

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



TH YEAR _____ MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2010 _____

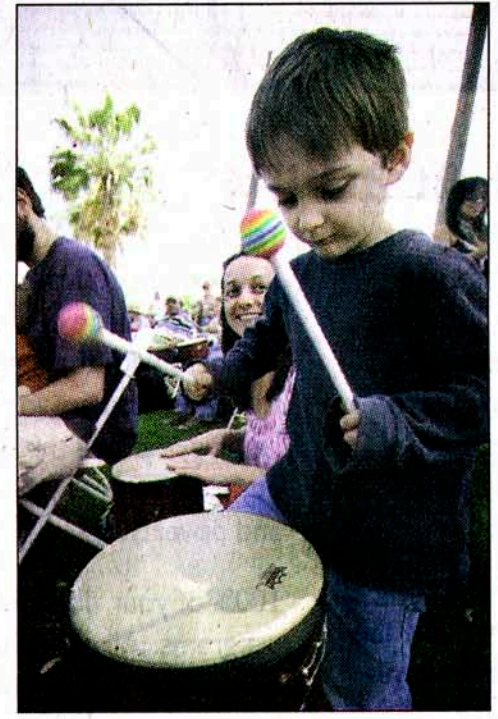
UNITED IN RHYTHM

Smiles abound at 2nd annual S.B. Drum Day

By **TYLER BLUE**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Walking down Cabrillo Boulevard on a warm weekend afternoon, the sound of drumming could be heard far in the distance. A father and three sons, ages 5 through 12, pulled up at Chase Palm Park on their bikes, ready to join in the action. The official start time for Saturday's second annual Santa Barbara Drum Day was still minutes away but there were already 100 people seated in the pavilion, playing together in a synchronized, tribal beat.

Standing in the middle wearing a microphone headpiece, Steve Campbell provided guidance to the musicians. "OK everyone, we're going to feature hand drums," he said. On cue, everyone else stopped playing, leaving a well-syncopated rhythmic foundation exposed. For the next two



MATT WIER / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Above left, more than 100 people are shown attending the second annual Santa Barbara Drum Day at the Chase Palm Park Pavillion on Saturday. Above right, Enzo Larameta and his mother Yvonne drum during Saturday's drum circle at the event.

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Event drew participants of all ages

■ DRUMS

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hours, hundreds of people, beginners to pros, embarked on a collaborative musical journey.

Mr. Campbell and his wife, Lindsay Rust, have been running an organization called Dancing Drum since 2002. Their primary service is going to elementary schools, locally and nationwide, and conducting programs that use drumming as a catalyst to instill a spectrum of beneficial lessons. On Friday, they led Youth Drum Day at The Granada, where fifth-graders from McKinley, Monroe and Adams schools performed for each other. The Community Drum Ensemble is another aspect of the organization, which presents the opportunity for anyone to learn essential components of rhythm and to become comfortable performing with a large group of people.

The first Santa Barbara Drum Day was held last year in the Carrillo Recreation Center. This year's outdoor venue lent to more of a festival setting. Some 300 chairs were arranged in concentric circles in the park's pavilion. A large wooden pole was a natural axis point in the center. The mountains provided a scenic backdrop.

When people approached, Mr. Campbell beckoned them toward the far side of the circle where there were plenty of empty chairs. Sponsor Remo Drums provided enough percussion instruments for everyone ranging from large congas, to shakers to hand

drums, which resembled racquetball rackets. The Santa Barbara County Arts Commission and the Children's Creative Project provided additional sponsorship.

Despite the range of different instruments and abilities, when everyone started playing, the sound was extremely cohesive. Art Ludwig, who has been attending full moon drum parties at Knapp's Castle and the weekly Saturday drum circle at East Beach for the past 30 years, said, "These guys can get hundreds of people, some who have never drummed in their lives, to drum on the beat. It's extraordinary."

Rather than play a drum, Mr. Ludwig chooses to dance. "My body is my instrument," he said. Some joined him in dancing or hula hooping along with the music. Others had picnics or played with their dogs. A man twisted up animal-shaped balloons for kids.

Mr. Campbell and a few others took turns facilitating the constant evolution of the jam. Rather than just playing continuously, they gave directions, which evoked certain nuances within the music.

"Call-and-response" was the most commonly employed technique whereby the leader asserted a beat or vocal expression, which the circle would then emulate. Another common approach involved isolating particular instruments or quadrants of the circle. "Everyone stop except the shakers," or "bass drums only" were typical instructions.

Participants were challenged with various listening exercises such as playing certain sequences of

numbered beats or having the discipline to stop exactly when it was the next quadrant's turn to play. These breaks in the music built anticipation for the moment when everyone would realign, contributing to a palpable intensity.

At one point, Ms. Rust prompted people to play based on where they were from, thus spotlighting attendees from Los Angeles to England.

A glance around the drum circle revealed a cross-section of players. A mother and young son beat on a large drum together. An elderly grandmother showed her toddling granddaughter the ropes on a small hand drum. Another little tyke, probably all of 2 years old, pounded furiously on a drum bigger than he with rainbow-tipped mallets while a piece of candy protruded from his mouth.

Further off to the side, a mother bounced with her infant strapped into a front-pack while rapping two plastic sticks together. A cowbell was audible through the dense layers of sound. Its player, a boy of perhaps 8, might well have been classically trained in light of his accompaniment.

Abby Jensen, 11, stood out on an instrument of Angolan origin called a reco-reco; scraping a metal stick over a tightly wound metal coil. She played along with her younger sisters, ages 8 and 6, and her mother, Betsy.

"I was in the Solstice Parade with Dancing Drum," Abby explained. "When everyone plays together, it goes with the rhythm. It's cool how it works." Her mother added, "It's good for all levels to play together. It's a great way to overcome the elitism that

usually prevents people from even trying."

Drum Day was quite the outing for 13 members and three generations of Santa Barbara's Stawiecki family. A few of them attended last year's event and had so much fun that everyone had to come this year.

Paul, 18, praised the way it emphasized unity amongst the community. "You get to know other cultures and it relieves stress," he asserted. His mother, Kasia added, "It's just about having fun and working together. We're so grateful to have such a beautiful day."

They were excited to head home and continue the groove in their garage.

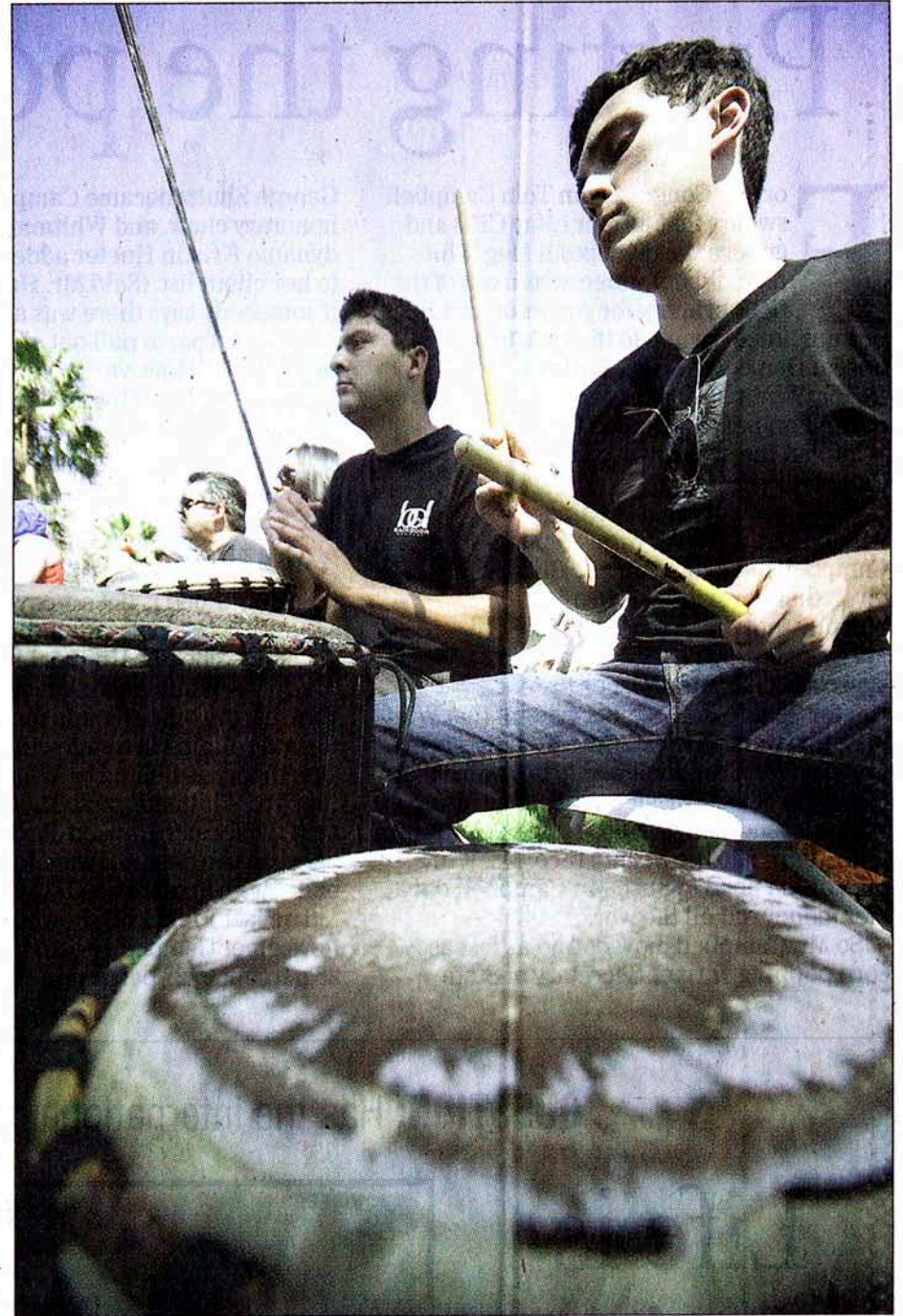
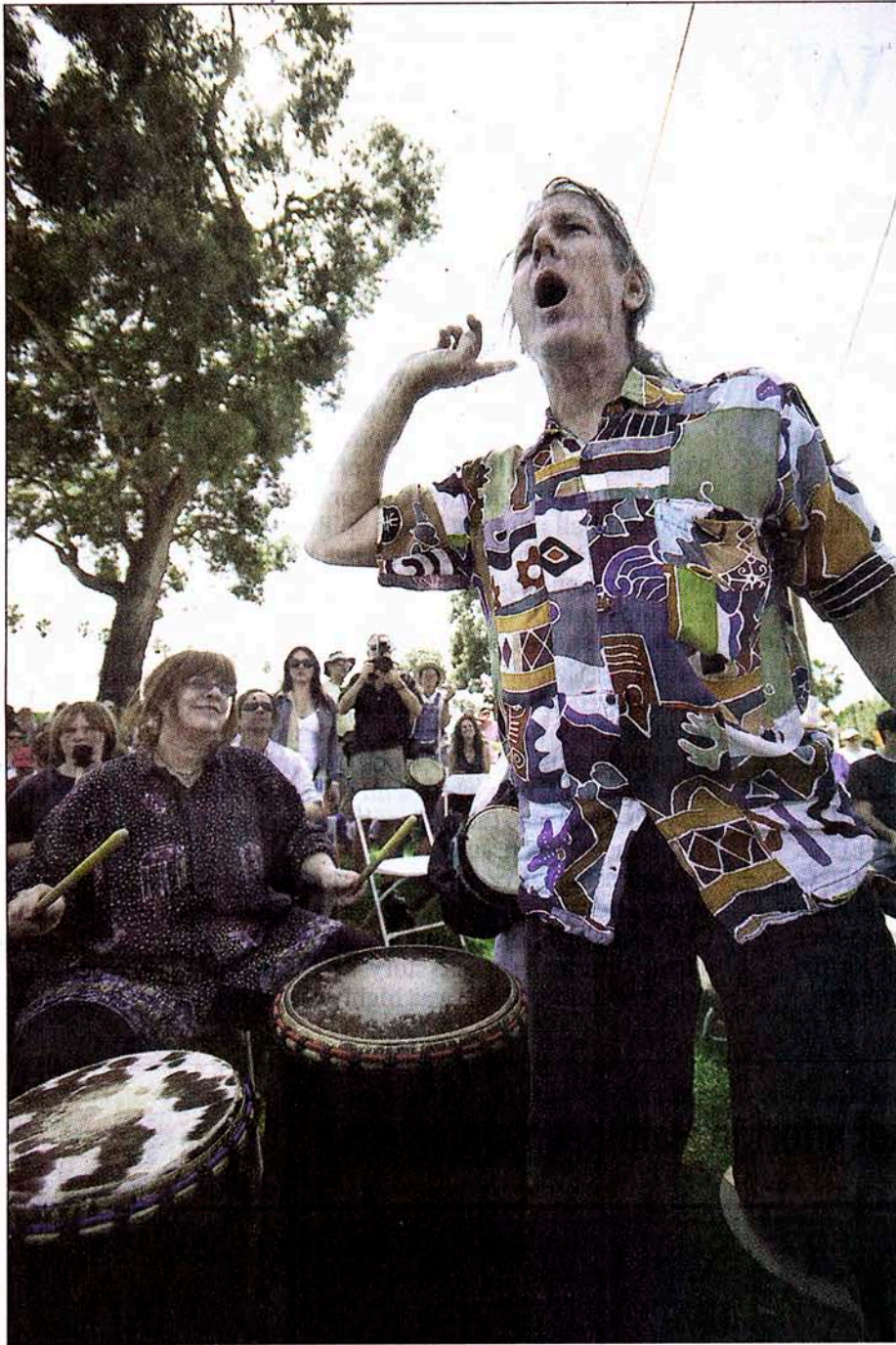
Mr. Campbell led the circle into a climactic conclusion, culminating with a prolonged "rumble" - the sound made when pounding as hard and fast as possible. Raffle winners were announced, the proceeds of which will help purchase drums for a school in New Orleans that Dancing Drum will be visiting in April.

"We're totally thrilled," Ms. Rust exclaimed. "The diversity was wonderful. I saw a lot of smiling faces."

Said Mr. Campbell: "After the first event, it sprouted legs. It feels with this one like it's starting to walk. I'd like to see 1000 people here in the future. It's an experience that really builds community."

"Everyone who was here believes, 'I can make music.' That's the real magic of this event."

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MATT WIER / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Above left, a Remo drum representative, who brought a truck full of drums for Saturday's event, rallies the crowd at the second annual Santa Barbara Drum Day. Above right, drummers play during the Saturday afternoon drumming event.