

PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

BY DAN JACOBSON

TEDxNavesink: Another boost for Red Bank

Red Bank has gained yet another important alternative and creative boost.

TEDxNavesink, our local movement to organize renowned TED-style conferences, is building on the sold-out success of its first event to pick the Two River Theater as its venue for next year.

Couldn't think of a better match. That first TEDxNavesink conference in September — around the theme of "the Next Wave," meaning the future of our state and coastal region — filled the Brookdale Performing Arts Center, which holds 350 people. The Two River Theater has the same capacity.

Next year's conference is "TEDxNavesink 2014: Play", and it's scheduled for Saturday, May 10.

According to Brian Smiga, who leads the group's planning committee, the gathering will explore the value of play in business, innovation, education, entertainment,

design, planning, daily life, health, and play on land, sea, stage and everywhere.

"As in 2013, our goals are 'ideas worth spreading' and 'new friends and projects worth meeting'. Last year, we jump-started new collaborations, projects, fund-raising and friendships, and in 2014 we are sure every member of the audience will come away enriched," said Smiga. "TEDxNavesink is a great investment of time for teams, businesses, leaders, the core organizers, and we hope for every member of the audience."

TED conferences were started 25 years ago to bring together those in technology, entertainment and design, thus the name "TED". The non-profit TED organization licenses its name to local organizers who want to hold their own TEDx conference. The parent organization requires certain standards to be met by the locals.

This newspaper was all over the first TEDxNavesink conference soon after organizers started to plan it.

That meant multiple triCity front page stories to boost it. For this is the type of activity in the triCity region that we always encourage and back. The organizers were shocked at the amount of broad-minded people in eastern Monmouth County. They shouldn't have been. We've long known what's here.

"We didn't know there were that many early adopters in Monmouth County," said Smiga in his opening remarks at the September TEDx conference. "And I think all the early adopters are here."

The Two River Theater on Bridge Avenue across from the Galleria is a treasure of our region, and it's one of the reasons we argue Red Bank's destiny is to become a recognized leader in the arts and culture in the whole northeast.

It's a beautifully-designed theater which is perfect to accommodate the speakers at the May TEDxNavesink

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The seating is comfortable, and the layout and acoustics are expertly designed for the performing arts. Everyone will feel connected to the presenters, just as they feel connected to the actors in a production. Speakers at TED events give "the talks of their lives" in presentations of 5-18 minutes

Those who attended the September TEDx conference understand our mission of transforming eastern Monmouth County into a suburban region like no other, where the creative and alternative are ascendant. In fact, that's pretty much what the attendees represent.

I'm not so sure they've all been to the Two River Theater, but everyone around here should go experience it at some point. It's also important for the TEDx attendees to see the potential this newspaper sees in Red Bank. For too often too often the town gets a bad rep as only about commercialism and shopping. It's simply not true. There is a surprisingly large and growing community of creatives, as well as those working in the tech and marketing industry, which tend to attract the broadest-minded people. It's quite remarkable.

Having this TEDx conference at one of the best examples of the Red Bank's creative ethic — the Two River Theater — is powerful symbolism indeed. And one that will help focus our whole region on Red Bank in our obsessive quest to get people to see what we see up there.

Smiga said that ticket information and pricing for the May event will be announced in January. The tickets will include the morning and afternoon programming, lunch and an after-event reception from 5-8 pm.

"We prefer ticket holders to spend the whole day together. Many collaborations and friendships resulted from the 2013 event and we want more projects, friendships and collaborations to result from TEDxNavesink 2014," Smiga said.

TED conferences of the parent TED organization are huge, attracting major international talent in every field imaginable, where participants give the "talk of their life", as the group likes to say. [I like to cite my

experience at an international TED conference in Davos in 2011, when I shared a panel with Rupert Murdoch, Al Gore and Roger Ailes. Our topic? "Media blowback: How newspapers successfully disrupt the internet". The four of us had a great fun, although Murdoch can be a bit of a downer at times.]

Anyway, the more grass-roots TEDx conferences allow local organizers to bring that sharing of knowledge and thought to more local concerns. There are independently-organized TEDx conferences all over the world.

What I love about TEDxNavesink is how it's self-started and run by locals thinking in a broad-minded way. It's a non-profit endeavor, so it's done with a selfless goal of improving our region and world. Beside the team of 25 organizers who put the event together, many other volunteers and sponsors participate.

Those in attendance are really into this stuff. It's healthy, wholesome and important intellectual fare. Visit tedxnavesink.com for more information, and watch for the January sale of tickets. Last year's ticket holders were contacted this month with the opportunity to purchase their tickets first.

HAVING THIS TEDX CONFERENCE AT ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF THE RED BANK'S CREATIVE ETHIC — THE TWO RIVER THEATER — IS POWERFUL SYMBOLISM INDEED.



TEDX NAVESINK 2013 AT BROOKDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN LINCROFT.