

JUICY COUTURE | These days, you don't have to hug trees or wear Birkenstocks to show your love for Mama Earth. Check out this cute, eco-friendly handbag from Tampa's GoGreenItems.com. It's made from recycled juice boxes by a women's cooperative in the Philippines, which uses the income from the sales to support 200 families. No two are alike. It's \$35 at GoGreenItems.com.



SPACES

{LIVING IN THE NOW}

ALL THINGS TO ALL ARTISTS

Painted sneakers? Heavy metal? Belly dancing? Ybor's newest artspace wants it all.

By Susan Thurston
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The latest addition to the Ybor City arts scene is part gallery, theater, concert hall, gift shop and classroom.

The founders wanted Arts on 9th to focus on all aspects of art, where people feel just as comfortable watching a heavy metal band as taking a sewing class.

"We're trying to be more of an arts center than a gallery," said Jeff Svajdlenka, one of the four owners. "We're not going to just hang works on the walls."

Svajdlenka opened the nonprofit center at 1513 E Ninth Ave. in March with his wife, Tawnyia, and co-founders Rosemary Saunders and John Burchett — all of whom have other jobs. They rent the former warehouse from Jack Shiver, owner of the nearby Don Vicente de Ybor Historic Inn, who had been using it for storage.

The 6,600-square-foot center has a large theater, art gallery, gift shop, costume-making room and classroom studios. The main rooms have skylights, hence the Skylight Theater and Skylight Gallery.

The founding artists hope the center adds more maturity to Ybor, a destination often associated with a young bar crowd and late-night crime. The owners are in their 40s and 50s and, between them, have decades of experience in the arts. Saunders, a costume maker, has been a frequent finalist in the annual Guavaween costume contest and works as a Ybor ambassador helping tourists.

Despite the tough economic times, the group decided to open now in anticipation of the "IKEA-zation" of Ybor, as Svajdlenka calls it. They expect some of the crowds headed to the soon-to-open furniture store will spill over into Ybor.

"It would be nice to compete with St. Pete," said Burchett, noting the city's plentiful galleries and art businesses.

In its first month, the center has hosted performances by the heavy metal band Souldidium and the 15-piece Boulevard Jazz Orchestra, which returns April 17. It holds cigar rolling and belly-dancing classes and



Photos by Luis Santana/tbt*

Artwork hangs on the wall of the main gallery of Arts on 9th in Ybor City.



Founders Jeff and Tawnyia Svajdlenka want to be "more of an arts center than a gallery."



Custom painted Vans sneakers are up for auction during the current exhibition.

Arts on 9th

Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and later during special events. *Art Brigata: Art From the Trenches* runs from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Friday. Admission is \$5 at the door. The Boulevard Jazz Orchestra performs at 8 p.m. April 17, with free swing dance classes at 9. Admission is \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door. The center needs gift shop volunteers, art class teachers, consignment artists, and musical and performance artists. Call (813) 436-8002 or go to artson9th.org.

plans to add courses in ceramics, drawing, painting, sewing and astrology. The gift shop sells costumes, jewelry, ceramic pieces and art supplies.

On display through mid-April is *Roommates*, an exhibit of paintings, pastel and chalk works by roommates Damon Navari and Reuben Garcia, a first-time exhibitor.

A healthy question: To spend, or not?

Buying health-care basics can present a bit of a conundrum: Is a \$100 bathroom scale, whose readout rivals that of a NASA control panel, any better than an elementary \$10 one? How about a pricey pair of reading glasses versus drugstore frames? Here are some areas where it pays to skimp on health essentials and where it makes sense to invest. — **Real Simple Solutions**

When to scrimp

Thermometers: Old-school mercury versions, which are hard to read and can break, have gone the way of the Walkman. An inexpensive digital thermometer (about \$6) is the new classic and more than adequate for the average person. Go for an under-the-tongue variety, as ear (or tympanic) thermometers are less reliable.

Toothbrushes: The American Dental Association maintains that both budget-friendly manual and pricier power brushes can effectively clean teeth. So if price is a concern, don't feel guilty about going low-budget.

Reading glasses: For those who are young or who need only low-magnification nonprescription glasses to read, lenses that cost about \$15 will be as effective as those costing more than \$125. That said, if the distance between your eyes is unusually narrow or wide, budget glasses may not be comfortable and may cause a headache.

When to splurge

Dental floss: If your teeth are spaced closely together or if you have old fillings that have expanded, you may want to spend an extra dollar or two on smooth, snag-resistant dental floss or tape (thin, flat floss). It glides between tight teeth even more easily and can be gentler on gums than waxed floss.

Pedometers: If you got your pedometer via a kids' meal or a cereal box, don't count on it to tally steps accurately or for long. Pedometers that cost less than \$15 often wear out within six months.

Bathroom scales: A basic, inexpensive analog scale (\$10 and up), the kind that uses a needle pointer, suffices for most people. But if you're serious about weight loss or you're an athlete, consider a costlier scale (\$30 and up) that measures body-fat percentage, too. If you use the feature regularly, the readings will help you track your progress.