

# Healthy Homewood Fest offers wellness with a beat

BY ERIC CRUMP  
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At a quick glance, the gathering on Martin Avenue in Homewood looked like a typical summer festival in the village. There was food, music, activities for kids and 30 vendors for adults to peruse.

But the second Healthy Homewood Fest was not your typical festival.

For one thing, the vendors were all providing products and services aimed at promoting health and wellness.

The main thing, though, was the entertainment. It was participatory. As organizer Liz Smith of Serendipity Yoga introduced the second session, a drum circle led by Laura Miller and Jovani Robinson of Spear It Drummers, she summed up the theme of the event.

"It's all about just exploring new things," she said. "This is full participation."

Miller picked up the theme as she welcomed more than 25 people to the start of the drum circle.

"We're here to drum together. No prior experience necessary," she said. "We're all going to access our inner child. The only rule is: try to play together."

She also taught the group a simple chant for people to sing or say as they drummed: "Sing with my voice. Play with my hands. Let the way be open."

Members of the group soon got into the groove drumming and chanting for about five minutes, then continuing the beat for another five minutes before taking a break.

Miller said scientific research has found that drumming is beneficial to physical and emotional health.

"I know that you're happy playing and drumming. It's fun to connect with people," she said. "Drumming helps your immune system. There are some very good

things happening in your body. It helps boost feel-good hormones, endorphins.

"The vibrations from drumming can help you relax."

Vibrations played a big part in the next session, a gong wash by Harmonic Waves Healing, which dialed back the activity level. "Gong wash" describes the sensation of being immersed in a bath of sound.

Simon Jay Cervania, with help from Clarissa Villagomez, used a number of percussive instruments, including gongs, bells and bowls to weave a tapestry of vibrations while participants sat on yoga mats or rugs spread in front of the stage.

Homewood Events Manager Allisa Opyd sat for the gong wash to learn about the experience. She said she does not meditate, so she was impressed with the serenity created by the sounds.

"It was very relaxing. What was amazing was even though it was on concrete, and I was sitting on my yoga mat, I could feel the reverberation," she said.

Sessions also included an energetic exercise bootcamp led by Downs Fitness, a kirtan with Truself Empowerment and free-form ecstatic dance with Lauren Joy Herrera.

The kids activities were spread out on the lawn of the Gottschalk House, where baby goats attracted considerable attention at one end, and the variety of the Imaginarium provided kids and adults alike a chance to juggle, do beading, get faces painted or chase bubbles around the lawn.

Imaginarium leader Keaton Fisher said the trick to juggling and similar activities is to approach it with persistence and a high tolerance for failure. As he took a group of kids through the basics, balls flew everywhere, and that, he said, was exactly right for beginners.



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

The drum circle at Healthy Homewood Fest on Saturday, July 16, fills the air downtown with an infectious beat. The drumming, led by Jovani Robinson and Laura Miller of Spear It Drummers, was one of a number of wellness activities visitors participated in.

## serendipity

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(n.) the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way



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10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



HORN-FREE TIME:  
10 - 11 a.m.

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