

Mesa drum maker practices an ancient ritual

- By Melissa Hirschl, Tribune Contributor
- Jun 16, 2023



As the founder of Drumheart Academy of Drum-Making, Chaplain Cindy Green practices a sacred art.

In 1996, the Mesa resident discovered a compelling passion that sparked a lifelong spiritual journey. Her life-changing event occurred when she decided to take a drum-making class while living in California.

Already tuned into the mind-body connection as a licensed massage therapist and Reiki practitioner, Green never envisioned how strongly the drum class experience would impact her.

“The drum has deep roots from all cultures,” she explained. “Using the drum in the sacred or medicine way is a lifelong study, and I’m still learning.”

Since then, she has been creating personalized drums, sticks and rattle while teaching classes and facilitating drum circles.

Her classes teach the lore and history of drums and how to care for them.

“The drum-making experience is cathartic,” Green said, that “puts you into an alternate consciousness or journey.”

Currently, Green teaches classes throughout the Valley, New Mexico, Utah and California.

Spreading joy is at the heart of her mission, and to that end, she leads drumming circles at “A Path to Healing” in Phoenix, where participants are welcome to use her drums.

Green also provides “energy healing sessions,” including Reiki, prayer, sounds (flute, chimes), singing bowls and drumming over the body.

“I have had the privilege of attending two amazing drum-making classes taught by Cindy,” said participant Sangita Daniel. “Her class is a spiritual journey that births a drum that sounds amazing.

“I have also enjoyed participating in her drum circles – another heartwarming experience,” Daniel said. “Both activities are soul-satisfying and lifetime opportunities.”

Green thrives on watching people create.

“At first, my students tell me they can’t draw a straight line,” she said. “Soon after, I observed them become more confident and happier after they accomplished making their drums.”

In addition to putting their names and dates on the drum frame, students can also create designs on the inside.

The next step involves a meditation so participants can reflect on “the grandmother of all trees.”

“We walk through the forest in our minds as we thank her for sacrificing her wood. We tell her how we will use it in the world Sometime. The tree gives you an idea or symbol of what she wants you to draw.”

Fellow drum player Mike Taylor reflected on his experience with Green.

“She made a drum for me that I use in my therapy business and brings balance within my patients,” he said. “Her drums amplify the love of the human spirit.”

Green has gravitated toward creativity her whole life.

“My parents were artists, and I’ve been painting and drawing as long as I can remember,” she recalls.

“While my favorite classes in school were art and science, I also loved ceramics, jewelry making, painting, and macrame, which my teacher insisted I teach to the class.”

Green also has a long-held fascination with Native American spirituality, which blossomed in her initial drumming class.

“My instructor, Judy Rhoades, was overwhelmed and requested me to be her helper,” she explained. “To steep me in spiritual traditions, she took me to sweat lodges and drum circles, where I participated in healing ceremonies using hot rocks and steam.”

“Watching participants singing and saying prayers was a totally spiritual experience. My travels to several Native villages and lands have been educational and awe-inspiring.

“I see myself as a child of the Divine, a peacemaker, and a crone – a painter of rainbows and creator of vibrations. I am a tumbleweed, freely following the desert wind, touching and speaking with the earth and finding my truth. I am a writer, teacher, nurturer, a woman of the wild, and a sacred toolmaker.”

Green currently spreads her talents and wisdom with grieving teens at Camp Reach, a summer bereavement camp sponsored by Stepping Stones of Hope, a nonprofit that provides community-driven grief healing and wellness programs.

The center primarily caters to teens who have experienced the death or loss of a loved one. Green helps them make rattles made of chamois, a soft sheepskin.

“Cindy’s gentle caring spirit is easy for teenagers to readily sense,” said Diane Raden, board president of Stepping Stones. “She shares the Native American traditions in ways that open dialogues for a deeper understanding of the diversity found in different cultures as related to the grief process.

“This helps teens see that grief is unique and individual; there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

When not engaged with drum-work, Green enjoys creative endeavors such as animal skull painting, bookmaking and decorating vintage suitcases.

Information:

- drumheart.com, 480-299-4129
- Steppingstonesofhope.org, info@steppingstonesofhope.org, 602-264-7520
- A Path to Healing (drum circles), Apathtohealing.org