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- News
- Announcements
- Sports
- Opinion
- Living
- Entertainment
- Outdoors
- Photo Galleries
- Shop
- Classified
- Contact Us



Ent-Root : » Arts
Published May 17, 2007

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Swap your way to high style

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For The Olympian

A new season might call for new clothes, but this spring, in stead of going shopping, why not go swapping?



That's the idea behind Swap-O-Rama-Rama, an event aimed at reducing mass consumption through creativity.

Participants bring a bag of unwanted clothes to swap and then learn ways to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear - or a silk purse out of a silk skirt, maybe.

"My mom was like, 'It's a do mestic trap. Don't sew. Do something more inspirational or intellectual.' But it's a good skill set to have," said Sasha Silveanu, who'll be helping be

ginners learn to sew at the event. "Once you get a few concepts down, the possibilities are endless."

One of the workshops, taught by knitter-seamstress-dancer Jenny Macc of Olympia, actually is on how to turn an old skirt into a chic new purse.

Jennifer Kuhns will teach ways to turn old sweaters into new fashions. And the event will feature a silk-screening workshop by Carnival, a student group.

"Both Jennifer Kuhns and Jen ny Macc were really generous in being willing to do workshops that are also things they make their living with," said Suzanne Reed, who is organizing the swap. "It's unheard of for someo ne to say, 'Here is something I make and sell, and I'm going to show you how to make it yourself.' "

There'll be sewing machines available, as well as heaps of clothes that need new life.

Even those who've never sewed are welcome at the event. Silveanu, who recently moved to the area from Chicago, will be on hand to help beginners.

"I've been sewing most of my life," she said. "I can show people about machines if they don't have them at home and help them with hand-stitching as well, so people have things to take home.

"Also, I can help if people need creative advice or suggestions on how to turn a pair of old pants into a bag or use sleeves for different purposes."

Silveanu is something of an expert. She makes practical totes out of old boat sails and sells them at the Shelton Farmers Market.

"It's all about finding new ways to use old materials and keep them living, keep them useful," she said. "That's what I practice, and I hope to encourage that for others."

Swap-O-Rama-Rama was started in New York City by Wendy Tremayne.

"Wendy's idea is that she wanted to have consumers take creativity back into their own hands and not have clothing end up in landfills," Reed said. "There's a huge amount of c

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- South Sound
- Northwest
- National News
- Lacey Today
- Business
- Education
- Elections
- State Government
- State Workers
- Legislature
- Environment
- Traffic
- Weather
- RSS Feeds
- Capitol Chat
- Corrections

Blogs

- Adam Wilson's Blog
- Chester Allen's Blog
- Hot Flashes
- Idol Chat
- Sports Blog

Announcements

- Obituaries
- Deaths
- Births
- Marriages
- Divorces
- Occasions
- Crime
- Traffic
- Lottery
- Reader Network
- Submission Forms

Sports

- Sports Main
- Outdoors
- High School Sports
- College Sports
- Motor Sports
- Golf
- Winter Sports
- Seahawks
- Sonics
- Mariners

Opinion

- Opinion Main
- Our Views/Your Views
- Letters to the Editor
- Ask the Editors
- Editorial Board

Living

- Living Main
- Horoscope
- Home & Garden
- Health & Fitness
- Notes From the ER
- Books
- Holidays
- Where Do I Take My

Entertainment

- Entertainment Main
- Entertainment News
- Events Calendar
- Nightlife
- Local Bands
- Film
- Showtimes
- Food & Drink Reviews
- Dining Guide
- Arts
- Visitor's Guide

Outdoors

- Outdoors Main
- Environment
- Tides

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- Cars
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