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Sunday, May 8, 2005



Jeffrey Sauger / Special to The Detroit News

Detroiters Jordan Medeiros, left, 27, and Matt Clayson, 24, distribute pamphlets promoting Detroit Synergy in Ferndale. The organization promotes the city's positive attributes.

Detroit Synergy instills city pride with fun events

Scavenger hunt, dinner tour and cleanup projects fill group's calendar.

By David Josar / The Detroit News

For a group without a formal structure, the growth of still-evolving Detroit Synergy has surprised even its founders.

Over the next few weeks the group will organize a progressive dinner tour along Woodward that features 11 Detroit restaurants, a downtown scavenger hunt and a citywide bike ride.

Started by a trio of friends who lived in the Cass Corridor as a way to tout the benefits of living, working and playing in Detroit, the organization now boasts about 1,800 members and sponsors some of the city's most innovative activities.

"It has been more successful than I would have dreamed at the time," said Francis

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How to join Detroit Synergy

The best way to get information is via the group's Web site, www.detroitssynergy.org, where people can sign up for its mailing list.

Upcoming events include the strolling supper club on May 11, but the \$35 per person ticket, which includes food, some beverages, tax and tip, must be purchased online before the event; the Tigers' game takeover will be

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Grunow, one of the friends who created the group in the fall of 2001. "I believe its concept to get people engaged in the city of Detroit and caring about Detroit. It's been very successful, but it's only a piece of what has to happen in the city."

There are no membership fees or structured meetings. All projects are self-funded. Individual members work together to create events and activities that adhere to Detroit Synergy's mission of getting people excited about the city.

Last Thursday night, for example, about 20 members handed out leaflets in downtown Ferndale, Royal Oak and Birmingham that promoted the group's upcoming supper club in Detroit.

Member Matt Clayson, Detroit Synergy's development chair, got involved in the group about two years ago after he and his fiancée moved into the Harbortown apartments from East Lansing.

He was looking for an organization that helped Detroit but offered more than just occasional projects.

"Here you get to learn about people and interact with them," said Clayson, 24, a consultant for the Tourism and Economic Development Council of the Metro Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Instead of just cleaning up an empty lot, we feel people are the backbone of a community and that engaged people will help the city."

There is nearly always a social aspect to the group's activities. Even when its members are banding together to participate in the Motor City Makeover they plan to gather for an "afterglow" at a nearby bar or restaurant.

Clayson said while organizing events takes many individual man-hours, the group's structure makes the projects feasible.

The supper club concept originated from one Detroit Synergy member who liked restaurants and dining in the city. That member networked with others to find restaurants that would participate, negotiated affordable prices and did some promoting, Clayson said.

"It's a win-win situation for everyone," he said.

One of those winners Rose Giffen, 30, a fund-raiser for a non-profit organization in downtown Detroit who returned to the area two years ago.

After going to a few general meetings, Giffen found herself planning a 350-person Corktown pub crawl for Detroit Synergy. When the event ran, hundreds of people crowded in the Corktown streets and in its bars.

"There's something magical about saying you can affect where you live and work. It's powerful," Giffen said.

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held May 31; Chill in Detroit will be held on May 19, when appetizers and beverages will be served as members mingle with folks from area community groups; and Hunt-Rediscover Detroit, a scavenger hunt in which teams can win prizes, will be held June 4.

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