

Bang the drum with enthusiasm

Drums

CLUB

New Sun City club offers musical outlet

Sun City residents soon will have the opportunity to embark on a new experience — Native American and African Djembe drumming. Those who are skeptical and wondering what it is all about are encouraged to attend the Recreational Drumming Social Club of Sun City's first drumming circle 1:30 -3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 5 in the music room at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave. There is no need to own a drum as the instruments will be available for everyone

to use.

Lydia Woods, PhD, MDiv, MACE and Diana Graettinger, PhD, are co-founders of the group. Dr. Woods also is the Drum Arizona Inc. CEO, a non-profit organization formed to provide surrounding communities with the same drumming experiences.

The two women came together earlier this year after Dr. Graettinger attended a drumming circle in the library at the White Tank Mountains. It was there, she decided, she wanted to share the experience with others in Sun City.

"I wanted to spread the energy and the fun to my own community," she said.

At about the same time,

Dr. Woods was interested in forming a drumming club for Sun City. The two met through a mutual friend and together they submitted the necessary documentation

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The Recreational Drumming Club of Sun City soon will be a part of Sun City. Organizers, from left, Harriet Cohen, Dr. Lydia Woods and Dr. Diana Graettinger recently enjoyed a day of drumming. [Submitted Photo]

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and received the Recreation Centers of Sun City board's approval.

"I can't read music, I never thought there would be an instrument that I could play until I had my first drumming experience and I was overwhelmed with excitement. I realized that if I had such a wonderful experience there would be people in Sun City who would feel the same way," Dr. Graettinger said. "It was pure magic that Lydia and I met."

Dr. Woods believes the pairing was inspirational.

"Diana was the perfect student," she said. "There is no note reading at all. You don't need rhythm, musical skills and you don't need any prior experience."

The third founding member, Harriet Cohen, is a member of Dr. Woods drumming circles conducted at the Lakeview United Methodist Church, 10298 W. Thunderbird Blvd. "I became an avid follower and I now own my own drum, which I made myself,"

Ms. Cohen said. "The most important aspect of drumming to me is the whole new music language, it is totally different from what we know, there is no reading of music, but the most important thing that happened to me is it rejuvenated me spiritually."

She also said she appreciated the camaraderie that developed among circle members.

As the group's facilitator, Dr. Woods will guide Sun City drumming circle members through the various steps of drumming.

"Learning to drum transcends all ages from three-year-olds all the way up to 90-year-olds," she said. "And as we make this music together we come together as a cohesive group and community of drumming and it sounds like we are professionals and it sounds like we have been drumming for years."

Dr. Woods has been involved with drumming for the past eight years and began teaching drumming about three years ago. She took her first drum lesson in Atlanta from an African Drum Master teacher.

Sun City residents will learn both African and Native American drumming.

Dr. Woods explained that the Native American hoop drum is round and held in the hand.

"It is played with a drum beater held in the opposite hand," she said. "The African Djembe drums are hour-shaped and made out of one solid piece of wood with animal skin on the top and they are held between the knees and hit only with the hands."

Dr. Woods owns more than 150 drums for students to use.

Aside from the fun of being part of a community of drummers, drumming also promotes healing, increased energy, improved joint mobility and posture, and improved motor skills, according to Dr. Woods. It is also a great stress reliever, she added.

"Studies indicate that these types of activities not only are physically but also mentally gratifying," Dr. Woods said. "Research has concluded that recreational music has more favorable effects than antidepressants and mood stabilizing drugs."

Editor's Note: This story was submitted by the Recreational Drumming Club of Sun City.