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Conference to examine possibilities of Internet

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By *Richard M. Barron, Staff Writer*
News & Record

Greensboro's Internet community has become so active that The Los Angeles Times dubbed the city "Blogsboro" for the scores of people who have their own online journals, or Web logs.

Hoping to harness that energy and expand the Internet's usefulness for communities and individuals, a local group will hold a free conference on the Internet in October.

Called "ConvergeSouth," the two-day event's planners hope to explore "digital publishing and entertainment," according to a preliminary mission statement. The weekend will include speakers and seminars on using the Internet for personal expression and communication, and evenings will showcase local music and nightspots.

The goal is to explore ways to approach the Internet more creatively, group member Sue Polinsky said.

A blogger herself and a Web consultant, Polinsky has joined a broad group of Greensboro residents, from other bloggers to economic-development professionals, to plan the conference.

The event is scheduled for Oct. 7.

"Jealousy" is behind the idea, Polinsky joked.

"Everybody else is having conferences, except us," she said.

Inspired by the South by Southwest Festivals in Austin, Texas, the group wants to fulfill several goals during the event. These include:

- Finding ways to bring more people to the Internet to expand its economic and ethnic diversity
- Encouraging people to be creative in using the Internet for journalism, expression and entertainment
- Helping like-minded people meet and learn from each other
- Enjoying local music
- Showcasing Greensboro's downtown

Sponsorships and donations are essential to the event's success. In

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initial meetings to plan the event, Polinsky asked how much admission the group should charge.

The planners eventually settled on free, hoping to get sponsorships and donations to make it fly, she said.

Most seminars will take place at N.C. A&T, she said. Local foundations and economic development groups, such as Action Greensboro, are offering time and financial support.

Volunteers planning the conference include longtime blogger and journalist Ed Cone; www.Greensboro101.com founder Roch Smith; Ben Hwang, a local engineer; John Robinson, editor of the News & Record; and Allen Johnson, the News & Record's editorial page editor.

Contact Richard M. Barron at 373-7371 or dbarron@news-record.com



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