

LEISURE

# Arts & LIFESTYLES

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# Women's Expo

to be held at the Middle Country Public Library • B9

# Ninth annual Women's Expo to be held at MCPL

## A day of holiday shopping, inspiring stories, networking — and fun!

BY DONNA NEWMAN  
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The Women's Expo is a celebration of Long Island women: their talents, their dreams, their ambitions and successes. As you walk through the 76 exhibits that will fill the Middle Country Public Library on Oct. 8 (from 11 am to 6 pm) you will feel the frisson of possibility. And, if you listen, you will hear extraordinary life stories from "ordinary" women — proving that following your passion can truly take you places.

One of the accomplished women you may meet is Barbara Jordan, Middle Country Library's assistant director of community relations and special projects, who has been among the Women's Expo's hardest workers and biggest cheerleaders since the idea's inception.

MCPL Director Sandra Feinberg said the Expo would never have achieved the level of success it enjoys today, were it not for Jordan's efforts. "The Women's Expo has become one of the most popular and well-attended events held at the library and Barbara was critical in its initiation and implementation. From the beginning, she steered the work of the committee and co-chairs, initiated and streamlined staff responsibilities, assisted in securing sponsorships, and established procedures for vendors and volunteers."

Working alongside Jordan, Elizabeth Malafi, a coordinator of the library's Miller Business Center, underscored her dedication and drive as important factors in the expo's growth and development. "Many of us work together to create this annual event

— always with Barbara's enthusiasm and creativity guiding the way. I've learned so much being involved in this special project with her. It's kind of hard to imagine the Women's Expo without her."

Jordan marked a quarter-century at the library last year, and has been involved in many of its unique enterprises designed to meet community needs. Her coordination of the Women's Expo will end this year, as Jordan is set to retire in January. Although she'll hand the reins to Malafi, there's no question that Jordan will be present at next year's event. Happily, she says, she'll be able to spend all her time shopping.

As the expo has grown, exhibit spaces are more coveted. A committee reviews all applications with an eye toward providing

the greatest diversity — of products and services and of women. Making the cut this year are veteran exhibitors as well as first-timers. Some of their stories follow somewhat traditional paths; some are ideas from out of the blue. Here's a sampling:

- Samantha Elliott, a pastor's wife and gospel recording artist, started her millinery business, *Samantha's Place Inc.*, about 20 years ago. "I thank God for both my grandmothers, who taught me how to sew," she said. She took that initial knowledge and, through schooling and working with designers out of New York City, parlayed it into a successful enterprise with a web presence ([www.sistersamanthasplace.com](http://www.sistersamanthasplace.com)).

"In my culture — the African American culture," Elliott said, "I believe we wear more hats. We're taught to wear hats and to dress up." She added, "I can look at your face and tell what style hat would look good on you." Beyond creating hats, Elliott feels her gift extends to inspiring women to use the talents that God gave them: "Now, with the economy the way it is, a lot of women are reaching way deep inside of them and pulling out some of that gift that God has given them ... I believe that each one of us

has some special talent to share."

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***The Women's Expo is a showcase and marketplace perfectly timed to jump-start your holiday shopping. The vendors are entrepreneurs, artisans, importers, designers and distributors offering a wide variety of products and services, many of them one-of-a-kind.***

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- Susan Broderick was shopping in Port Jefferson when she noticed a flyer for pottery classes. She brought it home, gave it to her family and said: "This is what I want for Christmas," and from the very first class, she was hooked. Through her son, she met Vermont potter Robert Compton, who taught her different techniques and ... "that's when I fell in love," she

said. "In the beginning, I started out doing functional pieces — and I still do them — but my heart is in the decorative work. You never know what you're going to get. They're like little presents."

More recently, seeking growth as an artist, Broderick took a class with renowned potter Fong Choo in North Carolina. It piqued her interest in Asian work. She finds it ceremonial and very peaceful. She recalls one show visitor who paid her what she believes to be the ultimate compliment: "Passing my display, a woman said to me 'I feel like I should bow; there is a reverence to your work.' I was blown away!" Look for her hand-thrown pottery online at [www.susanbroderick.com](http://www.susanbroderick.com).

*Continued on page B17*

## Women's Expo

*Continued from page B9*

• Laura Hinde's passion had its roots in a desire to distribute beautiful things — and to help others in the process. She fit her budding business, Beyond Beads & Bags, into an already hectic work life. She works a 9-to-5 job, but weekends from April thru November you can find her at craft shows and street fairs. She owes the seeds for this new venture to her daughter, who participated in a mission to Cambodia in the summer of 2007. Kristin worked with an organization that helps those at risk by teaching them marketable skills. When she returned home with items produced by women in the program, to sell in the U.S. to raise funds, Hinde had an epiphany.

"The handmade items she brought back were so beautiful, I thought, 'somebody has to market these.' You're looking at that somebody." This is her first time at the expo, and she's looking forward to the sales, but also to the sharing. "It's an opportunity to meet and talk to women with more business experience than I have; to see the things they do to make themselves more successful; to let them know what I've learned, find out what they've learned." See the Cambodian imports at [www.beyondbeadsbags.com](http://www.beyondbeadsbags.com).

• Christine Matthews created Mothers in Mind to market an item she invented. A problem solver, Matthews got tired of fighting with her toddler to zip up his jacket. She created a new kind of garment, part scarf, part dickey — but not really either — and called it the Snickey. This soft, fabric neck accessory (which is not just for kids) protects the neck from winter chills and has a quick release fastener designed to disengage immediately should it get snagged on something. The first ones were sewn for her twins. "When family and friends started asking me to make them one, I was flattered," she said. Then she offered her creation to a local children's clothing boutique — and they snapped it up. And so, a business was born. "Since then, every store owner I've approached has been equally enthusiastic: 'Great product! I love it! Yes!!'"

Now, two and a half years later, you can purchase a Snickey in stores in New York, Connecticut and Massachu-

sets, or through her website, [www.mothersinmind.com](http://www.mothersinmind.com). They come in a variety of colors and sizes and can be embroidered or monogrammed. Matthews looks forward to meeting women at the expo "who have blazed the trail to a successful business, and are willing to share what they know."

• Barbara Ringewald was recruited for the Women's Expo years ago by Barbara Jordan, who saw her creations on display elsewhere. She is an award-winning weaver who has been practicing the craft for two decades — ever since taking an adult education class that addicted her. "Weaving is an ancient craft," said Ringewald. "When weaving, I feel a connection with the past and am amazed and gratified when people respond to my work and feel that connection, too. I design and weave clothing that reflects the time-consuming care and love that went into apparel in the past, but is sophisticated and user-friendly for our busy lifestyles now."

Her philosophy: clothing should be beautiful, comfortable, practical and, above all, fun to wear. Her cottons, wools and silks feel good and drape beautifully. New this year is her collection of hand-painted scarves, all her own designs. Of the Women's Expo, she said: "Barbara and her crew do an amazing job. It is well known, despite being a one-day, mid-week event. It's a great networking opportunity."

The Women's Expo is a showcase and marketplace perfectly timed to jump-start your holiday shopping. The vendors are entrepreneurs, artisans, importers, designers and distributors offering a wide variety of products and services, many of them one-of-a-kind. Presented by the Middle Country Library Foundation, Women's Expo was originally developed in partnership with the LI Fund for Women & Girls out of a shared vision to promote the economic independence of women.

In addition to the exhibits, there will be an Expo Café where lunch will be available for purchase from 11 am to 3 pm. "Tea at Half-Past-Three," a meet-the-author event, will feature Kimberly Seals Allers (author of *The Mocha Manual* series) presenting "Pushing the Reset Button: Redefining Life, Redefining You."

The Women's Expo will be held at Middle Country



Photo by Barbara Jordan

Weaver Barbara Ringewald

Public Library, 101 Eastwood Blvd. in Centereach. Admission is free, but it is hoped that guests will purchase raffle tickets that they may then put in contention for the prizes of their choice. All proceeds go to the library's Miller Business Center, which offers support services to the business community as well as a springtime skill-building workshop tailored for women entrepreneurs. For information, call the library at 585-9393, ext. 296 or visit [www.womensexpoli.org](http://www.womensexpoli.org).

### On the cover:

Photo by Barbara Jordan

Exhibitors at the 2009 Women's Expo display their wares.

From left, MCPL librarian Elizabeth Malafi, weaver Barbara Ringewald, inventor Christine Matthews, potter Susan Broderick, librarian Sara Fade, importer Laura Hinde and milliner Samantha Elliott.