By Alan Neuhauser
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

In honor of Make a Difference Day 2008, the State University of New York at New Paltz will offer a free concert for community members age 55 and older. Called "An Evening of Music," the concert is the highlight of the college's annual participation in the national day of community service created by USA Weekend magazine. This year, the theme is "SUNY New Paltz Celebrates Senior Citizens."

Make a Difference Day is an annual event held on the fourth Saturday of October. It seeks to give people the opportunity and incentive to involve themselves in their communities. Those who participate can nominate their community service activities for an award, including a $50,000 grand prize for each of the top 10 nominees. Last year, more than 3 million people participated nationwide.

The concert in New Paltz will feature performances by student musical groups, including the Vince Tampio Jazz Quartet, Absolute A Cappella and the Sexy Pitches, as well as a solo performance by Christine Sweeney, a senior majoring in music.

"We look forward to inviting and welcoming senior community members and caregivers of other senior citizens to campus to enjoy this evening of music performed by our students," said Michael Patterson, director of Student Activities and Union Services at SUNY New Paltz. "Not only is the focus of the event to honor our senior community members, but it is a good opportunity for our students to socialize and learn from them as well."

The concert is at 7 p.m. Saturday in the Student Union's multipurpose room.

The concert is only one of several community-service and community-involvement events offered or organized by SUNY New Paltz.

The college will kick off its participation in Make a

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Students have been helping solicit and register donors as well as sign up for volunteering at the registration desk, the recovery station and in the cafeteria on the day of the drive.

To give blood or help at the registration desk, the recovery station or in the cafeteria, call 845-373-4352 to schedule a time to volunteer.

To learn more about Make a Difference Day, and which Hudson Valley organizations are participating, visit www.usa weekend.com/diffday or call the Make a Difference Day hotline at 1-800-416-3824.

Kathy McLaughlin/Staff file

Charles Johnson, assistant director of student activities at SUNY New Paltz, tries to identify nursery rhymes during a mock baby shower held as part of Make a Difference Day in 2008.

SUNY New Paltz students Rosalba DiChiara, left, and Lorraine Vultaggio sort baby items that were donated to the mock baby shower organized by the college.

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Aging's Meals on Wheels program. The donations will be used in emergency food packs for more than 600 residents in need of home-delivered meals.

For information about Make a Difference Day at SUNY New Paltz, including how to get involved, call the Office of Student Activities and Union Services at 845-257-3025.

Host of projects

Other mid-Hudson Valley events scheduled for Make a Difference Day include:

The Hudson Valley Chapter of the American Sewing Guild will meet from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Quilted Bear Den at 4508 Albany Post Road in Hyde Park Saturday.

The group will stitch "Anti-Ouch Pouches" — attractive, tote-bag-like items that help provide comfort after breast surgery or radiation treatment. All are welcome, and no sewing skills are required. To learn more or to participate, call the Quilted Bear Den at 845-233-4858.

From 2-5 p.m. Saturday, Hyde Park Girl Scout troops 215, 141 and 15, along with the residents of Castle Court at Concord Village in the Town of Poughkeepsie, will make Heart Pillows for Saint Francis Hospital.

These pillows are given to patients who have had abdominal or cardiac surgery. They hug the pillow to their stitches when they have to cough to prevent tearing them.

The annual Make a Difference Day Blood Drive will be held at the Eugene Brooks Middle School gymnasium in Amenia from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. September 26. This drive was initially started in memory of the New York City firefighters who gave their lives on Sept. 11, 2001. To date, more than 1,000 units of blood have been donated to the American Red Cross through this effort.

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