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Wisdom from the Grill

By: Susan Van Dongen, TimeOFF

09/01/2005

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Sharon Silverstein and the Peace Project will perform during the Central Jersey Firemen's Cook-off.

Mouthwatering barbecue, great music and a little enlightenment — all this can be yours at a gathering of grill-masters in Hillsborough.

The first Central Jersey Firemen's Cook-off will be held at the Woods Road Firehouse in Hillsborough Sept. 10 and will feature guys, their grills and a plethora of secret sauces. Ribs and chicken will withstand the scrutiny of the judges, and ribs, brisket, pulled pork, hamburgers and hot dogs will be available for purchase.



Sharon Silverstein and the Peace Project will perform during the Central Jersey Firemen's Cook-off in Hillsborough.

Three bands are scheduled to perform — Soulphonic, the Angela Stryker Band, and Sharon Silverstein and the Peace Project, who will perform original music mid-afternoon. That's where the enlightenment comes in.

With a deep, smoky voice and songs drawn from diverse styles — folk, blues and jazz — Ms. Silverstein and friends touch the very soul, conveying ideas about unconditional love, grace and the great potential all humans have for true wisdom.

With spiritual teachers such as Carlos Castaneda and Wayne Dyer, Ms. Silverstein's lyrics seem to seep into the subconscious, and her music and voice have a transformational quality.

"My voice — which has been compared to Grace Slick or Janis Joplin or Melissa Etheridge — is very penetrating," Ms. Silverstein says. "So the vibrations of my voice combined with the vibration of the concepts in the songs all goes to the cellular level and, I think, awakens some spirituality within the listener. My shows are like miniature personal growth seminars."

An enthusiastic "yogini," as well as student of transpersonal psychology and self-awareness, Ms. Silverstein writes her songs around the ideas she finds in her studies.

"I integrate what I've learned into the lyrics, for example the song 'As a Woman Thinketh,'" she says. "I was exploring the idea that we attract what we are, the concept of 'as we thinketh in our hearts, so shall we be.' All thoughts carry an energy and what we give out is what get back.

"That's why it's important to sit in stillness every day and shut down the mind chatter," she continues. "As individuals, we're given every single thing we need to be successful, but we have to shut down this chatter. It's a kind of re-programming. We release what we learned as children — things that don't serve us anymore — and instead we start incorporating what we choose to believe."

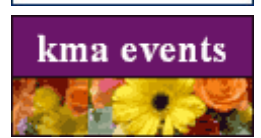
Born in Brooklyn and raised in Old Bridge, Ms. Silverstein has a bachelor of music degree from the Mason Gross School of the Arts. She taught in the New Jersey public school system for more than a dozen years, mostly elementary and middle-school



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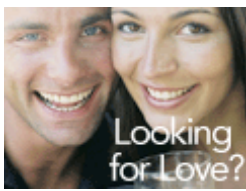


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music. However, a few years ago, an "a-ha" moment with an eighth-grade band member motivated her to leave public school teaching and launch her own business, facilitating new, more positive ways of parent-child and teacher-child interaction.

"My student got up at eighth-grade graduation and made a speech about how I didn't just teach music, I taught life lessons," she says. "I just cried when I heard him say that because I knew, he really got it. Then I realized, 'This is what I should be doing.' So I left my tenured position and started my own business, Living at Peace. I just thought, 'Let's bring this spiritual material to kids. What an education.' "

She says the mission for Living at Peace is to empower people of all ages to live life with greater self-awareness and a positive mindset. Ms. Silverstein has created a number of workshops that teach adults and children techniques to overcome negative beliefs and limitations. Drumming circles are just one way she gets her students to focus on the moment, to slow down at the same time they're being "lifted up" by the rhythms and group energy.

Ms. Silverstein lives in Hillsborough with her husband and 8-year-old son, a budding drummer. She got involved in the cook-off when friends invited her to take part. Doug and Laura Keiles, who have recently opened the R.U.B. Hut in Manville ("Really Unique BBQ"), love the Peace Project, but also hope to spread their enthusiasm about grilling, which has grown in popularity, thanks to the Food Network as well as various regional and national competitions. It was because of the Keiles and their super-secret recipes that Ms. Silverstein is no longer a vegetarian.

"I tasted Doug's ribs and I fell off the wagon," she says.

Although it's billed as a competition, Ms. Silverstein says it's more of a celebration.

"These are some of the most friendly people you'll find, who will go out of their way to help their neighbors," she says. "Although there is prize money for different categories, it's a collaboration."

Even so, the participants would rather stew in their cryptic condiments than share their recipes.

"Everyone has their unique way of barbecuing," Ms. Silverstein says. "Everything is very secret."

Sharon Silverstein and the Peace Project *will perform at the Central Jersey Firemen's Cook-off, Woods Road Firehouse No. 3, Woods Road, Hillsborough, Sept. 10, noon-5 p.m. Free. For information, call (908) 359-3333. On the Web:*

www.ribswithin.com/nfjs.html. Ms. Silverstein on the Web: www.livingatpeace.com. R.U.B. Hut on the Web: www.rubhut.com

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