

DRUMMING: Event is a community-building effort

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from Earthtones Northwest in Portland. Earthtones provides music therapy and horticultural therapy for healing and wellness. Its founder and CEO, Jodi Winnwalker, lives in Sisters Country.

One of the event’s coordinators and its primary MC, she brought a powerful, exuberant energy to the evening’s festivities.

“We are all music,” she said.

Rhythm & Song combined a festive atmosphere with an unmistakably small-town feel. Local talent and encouraging faces were all around, similar to the open mic sessions at Paulina Springs Books and the new talent show series at Sisters Farmers Market.

However, Rhythm & Song’s approach to performance space and audience participation is unique. Musicians generally perform in the round, with audiences seated in a circle all around.

Audiences are invited to sing, dance, drum, or otherwise become part of the music, depending on who is performing. At times, roles of participant, audience, and official performer blend into one.

“The musicians who participated expressed that they really enjoyed sharing their music and engaging with the community in such a way,” said Winnwalker, a music

therapist and the event host. “Simply drumming together — it’s a most remarkable thing,” said Katie Cavanaugh, who led a drumming session.

Drums and other percussion instruments had been left in a circle for audience members to use.

Cavanaugh noted that everything in our bodies has rhythm.

“Your walk is rhythm,” she said. “Your footfall is rhythm.”

She invited women to join in a drum circle at her home, Harmony House, on the first Saturday of each month. For directions, interested participants can call 541-548-2209.

Paul Alan Bennett sang an original composition about Pegasus, the winged horse, and taught the audience to join along with sign language and gestures. Fiddlers Sasha Stolasz and Melissa Stolasz, a mother and daughter duo, got many toes a-tappin’. AnnaMarie led drumming, and Kirk Olsen chimed in on guitar throughout the evening.

Sisters Ukulele Group spiced up the evening with their singalong version of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.” Shannon Rackowski performed beautiful hula to some of their tunes.

Winnwalker handed her microphone to a little girl she’d recruited to introduce an act: The Silverado Quartet, an all-female a cappella singing group. They declared their combined age to be 285.

Their barbershop sounds and crooning numbers brought smiles and applause.

Especially popular was their own version of the familiar “Mister Sandman, bring me a dream...” which instead implored, “Mister Schwan Man, bring me ice cream!”

While many adults stayed seated, others danced. Some drummed, some hummed. Little kids wore themselves out during the evening’s final, irresistible act: “Fiddler Bob” (Bob Baker). Big kids alternated between singing, dancing, and running off to wreak havoc on the nearby playground structure.

Winnwalker enjoyed “the whole scene of our community engagement through sound, color, movement, nature, and joy.” She said, “I revel in illuminating connection — especially those tenuous lines that we forget exist: the connection with ourselves, others, our lovely world and the greater power as we each understand it.”

Rhythm & Song was presented by Citizens 4 Community (C4C), a non-profit group “dedicated to furthering civility, collaboration and civic engagement.” Additional information may be found at citizens4community.com.



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

All ages and walks of life turned out for a community gathering at Village Green.

Sponsors of the event include the Ford Family Foundation, St. Charles Health System, Coldwell Banker Reed Bros. Realty, and The Lodge in Sisters. Rich Hummel provided the PA system and sound support. Winnwalker thanked Paulina

Springs Books for donating chairs for the occasion.

C4C listed their hosting partners as Age Friendly Sisters Country, Sisters Park & Recreation District, Earthtones Northwest, and Melvin’s by Newport Avenue Market.

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