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'Geek' event taps those with passion for ideas

Ignite Charlotte tells speakers: 'Enlighten us, but make it quick.'

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Sam Fagan and Bridget Sullivan co-founded Ignite Charlotte. Courtesy Michelle R. Kovach, SpiritFire Photography

More Information

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Ignite Charlotte will be held from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday at the Neighborhood Theater, 511 East 36th St., Charlotte. Doors open at 6 p.m. Admission is free. RSVP required. To RSVP and print ticket, go to www.ignitecharlotte.org. For information, call 704-358-9298.

For those with a personal or professional passion about an idea they want to communicate, and others in our community who want to be enlightened, Ignite Charlotte offers an exciting venue to feed the creative muse that lives in the Queen City.

Self-billed as a fast-paced "geek" event, Ignite is an intercity event that has taken place in cities across the globe, including Paris; Sydney; New York; and Charlotte.

A free public gathering, Ignite features up to 16 presenters from our community, sharing their personal or professional passions using 20 slides that auto-advance every 15 seconds for a total talk time of five minutes.

In their inaugural Charlotte event last August, talks spanned from "Where Ideas Come From" to "How To Talk About Sex Without Breaking A Sweat."

Building upon the success of their first event, local organizers have slated another Ignite session for Tuesday.

Bridget Sullivan, an uptown resident, event producer and co-founder of Ignite Charlotte, said the forum is an exciting exchange vehicle for our community.

"Ignite Charlotte provides a fantastic opportunity to network and share ideas. There is tremendous energy in the room, and these events are catalysts for meeting new people and expanding on what's discovered in this forum."

Sullivan and Sam Fagan contacted O'Reilly Media, the parent organization of the Ignite series, about establishing Charlotte as an outpost.

"It just made sense for a city with Charlotte's creative capital to have Ignite," said Sullivan.

Ignite was born in Seattle, Wash., in 2006, when Brady Forrest, with the unusual title of technology evangelist for O'Reilly Media, and Bre Pettis of Makerbot.com launched the first Ignite series, focused primarily on technology idea exchange.

Partially inspired by Pecha Kucha Nights, Ignite has evolved into talks on a variety of subjects and Ignite contests that provide a great warm-up for conferences and other events.

Using this highly structured format, participants can actually brainstorm ideas together as a way to break the ice. They'll use this process in a pre-event ice-breaker on Tuesday.

The schedule for this week's talks include:

Geek is Chic by Adam Brooks, director of communications at Central Piedmont Community College.

Gen Y Doesn't Suck by Mallory Hole, Recruiter, ettain group

Bringing Charlotte Together by Bridging the Gap by Lawrence Shaheen Jr., campaign management consultant, Carolina Political Consulting.

The entire schedule of presenters is found at Ignite Charlotte's website, www.ignitecharlotte.org/speakers/ic2-talks-speakers.

Paolo Nagari, CEO and founder of the Charlotte-based cross-cultural training organization, Intercultural Group, stumbled across Ignite while surfing online.

Nagari will give a talk Tuesday called "Intercultural Intelligence: The World at your Fingertips."

Ignite is "an interesting format that allows presenters the opportunity to express the core of a particular idea," he said.

While Nagari did not attend the first Ignite Charlotte, he did watch the online video presentation. "It

was exciting, and something I wanted to participate in," said Nagari.

He hopes to capture his audience's attention with the notion that through use of intercultural intelligence, global opportunities for business are only a mouse click away.

Technology remains an important theme for the Ignite events, where volunteers vet ideas and presentations in advance. Other categories and topics typically featured include marketing, communication, creative sciences and the arts.

"We offer a wide-open platform," said Sullivan, who is expecting upwards of 400 people in attendance at this event. "Our tagline is: Enlighten us, but make it quick."

Fast, fun and enlightening - it should be quite an evening.

Michael J. Solender is a local freelance writer who covers Charlotte Neighborhoods. Have an idea for him? Contact him at michaeljsolender@gmail.com.



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