

# Drum circle inspires wellness in adults



STAFF PHOTOS: KATHY JOHNSON

**Sharon Silverstein (center), founder and president of Living at Peace, leads a drumming circle Monday at Warrenbrook Senior Wellness Center. Participation in drumming circles has been scientifically shown to boost the immune system, increase the body's white blood cells, help cancer patients recover faster and alleviate stress, loneliness and depression, Silverstein says.**

# Founder says participants can beat health woes

By **LAURIE LEVOY**  
STAFF WRITER

**WARREN** — With the excited anticipation of a youngster trying to make music from a new instrument, the men and women who registered for Sharon Silverstein's drumming circle Monday morning settled in with their djembes, a type of African drum, and other percussion instruments at Warrenbrook Senior Wellness Center.

Silverstein's program focused on introducing participants, including a man who just celebrated his 90th birthday, to the joys and health benefits of a musical jam session requiring focus, concentration, eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills and sustained listening.

"I want to show you how what we'll practice here can be applied to life changes," Silverstein told the group. "When the rhythms we will first hear, and then mimic, on the drum change, you will adapt by listening more, feeling (the vibrations of the drums) more, perhaps accenting one beat more or holding back a bit to listen more before joining the drum circle again. These same skills can be helpful in dealing with life's chal-



**Inge Ginter tries drumming Monday with the circle.**

lenges."

The group — made up of a large inner circle of drummers bordered by several people playing shakers, triangle and other percussion instruments — first followed

Silverstein's exercises to loosen up hands, wrists and arms.

Silverstein said participation in drumming circles has been scientifically shown to boost the immune system,

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increase the body's white blood cells (which fight infection), help cancer patients recover faster and alleviate stress, loneliness and depression.

"Drumming also has proven helpful with stroke patients. The vibrational feedback they experience in their hands all the way down their legs from drumming, along with stimulation of both the right and left sides of the brain by listening to and then mimicking the rhythms, can help improve the walking gait," Silverstein explained.

A positive mind-set, greater self-awareness and a sense of community are benefits to all circle drummers, regardless of age, Silverstein added.

The Hillsborough resident, founder and president of Living at Peace, a New Jersey-based company, has been a professional singer-songwriter for 24 years, holds a music degree from Rutgers' Mason Gross School of the Arts and has taught music in New Jersey public schools.

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# Drum

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Silverstein, 44, whose music degree is in the French horn, guitar and voice, described how she segued into folk drumming and aspects of yoga practice.

"I was seeking help about 13 years ago to lift

## AT A GLANCE

**WHO:** Sharon Silverstein.

**WHAT:** Founder of Living at Peace.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Go to [www.livingatpeace.com](http://www.livingatpeace.com) or call 908-431-9904.

me out of a postpartum depression," Silverstein said. When traditional medicine was not helping, a friend referred Silverstein to a homeopathic doctor. "Eventually I got into the

community of drumming and was helped," Silverstein said.

By the end of Monday's 45-minute class, every participant could improvise a few musical bars for the

others to mimic.

"It's named the call and response. It's excellent for concentration and memory," Silverstein said.

During the concluding affirmation circle activity, Silverstein drummed a rhythm, then paused for every player to say one thing learned or felt from the drumming circle.

Happy, team, fellowship, joy, concentration, relaxing, together, sharing and

camaraderie were among the responses.

Center manager Gwen Chalker described Silverstein as a facilitator who can provoke deeper, stronger relationships through her drumming circle and original songs.

"What I'm looking for is to have them connect with the rhythms of life through song and music," Silverstein said.