

Yoga festival

teaches compassion, concentration



ERICK BENDEL — EO Media Group

Marnie Rodebush, foreground right, a resident of the West Coast, and a group of yoga enthusiasts adopt the Namaste Pose during a yoga workshop. The workshop focused in part on dissolving the negative narrative about oneself.

Instructors show different ways to meditate, including art

By ERICK BENDEL
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — Sarahjoy Marsh's workshop on compassion toward oneself and others — held the second day of the three-day Cannon Beach Yoga Festival — began somewhat paradoxically.

Sitting upright on blankets and yoga mats in the Cannon Beach Community Hall, the 33 attendees gave their first names and then uttered a *noncompassionate* word to characterized their lives or themselves.

The choices were revealing: "lame," "shame," "sadness," "afraid," "careless," "failure," "judgment," "impatient," "anxiety," "defective," "abandoned," "unworthy," "frustration," "disrespect," "rejection," "jealousy," "selfishness," "shut down" and so on. When her turn came, Marsh said, "unkind."

"That's a relatively cruel perspective to have on ourselves," she said. "First of all, it's fundamentally not true. And secondly, it doesn't leave a lot of room for growth or radiance to flower."

Over the next two hours, Marsh, a yoga teacher and yoga therapist from Portland, discussed yoga-based practices to reach higher states of compassion. Singing long, deep notes is one such practice, she said.

Marsh led the group, call-and-response-style, through a vowel-laden Sanskrit mantra meant to induce a healing trance. It translates to: "May we practice together in a way that is effective and strong and produces luminous outcomes. May we not feel impatient with our-

**'We hunger for compassion.
We crave it. We benefit from it.'**

— Sarahjoy Marsh
yoga instructor

burned down — the painful heartache songs," she said.

Compassion

"We hunger for compassion. We crave it. We benefit from it. We long to know how to express it more consistently, more effectively," she said. Unfortunately, "we don't have a particularly compassionate culture," which she described as a "very competitive, materialistic, consumeristic culture, rife with anxiety and depression" and consequent physical disorders.

Positioned in the wide-legged forward bend (also known as the *prasarita padottanasana*), the group meditated on compassion. Then, in the downward-facing dog pose, they imagined dissolving the tension caused by their own noncompassionate word and "the story about feeling lame or ashamed."

"We can apply compassion to the pain we're causing ourselves. ... That's one of the pathways out," she said. "If you apply cruelty to cruelty, you won't get out. You just go further in."

In the back of the hall sat Gina Leon, of Portland, a Yoga Festival first-timer.

"The whole conference has been very powerful and positive ... and emotional, too," said Leon, who also attended Marsh's workshop at the Surfsand Resort the day before.

Leon, who works in banking and may undergo a career change, found the festival "very helpful in processing lots of thoughts and feelings."

See YOGA, Page 4C



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Linda Kinhan, Cannon Beach, sketches model Julie "Fig" Yanko. Behind Yanko, Lila Wickham, left, Cannon Beach, and Jennifer Wyman, Tacoma, Wash., do the same.

selves or each other in the process," she said. One benefit of singing in Sanskrit: "We're also not likely to be singing about how the dog died and the boyfriend left and the house



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