

Big Heart Dance Camp: follow your bliss

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

The Big Heart Dance Camp (BHDC) takes place just outside of Honeywood at the Unicamp of Ontario from Tuesday, June 18 to Sunday, June 23, for the 11th year.

Unicamp is a Unitarian Church camp. My family's farm is just down the road from Unicamp. The camp does private rentals. BHDC is private, not church, but a community offering. We still have spaces available in the camp, Ayrle MacEachern informed the Citizen. The camp runs during the week from Tuesday to Friday for our older teens and adults only. Then, from Friday to Sunday is open to all ages.

There is a third alternative to the dates: Tuesday to Friday is also a choice, as well as Ayrle put it, People new to BHDC, not quite ready to jump in can come for the day and see how it works.

What is BHDC? It is a time of letting go and finding connection with people and within oneself, basically, through dance and movement.

Ayrle's explanation, This program based camp gives an opportunity to explore all different types of movement. There are also opportunities for drumming and music making. BH Dance Camp is all about expressive arts, dance but more than dance.

There's singing, other music making, jamming on the back porch, a campfire each night.

Additional to those, There's a labyrinth; the property connects to the Bruce Trail there's a pond for swimming and canoeing. Opportunities to explore all kinds of things at BHD Camp.

There is even music in the yoga that is taught.

We also have opportunities for expressing ourselves through music: singing in circles; an open stage to share a song, poem, a reading, something they'd like to share on stage, she outlined the many ways in which music is used.

A big part of the Big Heart Dance Camp are the workshops and classes.

You can choose to go to all or none, she assured us but the point in all this is to Follow your bliss. What do you want to learn?

On offer every day are three meals a day and snacks, delicious, homemade meals every day and we eat meals together as a community, all of us that are there. I organize it and do all the prep for it but, at camp, everyone contributes to it, another way we build community.

Ayrle explained, The workshops vary from Nia form of dance, JourneyDance. It's been around for 35 years, based out of the U.S. but it's all over the world. It is dance art, healing arts and martial arts. People in Orangeville teach Nia all around the area. You can look at Facebook, Dufferin dance network for other dance happenings in our community.

That's one of 20 workshops, she continued, JourneyDance and other, guided ecstatic dance. There's a facilitator. It uses visualization and movement into a beautiful release, using world music.

Contact improvisation is another form, dancing with someone, playing with the rolling point of contact, not to stay with that person; this is not a couple dance.

Another example: Another dance is sacred circle dance. It's a community dance form and, like a mandala, in a circle. And we dance different dances from around the world, different cultures, with simple steps.

?There are different people teaching each different workshops. it's quite a big facilitation team. They are all seasoned entertainers. It's a dance, music, nature camp. On the weekend there's a kids camp. So, parents can come and the kids are having a blast with other kids in the forest and painting.?

For the middle of that age range, the teens in a family, ?So, teenagers are welcome and can do their own thing. They are encouraged to follow their bliss. This is a digital free camp and they can go to any of the workshops.?

It was extremely important to mention, ?this a drug and alcohol free event. This is a time for light hearted people. This is a place to feel, get to know yourself and get to know others. This is a time to unplug and get to know nature and the community.?

So much can come from such an unleashing and unplugging, Ayrle knows, ?There is personal growth and new skills learned through these workshops and classes. One might have an open and close circle. These are experiential workshops ? let's get into our bone, into our being. This is 11

thecamp and so many people have benefitted and come back.?

The Dufferin Arts Council has supported Big Heart Dance Camp.

?There's not anything like it in Dufferin or Ontario,? Ayrle was certain. ?It's unique in Ontario. People came from Ottawa, Montreal, Peterborough to Dufferin county. Lots of repeat, a nice group of repeats. And we always have newbies.?

The numbers are controlled to keep the sensitivity of the dancing clear.

?Forty max during the week,? she told us, ?Eighty max during the weekend. We've chosen to enable a strong intimate community to be built. Those numbers work the best.

There are four workshops a day, all different; every evening, there's a DJ boogie. Get down and boogie!?

There is ?more: mindfulness, savouring mindfulness to be more present and engaged about how my body's feeling.?

Given the wear and tear of today's life styles, she said. ?I feel we're providing a life's essential service. Unicamp is 50 acres ? it's so beautiful.?

She gave us the quintessential reasons for coming to Big Heart Dance Camp: ?To land in a loving community; to feel a sense of belonging. To be part of a gathering that happens annually, that nurtures you. To carry that summer solstice. The light that you can carry for the rest of the year; to take that energy and have it with you the rest of the year.?

Ayrle said, ?It's a little light; it's to take with you.?

The camp dates this year are from Tuesday, June 18 to Sunday, June 23. Registration for all or part is welcomed.

For all the information and to register, go to www.bigheartdancecamp.ca