



Stop in Salem before Raw Art Works fundraiser

By **Larry Claffin Jr.**

Staff writer

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On Saturday night, Raw Art Works will hold an annual fundraising "Bash" at its brand-new gallery in downtown Lynn. Not to be outdone, three women with strong ties to the North Shore's arts scene will host a pre-party for the event at a yet-to-be-opened home goods store in Salem.

Roberta O'Connor and Jen Reardon of Salem, with Kate Luchini of Marblehead, invite the public to gather at O'Connor's new store, Cabin Fever, before heading to Raw Art Works' Party with a Purpose Fundraiser. The pre-party takes place from 5 to 7 p.m. on Saturday at Cabin Fever, in the former C.F. Tompkins building; the fundraiser starts at 7 p.m. at Raw Space in Central Square.

RAW is a nonprofit organization that teaches life skills through art to underserved youths. Led by artists and art therapists, it offers 20 free programs, including visual arts groups, a film school, single-gender groups, mentoring and leadership programs and a college preparation program. Most of RAW's students live in Lynn, but some are from other North Shore towns.

The women, who are hosting the the pre-party at their own expense, said the purpose of the event was to spread the word about RAW.

"We wanted to expand RAW into Salem," said Luchini, a senior programs specialist in the education department of the Peabody Essex Museum.

Luchini said she was introduced to the organization four years ago when young RAW artists did a large public art piece in PEM's atrium. She's now on RAW's Friends Council which helps to promote and support the nonprofit.

"Kids don't feel like they're understood until they're at RAW," said Luchini, an artist who works in mixed media and sculpture.

"(The staff) really help kids and they really change their lives," she said, citing substance abuse and emotional and family issues that many students face. "RAW is a safe place where they can express themselves in a healthy way ... and the art is amazing."

Another reason for holding the party in Salem was to introduce the city to Cabin Fever, which will carry mid-century modern furniture from O'Connor's native Brazil, along with contemporary accents, when it officially opens on May 19.

Reardon, who has owned In a Pig's Eye restaurant on Derby Street for more than 20 years, said she found out about Raw Art Works when she attended last year's fundraiser.

"I was blown away by the artwork," especially one kid's self-portrait, she said.

Reardon said she uses the walls of her restaurant as a "gallery for local artists," and changes the work every six to eight weeks. She said she hopes to display the work of RAW students in midsummer, helping to spread RAW's mission.

"I've been in Salem in the public eye for 22 years and I've never heard of RAW," she said. "And if I've never heard of it, there's probably a lot of people that haven't."

If you go

What: Raws Art Works' Party with a Purpose Fundraiser

Where: Raw Space, 37 Central Square, Lynn

When: Saturday, May 17, 7 to 11:30 p.m.

Tickets.: \$40 at www.rawart.org or at In a Pig's Eye, 148 Derby St., Salem

Information: Event is 21-plus; entertainment provided by ACME Blues Band

If you go

What: Pre-party at Cabin Fever

Where: 281 Essex St., Salem

When: Saturday, May 17, 5 to 7 p.m.

Information: Event is free; refreshments and snacks will be served

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Photos



From left, Jen Reardon, Kate Luchini and Roberta O'Connor will host at pre-party at 281 Essex Street for Raw Art Works' "Party with a Purpose" benefit on May 17. The party is being held at O'Connor's new store, Cabin Fever. Staff photo