

Sustainable Sew-In Stitchers help save energy

From Journal Staff Reports

Almost 600 reusable tote bags have been made by Ithaca-area volunteers who responded to a call to sew for a project called Lighten Up Caroline, which aims to deliver a cloth bag containing a compact fluorescent light bulb and a packet of literature on sustainable living to every resident of Caroline.

The plan to distribute the light bulbs originated with a citizens' group called Energy Independent Caroline and was picked up by a Cornell University junior who applied for and won grant funding. SewGreen, an Ithaca-based sustainable sewing program, was challenged to make as many as 1,400 bags for the project. The sewing volunteers are using reused and donated materials.

If too few bags can be made, the shortfall will be made up with commercially made reusable bags, according to SewGreen Coordinator Wendy Skinner.

"I am absolutely stunned at how beautiful each bag is," Skinner said. "I can't imagine how it would feel to find one of these hung over your doorknob with a free light bulb inside. I applaud everyone who is making this happen."

Skinner said she thinks at least another 200 bags can be sewn locally. To push for that goal, a community sew-in — the third since the project started in early March — is planned for noon to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 5 at the SewGreen Studio at Tuff Soul, 516 W. State St. in Ithaca. Participants can bring their own sewing machines or use onsite machines. To make bags at home, pre-cut kits are available at SewGreen, Brooktons Market and the Brooktondale Community Center. The pattern is posted at www.sew-green.org.

Lighten Up Caroline distribution day is April 19. To volunteer, contact energyindependentcaroline@gmail.com.