

Compassion Story of the Month

With Brattleboro voting overwhelmingly to become part of the international Charter for Compassion, the Reformer and The Commons have agreed to publish a “compassion story of the month.” This is the thirty-fourth. Information on submissions from Brattleboro area residents is offered below.

Drumming for Personal and Community Healing

By Emma Sheldon

As a Registered Psychotherapist and Reiki Practitioner, it has always been a passion of mine to work with and offer healing energy to others. Three years ago, I was called to turn this healing inwards after being afflicted with terrible chronic pain. This news brought me deeper into my own healing and spiritual journey than ever before. Without a medical explanation for the continued symptoms I was experiencing, I began to come to terms with the fact that what was happening was a physical manifestation of some deep seeded trauma I thought I had cleared and released. This trauma, it appeared, was being held captive in my body and, I concluded, could only be healed through taking a deep journey into myself, into every cell of my being.

At this time, I was already engaged in a regular yoga and meditation practice, and was working with several healers/energy workers. But as my new journey began, I came into contact with people from indigenous cultures native to North and South America. I became like a sponge and found myself opening my heart to the learnings and wisdom these cultures so graciously offered.

And a primary message I received from these teachings was “go and get a drum and play it with others on the Earth.” What did this mean,” I asked myself in surprise. I had played music as a child but had no knowledge about playing drums and was not at all clear on how to proceed. When I reached out to friends about this message, however, the response was un-equivocal excitement and unconditional support. I was taken to a local drum maker and, before long, found myself deeply immersed in playing all different types of drums. When I left, I took with me my first drum, one made of elk skin, plus an abundance of information about how the drum was made, about cultural drumming traditions, and about the healing power of sound.

The friends who generously introduced me to the drum maker went further and urged that we begin playing in a drum circle together. And, so we did, playing in small groups at each other’s homes once a week, and playing on our own in between.

And it went further. During our drumming circles we began engaging in conscious discussions about culture, our connection with the Earth, collective trauma, and what we could do right here in our community to initiate a collaborative healing process. I had been noticing the growing population of people without homes in our town, and the still larger set of individuals in need of compassionate and empathic connection with others. I also noticed the divide between the shoppers at our local coop and the persons without homes hanging out at the park across the lot. Indeed, I was aware of the sense of unease that arose within myself when I walked by, caught

between a genuine desire to interact and a worry that I might not know how to engage respectively with these folks and offer my support.

And then it hit me: the drums! My friends and I discussed it, and decided to bring our drumming circle to the park, to the coop, and, ultimately, to the community. So, we began meeting in the park, bringing our own drums and drums to share. We asked permission to play from those sitting in the park and invited them to join us. We were received with smiles and genuine appreciation, and several of them joined us in the drumming and later in prayers for a home, a job, some healing from the illnesses they were battling. Music, a language that crosses all cultures, all boundaries, and all walks of life, became the universal form of communication among us. Often no words were needed at all. The drumbeat was serving as nothing less than the communication of spirit, of the divine, of nature itself, the heartbeat of the Earth, the pulse of life and the vibrational energy of deep healing within all beings. We felt this energy with tears in our eyes and gratitude in our hearts, and we realized we were immersed in a deeply healing process involving something so much greater than ourselves.

My individual healing process continues to shift and evolve, but the drums and the vibrations of love that emanate when we play them together have become a constant source of wisdom on my path. My hope is that this can continue within our community, that persons from all walks of life can join together in harmony and allow this beating of our drums and of our hearts become a universal language of shared compassion and connection. We hope to play again at the park by the coop this summer and to find other places in town to share in this collective creation. Please come and join us!

Submissions, from Brattleboro area residents, for future publication, not to exceed 650 words, should be emailed to: compassionstory@gmail.com or mailed to: Compassion Story of the Month, PO Box 50, Marlboro, VT 05344. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. Earlier submitted stories will automatically be considered in subsequent months.