

Green Drinks moves to Mission Tapas

By Andrew Roiter
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Yes ... Margaritas, Bullfrogs and Appletinis are all green cocktails, but that doesn't mean that Mission Bar & Tapas' menu will be restricted to those beverages for the environmental discussion group "Green Drinks" on Tuesday.

Green Drinks is a loosely affiliated international environmental group hosted in Pittsfield by the Center for Ecological Technology, CET, and the Berkshire Environmental Action Team, BEAT. Every third Tuesday, BEAT executive director Jane Winn and CET recycling director Jamie Cahillane invite green minded Berkshire residents to Mission Bar on North St. to discuss local and national green topics.

"There are so many people around town that are such great examples [of green living]," Winn said. "[They're] ordinary citizens interested in doing their part."

Some cities Green Drinks sessions are rigorously structured, with scheduled speakers and set topics

If you go ...

What: Green Drinks environmental discussion group
Where: Mission Bar & Tapas, 438 North St. Pittsfield
When: Every third Tuesday, monthly, 5:15 p.m.
Admission: Free
Information: Jamie Cahillane at CET, (413)445-4556, ext. 14 or Jane Winn at BEAT jane@thebeatnews.org or (413) 230-7321

every month; the Pittsfield branch does not follow this model.

"We do it very casually," Winn said. "Usually there are many side conversations going on. And anybody with an environmental interest who feels like talking about it can come down. Often it's people who care about the environment and just want to talk."

Cahillane said that Pittsfield Green Drinks is set up this way to



Ian Grey / Special to The Eagle

Green Drinks, a conversation open to anyone interested in talking about land, windmills, ecology, sustainable building and similar topics, meets monthly on third Tuesdays at Mission Bar & Tapas.

provide an after-hours environmentalism discussion group.

"It attracts those who might not come to a lecture," he said. "There's no speaker, no audience,

no invisible wall."

"Recently we've had a lot of politicians coming to the Green Drinks, especially those from the Green Rainbow Party," Winn said.

She cited local Green Rainbow Party politicians State-representative candidate Scott Laugenour and party member Mark Miller.

Green Drinks provides community members the opportunity to network for their green businesses as well.

Cahillane said that Green Drinks has given CET new customers and has given BEAT new volunteers.

"It's a place for people to come and have a beer or not and chat. There's a lot of businesses and organizations that come," he said.

The meetings draw between five and 30 people, many of whom are repeat visitors, but there are plenty of fresh faces.

"Every meeting I meet at least one new person," Winn said.

According to Winn and Cahillane, past topics have been recycling, the practicality of zero waste, and green building.

Cahillane added that often local landlords, contractors and architects come to Green Drinks to discuss the future of constructing green buildings.

Other recent topics have been the BP oil spill and the Asian long-horned beetle incursion.

The discussion draws environmentalists of all kinds, and they don't always agree. Winn said that while the group generally agrees on end goals, she often hears disagreement on how to get to those end goals. For instance, both CET and BEAT favor wind energy, but they sometimes disagree on where the wind mills should be placed.

Green Drinks has been running in Pittsfield for four years; before coming to Mission it was the Brew Works. Mission approached Winn and asked her if she would like to host the event with them each month. Winn agreed, she said, partially because Mission's policy of buying locally and green fit with BEAT and CET's ideals.

With seemingly insurmountable mountains like the clean-up effort in the Gulf, Winn said the jobs ahead can feel discouraging, but Green Drinks can be a good way for environmentalists to cheer each other up.

"There's always someone there who will be uplifting and say, 'but yeah, look what we can do,'" she said.

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