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'Women with Moxie' mix fun with their work
by Karen Mamone



Elsie Gilmore is the founder of Women with Moxie.

Elsie Gilmore jokes that she started "a good ole' girls" networking group in order to meet some cool women to hang out with.

And indeed, in Women with Moxie she has met some 700 of them. Gilmore has also created a fabulously successful way for women to increase their business and social lives that has become a full-time occupation that shows signs of spreading nationally.

Gilmore, a Vermont native who owns True Green Studios which designs and develops Web sites for businesses of all sizes, later teamed up with an old friend, boutique owner Laura Daniel Gale (Everything but the Girl in the Rosemary District) to help get the word out.

In only a year, the party of two has increased several hundredfold, and sponsored dozens of events for and by members.

Through its Web site and monthly Moxie Mixers, women in professions ranging from nail technician to medical doctor

share ideas and make business and personal connections over a casual drink.

And now Women With Moxie has started a Venice group.

"It all started with a desire to hang around with cool women and talk about some great ideas," said Gilmore, who showed up wearing an "I (heart) Nerds" T-shirt.

About 50 women attended the first meeting last August. There are no speeches, no, "I'm Alice and I'm a Realtor" introductions. The only structure to the meetings are some brief announcements and introductions.

Members are invited to post a picture online and tell something about themselves and their businesses. That listing becomes a resource guide for members, and a way for members with similar interests and career issues to contact each other.

Allowing women to "get together online and get together in life" has been a magically simple formula that has grown faster than Gilmore ever imagined.

A new Venice group is meeting for the first time in August, and chapters are planned for Charlotte and in north county. What's more, Gilmore has gotten inquiries from as far away as North Carolina, California and Miami from women who want to bring Women with Moxie to their areas.

Even with the need - the numbers and the time was just getting to be too much - to impose a \$50 a year membership fee, the network shows no signs of slowing down. A month after notifying women of the new fee starting May 1, more than 30 women joined.

As a not-for-profit organization, the pair is committed to providing more opportunities for people to come together for a good cause, Gilmore said.

The group has collected canned goods for the Mayor's Feed the Hungry Program, and it is sponsoring a team for the annual 3-day 60-mile walk for breast cancer.

Gilmore hopes the group will be able to offer educational resources for women, and this year it is launching a weekly podcast online "Radio Moxie."

Even as it has grown, MWM has maintained its low-stress, have-a-little ideal.

"We aren't a high pressure networking environment. You don't have to stand up and introduce yourself in front of everyone. It's more about forming relationships." she said.

The diverse membership includes realtors, financial planners, psychiatrists, a woman who sells airplanes, entrepreneurs of all ilk and a local newspaper columnist.

For "Members2Members" events, guest "hostesses" plan gatherings that range from a Couples Workshop, Vintage "USO" Dance, and a one-day seminar - Achieve More Without Adding More.

Its second annual Rally for Wellness, is a day of free health screenings and information, and other events include wine tastings, guided meditation, and a seminar on the relation between hormones and weight.

In September, members will hear about a dream event: a week in France golfing, shopping, sightseeing and taking a private cooking class in a chateau.

For more information, log onto Women with Moxie at www.womenwithmoxie.com. The group holds informal mixers on the third Wednesday of each month at the Rustic Grill, (400 N. Lemon Ave.). Mixers are free for members and \$5 for non-members. The next mixer is Aug. 20.