

[Wanted: local merchants seek local – and loyal – customers](#)

Community News

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Bread and Yoga at 4951 Broadway, kicked off the second annual holiday market in its studio this past week. PHOTO: Gloria Pazmiño

*Story by Rebecca Ellis*

This holiday season, some small Inwood businesses are finding creative ways to attract last-minute local shoppers to revive sales, and help them weather the storm in a tough economy.

And where chanting is usually heard, in a warm local yoga studio, there is instead the sound of sales.

Bread and Yoga at 4951 Broadway, kicked off the second annual holiday market in its studio this past week.

Last Sat., Sept. 10th, the holiday market featured twelve artisans and four local food vendors selling their wares, which included micro-roasted Ethiopian coffee, organic cupcakes, soaps, and t-shirts. The market will run until December 17th.

Shannon Park, a make-up artist, was giving people makeovers in what normally serves as the yoga studio's changing room.

"There has been a steady influx of people," Marcela Xavier, founder and director of Bread and Yoga said, emerging transformed, with a fresh face after a session with Park.

"The first weekend is usually slow," Xavier added. "People come first just to look. But then it grows by word of mouth. We see more sales [later]."

To be able to offer their space for the holiday market, Bread and Yoga charges each vendor \$45 per Saturday, or a discount rate of \$40 if the vendor commits to all dates.

Jane Lowers, in her forties, was selling hand-blown glass ornaments, for \$30 each, and dish ware for up to \$50 a piece. When approached, she explained that she had sold a plate and some ornaments, but only earned her booth rental so far.

But she was not daunted.

"It's my hobby," Lowers explained. Having signed up to sell her work for the length of the market's run, she is banking on forthcoming sales from last-minute holiday shoppers.

As she explained it, the market was part of Xavier's efforts to give back to the Inwood community by offering quality products to uptown shoppers during the holidays.

"My point in doing this is giving an opportunity for local artists to showcase their work and sell quality

products for people to buy over the holidays without having to go downtown,” she said.

Xavier said that the most profitable time for the studio is after the holidays, in January and February, when people sign up for yoga classes to work off the extra holiday pounds.

“People are wanting to fulfill their New Year’s resolutions,” she explained.

Loretta Jordan, an Inwood resident, was also at the market. She is a doula, a Greek term for “a woman who serves,” providing midwifery and post-partum care. This Saturday, she was in charge of a small sampling of dress shoes and ties from Jason Devereaux’s clothing line, Nostylgia, neatly arranged on a circular rack.

“We have a two-pronged approach: local businesses and national distribution,” Devereaux, the owner of Nostalgia, explained while sitting in his shop, located nine short blocks from Bread and Yoga.

Nostylgia has a fireplace feel. The shop was designed to look like an alleyway between two urban town houses, complete with a fire escape on one wall used to shelve a colorful display of cotton T-shirts. The brick interior walls are decorated with varsity trophies and clocks. Old-time detachable collars, varsity sweatshirts, and other classic wear grace the walls and shelves and vintage bikes are suspended from the ceiling. Customers are greeted by a German punch clock dating back the early twentieth century, with time cards – labeled Anwesenheitskarten in German – in the slot.

All the clothing is made in Upstate New York and can be described as Americana. Reminiscent of the 1950’s collegiate look, the styles hearken back to a foregone era.

“We’re trying to recapture America’s Golden Age with classical craftsmanship,” Devereaux said. “Back to a time when people bought things [meant] to last.”

Dress shirts, featuring suede elbows and graced with the store’s unobtrusive logo, are sold for \$80 each. Noticeably missing were the price tags. It’s because, sometimes, explained Devereaux, he will give loyal customers a discount.

Like the Bread and Yoga Holiday Market, Devereaux too is expecting last-minute shoppers.

“Those are the kind of shoppers who buy smaller items in retail stores,” he said. “Now everyone is getting their big screen TVs at Target.”

Devereaux graduated with the Class of 2004 from New York University’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business in marketing. Even though he is doing something quite different than his classmates, who mostly “went into banking and finance,” his retail and clothing line are paying off. Since he opened his shop six and a half years ago, Devereaux has watched the Dyckman Street block near Broadway blossom from a “row of vacant, rat-infested storefronts” to a bustling neighborhood filled with restaurants and clothing stores.

Local businesses in Inwood and Washington Heights benefited immensely when the Audobon Partnership for Economic Development began providing loans from \$5000 to \$250,000 in 1999. The urban renewal initiative was awarded grant money from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation.

Nostylgia is already working on next year’s fall and holiday selection, having recently partnered with a manufacturing firm. In the future, the bulk of clothing will be made in the U.S., but 30 percent of it may be made elsewhere after next year. But Devereaux sees the new partnership and some outsourcing of

production as a necessary step in building a long-term, sustainable local business.

“Someday, I hope it will be economically feasible to make everything here,” he said.

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