

Firebrand

New Radical Community Center Coming to Nashville

Chris Lugo

2004

Middle Tennessee anarchists and community organizers gathered at Nashville's Belmont United Methodist Church on May Day, traditionally a worker's holiday, to celebrate their vision of social justice, and are working to create a vision for the Firebrand, a proposed community center in East Nashville.

"The vision for the Firebrand isn't just a community center," said Lisa Abell, of the Firebrand Collective, "it will also be a home for regional independent media, a kitchen for Food Not Bombs, an info shop with a large collection of zines, and a community living room. It will be whatever the community that participates in it helps it to be."

This is part of a project to create a new community space for radical grassroots activists in Nashville. The Firebrand is currently in concept phase, but with your help, we can make it a reality. Our vision for the Firebrand is to create a community space that will inspire and educate people.

It will be home to several different organizations and activities and include a wide variety of facilities. Our current vision includes a library, media lab, performance space, meeting space, and a kitchen.

The Firebrand Community Center is named after a radical Tennessee newspaper published in the early 1900's by the anarchist Ross Winn (see article about Winn in this issue).

Our logo is taken from the original masthead of Winn's Firebrand, which read, "The Advance—Ross Winn's Firebrand: A Periodical of the Period."

We know that Winn's work and memory won't be found in the state archives or in a monument in a city park, so we offer it here, in the form of a community center and infoshop which carries on the ideals of true liberty and individual freedom to which he and so many others dedicated their lives.

The May Day evening began with free movies from the Tennessee Independent Media Center, which recently celebrated its one year anniversary. "Independent citizen reporting is essential to our vision of the Firebrand," said an editor with the Tennessee Independent Media Center, a charter organization of the Firebrand. Fundraising festivities began at 6:00pm and with cuisine from Food Not Bombs (FNB), which was recently featured on National Public Radio for their work feeding Nashville's homeless.

"What we do," said Becky Renfrew of Nashville FNB, "is gather food that would otherwise be wasted and we share it with people. We don't require them to go through any paperwork or prove anything. We just feed them because they are hungry."

The evening featured local activist speakers, a presentation on Ross Winn, and hip-hop poetry and music.

For more information about the Firebrand which is seeking ideas, donations and participation, please visit thefirebrand.org

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