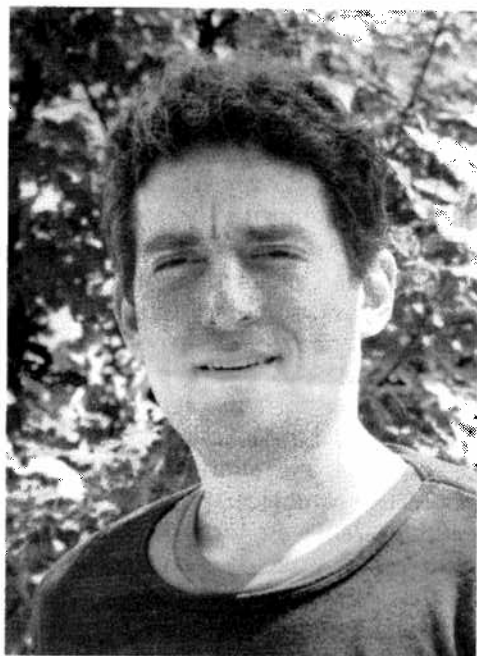


The Center: one year in operation

Barely one year ago, The Center (123 S. Cherry St.) opened its doors to the public. The Center was a dream I had and it only materialized with the labor and love of people, young and old, from the community, and the generous support of my wife. Now only one year into existence, so much has happened and so much appears ready to happen. The best way I can share the energy and spirit found at The Center is to let you hear what some of its visitors have to say. So I solicited for comments and the following was volunteered: "As a member of the West Central Illinois Food Co-op, I was glad to see our operations move to The Center. This relocation could attract more people living downtown, including college students, to become involved with the food co-op. The Center's focus on promoting activities, many of which are family-friendly, that bring together Knox College students with the greater Galesburg community is a welcome addition to downtown." Laura Bush-Collins



happiness." Paul

"I love The Center! There are few places in Galesburg for young people to come together to do socially important and progressive events and to hold engaging conversations. This is one of those special places! Thanks for setting up a spot for brainstorming, music and great company!" Marilyn Webb

"The experience that has meant the most to me is the opportunity to get to meet people from our community that I would not have met without The Center existing. You have so generously donated this place for people from all areas of our City to meet and share ideas. You have given all of us an opportunity to think more, consider more, meet others, and find solutions to issues facing our community. You have provided all of us with the chance to learn from the expertise and experiences of others. I have enjoyed the opportunity to hear different points of view on issues and this has given me a chance to look at them from a different perspective.

It has been wonderful to meet the Knox students and see them interested in what is happening in our community and to witness their willingness to get involved in projects to improve our City. They donate their time and ideas to try to make a difference. Hopefully The Center will continue to promote sharing, caring and interaction with our citizens, students, and government officials. No one has an excuse any longer to simply sit back and complain about what is wrong in our community. You have given everyone a chance to do something to make a difference in any number of ways." Dawn Harrison

"Here's what I like about The Center: it is a positive, whine-free zone with lots of action-oriented options for concerned citizens of Galesburg. All kinds of people attend meetings at The Center—lifelong Galesburg residents, college students, faculty, kids, city administrators, etc. I appreciate how people are fair and courteous and give their attention to the ideas of others." Jennifer

"I helped organize and then attended a 40 hour class on how to respond to sexual assault during summer '08. Having The Center open its doors at no cost to us not only saved us money, but provided us a space to gain communication skills required help our community members and to learn about the suffering in our own community that often goes unheard and unrecognized. The casual, homelike feel to The Center made everyone that much more at ease with the material. I think a regular classroom would have replicated a professor vs. student division. Thanks for opening your doors to us!" Robin

"The Center has provided new opportunities for people to share and discuss diverse ideas. The outcome of this exchange of perspectives has lead people to become participants in exciting ventures that bring needed resources and added interest to the Community of Galesburg.

I have enjoyed the new friendships that have been created as well as re-enforcing existing ones. The Center is a great haven of trust & a springboard for people who believe in the power of joining together to improve the quality of life for all who seek it." Sal Garza

"For me, the Center has been a second home. At Knox I've often felt a lack of outside influence; from adults, children, in general other people who live in the real world, and not the surreal collegiate bubble. The Center is a place where my intelligence as an (almost) adult and a college student is respected, and yet people from all walks of life continually show me that I don't know much yet. It's so comforting! Every time I walk away I feel more elated and energized than when I came in." Tanya

"The Center has helped me see others' true selves and has allowed me to share some of who I am. Connecting with others in this very real way has allowed me to begin to see through others' eyes—at least enough to know there is much I don't know!

I go for the progressive politics, for laughter, a chance to compare notes on the ironies that always seem to accompany oppression, or injustice. I leave feeling that I have allies, that others care—and that not only can we positively change our society, our culture, but we can have fun while we're doing it." Diana Mackin

"Living about a 30 minute drive from The Center, I am not a regular but have attended about a half dozen events there. The Center has impressed me as a positive venture that has a feel of inclusionary cooperation. It is in many respects a change to a more community based sustainable activity that may be required for happiness with economic downturn. I may not be always in synch with every view of those that come to The Center, but I feel comfortable expressing and discussing my particular views there. David Korten's words in his recent book, *Agenda For a New Economy*, apply to the Center. Korten wrote, 'The power of civil society is the power of authentic stories. Despite appearances, civil society holds the upper hand, because the power of authentic stories ultimately trumps the power of both state and corporation.' Nurturing the relationship of community—like that of family—brings

You are Invited

to celebrate the
1st Anniversary
of

THE CENTER



this Saturday, March 7th
6-8 PM
123 S. Cherry St.

Hors d'oeuvres & refreshments

"My experience at The Center has been very brief. However, there are many positive attitudes surrounding the facility and the members that are openly willing to contribute to improving our community. The Center balances bringing neighbors together and making our environment more pleasant, all with genuine care. I must say that I am better informed of resources available to give my kids a healthier life to live because of The Center." Kelly

"One warm spring day I was walking down Cherry Street past The Center storefront. I wondered what was inside and walked in. Diana was there. Asked her what The Center was. She talked for awhile and finally said, 'It's whatever you want it to be.' 'Whatever you want it to be?,' I thought. She told me about a meeting coming up in a few days. I went to the meeting during which some of the upcoming events were discussed. Discussion came around to me. I still had the question in mind, 'What is The Center?' So I asked Peter. Again the answer was, 'It's whatever you want it to be.' I thought, '?: I've been around you guys for ten months. I'd have to say that when someone asks me, 'What is The Center?,' after rambling about for a few minutes, I answer, 'The Center is whatever you want it to be.'" John

"I see The Center as a facilitator for social action. There is not a board of advisors or anything like that. The Center acts as a sort of meeting place to jump start a group for doing whatever needs to be done. One of the things I really admire about The Center and the way its set up is that there is no hierarchy of people you have to go through to get a plan approved. There isn't a set group of people who do everything. Instead there is a whole variety of people from different backgrounds who meet different days and are interested in different

things. To me, this is what makes The Center so valuable. The people who use it don't all have to please some high-up group of people. They can just use the space to facilitate what they think needs to be done in the community." Maury

"My wife and I attended a recent event at the Center, a fundraiser for planting city trees, and were so pleased to see how well the Center has helped to integrate Knox College students and residents of Knox County and Galesburg." Rick

"I'm a relative newcomer to Galesburg, having been here for a mere six years. My previous homes have been in Brooklyn, New York, Chicago and Park Forest, Illinois and then to Galesburg. The Center is unique in that it is a meeting place for all of the residents of the city that are interested in the Arts.

I have seen movies there that were only available to me previously in hard-to-find theaters, at very high prices. The Center can only continue to grow as it offers additional services to the townspeople. We have the intellect and we have the time. Just keep your imagination flowing as to what else you can offer to the residents." Les

These are just some of the several hundred people that visited The Center this past year. Their unwavering commitment to community and open modes of communication is testament to the character of the city of Galesburg and the surrounding areas.

As I said, there is a lot more to come and **you**, any of you, can make The Center a part of your lives as well. Come join the fun. Visit the website, at www.thecenteringalesburg.org, or contact me via email, thecenteringalesburg@gmail.com (and I can put you on the weekly email list). Most of all, stop by, have a seat, and share a story or a dream.

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