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An open mike and the chance to tell a story

By CHANNING GRAY
Journal-Bulletin Arts Writer

Got a tale to tell — and who doesn't these days? Then get over to AS220 in the next couple of months, and you can share your yarn with both beginners and seasoned veterans.

The alternative arts center at 115 Empire St. in Providence is for the second year hosting a series of Wednesday-evening storytelling sessions for adults, with an open mike starting at 7 and a featured storyteller taking over at 8:30.

Barrington's Joan Bailey, a familiar face at area schools and libraries, where she has entertained audiences with tales of her native Lancashire, England, leads off the series tomorrow.

Two weeks later, on Nov. 20, Bill Harley takes over. The multitalented Harley is among the

most popular storytellers around, known for his frequent appearances on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and his many recordings of children's songs.

The series, which is free ("but we generally pass a hat," said Bailey), continues next month, with Don Kirk slated for Dec. 4 and Valerie Tutson, known for her folktales based on African traditions, closing out the series Dec. 18.

Bailey said that the names of novice tellers are picked from a hat, and the performers are allowed to speak their piece, which "pretty much runs the gamut from personal experiences to poems to folk tales."

Bailey, who has been telling stories professionally for the past four years, said time at the open mike is limited to about eight minutes, although she added, "We're pretty flexible."



JOAN BAILEY, of Barrington, leads off the series tomorrow at AS220.

"We don't like cutting people off," said Bailey. "We don't feel it's very friendly."

If you're still hankering for more tales, you can stop by AS200

on Friday, Nov. 22, for Tellabration 96, a nationwide night of storytelling that is expected to draw 10,000 listeners in 196 communities across America.

This is the ninth year for the national event, held in cooperation with the National Storytelling Association in Jonesboro Tennessee, a sort of mecca for storytellers. This is the first Tellabration being held in Providence, though, and a half-dozen storytellers are donating their talents, including Bailey, Dick Johnson, Carolyn Martino and Marilyn Murphy Meardon.

The stories start at 8 p.m., and admission is \$5, with proceeds going to benefit the National Storytelling Association in Tennessee, and Rhode Island's own Jonnycake Storytelling Festival.

Call 831-9327 or 351-8090.