service.

"We like people to be aware that giving money to your friends and neighbors keeps it in town a lot longer," says Kim Still, market promotions and advertising manager at Eugene Saturday Market, and a coordinating member of Unique Eugene. The group was formed as a way to bring a sense of community to Eugene businesses. "We started working together to promote each other," Still says. Each store chooses a charity to receive a \$100 Unique Eugene gift card, which can be used for raffles or fundraising. All new members must be approved by a unanimous vote of

KIM STILL



the existing members. "Businesses downtown really come together to make it a unique shopping experience as well as a local one," says Sarah Ball, an employee at Goldworks Jewelry.

Unique Eugene does not work like a networking group, the way small business associations such as LeTip or Gold Star Referral Clubs do. Instead, according to Still, Unique Eugene members spend their meeting time "seeing how things are going or sharing ideas." Ball says, "It's a great opportunity for exposure."

Businesses promote themselves mainly with collaborative projects and collective advertising, such as the limited run of coupon books that are released for the holiday season. Unique Eugene business owners stressed that one of the main goals of the group is to support local nonprofits. They've raised \$2,000 a year for a Lane Community College scholarship fund as part of a 2008 pledge to raise \$10,000.

Many of the stores are artisan craft stores, with all work done in the shop. Goldworks, for instance, offers the ability to create unique jewelry from scratch or from old metal the customer wants made new again. "Our clients really do love to be able to see their ideas come to fruition and have a hand in the design process," Ball says.

Other stores, such as Tactics Boardshop or Smith Family Bookstore, work with local employees to keep the money involved in big retail ventures in Eugene. They also promote local work. Shops such as The Kiva or Sundance focus on selling local foods and catering to local interests.

Overall, Unique Eugene creates a community within the community; a place where business owners can promote each other and keep money in town. "We love it. We really do. It's a fun and unique group of people to be involved with," Still says.

More about the group, as well as a full list of involved businesses can be found at the group's website, uniqueeugene.com. **GG**



GOLDWORKS OWNER ERIN MURPHY AND SARAH BALL

HO! HO! HO! Here's where you gotta GO!

SWEET POTATO PIE

The Pie's got GIFTS
for everyone on your list!

- * New hoodies for men & women from Vital Hemp.
- * Scarves, gloves & hats.
- * Kickass GLASS pipes starting at \$3.
- * Locally-made jewelry they'll LOVE.



Join us for Last Friday Artwalk! Nov. 29th 5-9pm.

775 Monroe Street (next to Sweet Life) • Monday - Saturday 12-7 / Sunday 12-5

Sweet Creek Foods

Local & Organic

Gluten Free Look for us at your Natural Foods Grocery

www.sweetcreekfoods.com
541-935-1615