

## No More Walls!

## By Rita Delfiner

I saw "Hamilton" - thanks to TTN.

I was the first to reply when a TTNer told a group at lunch she had an extra ticket to the sold-out Broadway musical because a friend couldn't go and did anyone want to accompany her? I'm sure they could hear my "yes!" from across the street.

Such networking is at the heart of "Culture Mavens" - a <a href="Peer Group">Peer Group</a> whose members launched the innovative, hugely successful concept dubbed "peer groups without walls." That means they're not like the typical Special Interest Group (SIG) which has small get-togethers in members' homes. This new kind of group's focus is on e-mail.

For example, Culture Mavens use e-mail distribution lists to share information about a dizzying variety of cultural opportunities. "The purpose of Culture Mavens is to have a large network of women you can reach out to if you want someone to go with you to some kind of cultural performance or event," said Barbara Alpern, coordinator of the group. Also, "if you have a ticket and can't use it, or someone you were going with can't use it, you have 80 women you can reach out to at the last minute," she added.

The group does hold monthly meetings at a member's home. "The first 12 to 15 women who respond to an e-mail invitation are confirmed to attend," said Alpern. The others are put on a waiting list in order of acceptance in case of cancellations.

At the meeting, women pool their knowledge, reactions and recommendations about various theatrical, dance, opera and musical events, films and museum and gallery exhibits, comedy and jazz clubs and more. Over wine and noshes they dish about subscriptions and discounts. Detailed minutes of the meeting are then emailed to everyone on the membership list. Half the women just want to get the minutes - and the names and contact information for other members.



And now there are several other groups using the same model. "This type of special interest group is becoming extremely popular," said **Barbara Alpern, TTN-NYC's Vice Chairwoman.** Some other peer groups without walls include "Arias R Us", "Foreign Film Friday" and "Travel Mates".

Travel Mates, which began in January, already has 75 names on its e-mail list. The group holds a meeting every six to eight weeks - but the emphasis is on e-mail where women connect with each other to do "any kind of travel anywhere, domestic or international, from a few days to a few weeks," said co-chair **Phyllis Meissel.** 

Destinations suit any budget and could range from hiking in the Rockies to heading to Laos and Cambodia, Europe or Cuba. Members also e-mail travel questions to the group or to recommend aspects of a trip. Meissel has the welcome mat out for more members since the larger the e-mail distribution list, "the more opportunity a traveler has to meet someone to go with. Join a "peer group without walls" and experience for yourself TTN's latest innovative approach to introducing you to new friends and rewarding experiences.



As Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable proved in "It Happened One Night," tearing down some walls can be fun!