

Festival promotes alternative healing, helps brain injury group

by ZACH BENOIT OF THE GAZETTE STAFF • OCT. 22, 2011

To hear its organizers tell it, everybody who attended or took part in Saturday's 2011 Art & Soul Festival came out on top.

"It's just been a win-win all around," said Ian Elliot, of the Billings Brain Injury Support Group. "It's an opportunity for Billings residents to sample alternate healing modalities they might not otherwise be exposed to, and it raises money for brain injury support."

The festival, held at the Al Bedoo Shrine Auditorium and put on by Elliot and Barjon's Books, featured about 50 vendors focusing on alternative healing arts and creative and spiritual expression.

Proceeds raised go toward the Billings Brain Injury Support Group, which holds the Free Koncertz for Kidz each summer at Dehler Park.

Attendees came out on top, said Barjon's owner Jim Nymeyer, because it exposes them to different forms of healing and medicine.

"If people are looking for answers to those questions that are rattling around in our heads, this could be a good place to start finding them," said Carla Huff, of Billings, who attended with her 4-year-old son, Dylan. "Holistic healing, getting aware of your body and mind, I look at it as treating your whole body instead of just one part."

Vendors focused on things like yoga, reiki, herbal remedies, readings, artwork and meditation. Nymeyer said it's good for them because it exposes new people to their business.

"It's a really good avenue to be nontypical how you spread information," he said.

Joseph B. Carringer brought his Ancient Voices Harmonic Therapy business all the way from New Hampshire for the festival.

The business focuses on using a didgeridoo, an Australian drone instrument, for physical, mental and spiritual sound therapy.

Carringer said events like the festival are good because they let people mix and match different therapies that work for them.

"It's a holistic buffet," he said. "The thing about holistic is it's not a one-size-fits-all approach."

And for Elliot and the Brain Injury Support Group, it's a boon because it brings in much-needed funds to support their operations.

Last year's event raised about \$2,000 and Elliot said he expects Saturday's to do even better.

"This has been needed and that's kind of evident from the turnout," he said. "It just enhances Billings."

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