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| **Contact:** **April Roggio****Sustainable Hilltowns**april.roggio@gmail.com | Building a Makerspace! A look at the Make Movement, sustainable farming and local economic development in the Hilltowns |

# Press Release

### Hilltown communities to host public workshops

*Shall we build a makerspace for small farmers, homesteaders and do-it-yourselfers?*

**October 12, 2015.** This fall Sustainable Hilltowns will be hosting several community discussions. Led by April Roggio, local independent researcher and co-owner of the Medusa General Store, these community dialogues hope to answer the following question: would the development of a “makerspace” in the hilltowns, help to nurture small farmers?

Funded with a grant from the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE), Sustainable Hilltowns is interested, broadly, in pursuing activities that encourage sustainable economic development, food security and prosperity for our region.

The Maker Movement, a grassroots initiative that has inspired everyone from community activists to our President (the White House announced it’s own Maker Faire this year!), proposes that everyone can and should have the opportunity to design and create, to be builders, hackers and innovators, not just consumers. From 3D printers and robotics to DIY transportation and sustainable technology, the Make movement is inspiring communities to create and explore together with promising outcomes.

Surprisingly, while the Makers have left their mark on organizations from big business to education, and inspired designers, young and old, it tends to be an urban movement. We think now’s the time to change that: we want to reach out to our community and design a maker space that promises to support our small farmers, especially in a region that has not yet recovered from a recession economy. Farmers are, after all, the very first “makers” and have longed thrived on their ingenuity and entrepreneurship. Our version could include an extensive resource library, a workshop with relevant tools and a space for sharing ideas and collaborating with other farmers and small businesses. It could precede a complementary effort to build a full scale rural business incubator in our region.

Roggio has scheduled workshops during the month of November, and is asking interested residents to join in the conversation. A brief presentation will cover the basics of the Make movement, how it relates to small farming, and how we might amend the concept to meet our own needs. While she and Sustainable Hilltowns are particularly interested in hearing from small farmers, everyone is welcome to attend and share their experiences with small farming, homesteading, growing and producing, in the Albany County Hilltowns.

Workshop schedule:

Tuesday, November 3, at 6pm, at the Berne Library (community room)

Wednesday, November 4, at 6pm, at the Rensselaerville Library (community room)

Saturday, November 7 at 4pm, at the Knox Octagonal Barn

Additional presentations can be scheduled as requested. Contact april.roggio@gmail.com or leave her a message at 518 261 0910. Updated information is also available at the Sustainable Hilltowns Facebook page.