

## Creating a Space

by Doris Pulone

Many Monthly Meetings claim to support and nourish the arts, but all too rarely make space or time available for the nourishment of those members who derive their own spirituality from it.

Happily there are those who do. Mount Holly Meeting has not only hosted arts events—Musica Antiqua, children's art workshops, art shows—at the Meetinghouse for years, but has minuted its support for artists and art in our midst. The Outreach Committee has used the arts continually to "raise the creative spirit" and in the process attract people to Quakerism.



AFTER AN UNSUCCESSFUL TRY AT COUNTRY MUSIC, JOHN WOOLMAN BECAME A PREACHER.

Mount Holly Meeting's annual "Celebrating Our Diversity" Cultural Festival began in 1993 with four weekends of music, dance, visual arts, and drama, all representing different cultures and all local. The idea of Outreach Committee member Al Thorp, it was carried to fruition by the Committee with some help from the Meeting and a \$1500 grant from the Burlington County Cultural and Heritage Department and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. There were professional and amateur performers, including Friends Theatre Group; an art show by the Fellowship of Quaker Artists; Delaware-Lenape Traditional Dancers; Keiko Chou on the Japanese koto; a Tai Chi demonstration; Dances of Universal Peace; and Italian folk stories, to name just a few events. Many people met and experienced each other's art.

The festival has since been scaled down. This year it was held on Thursday morning, May 23. It featured Sondra Ball of Mickleton MM telling stories from Native American nations; Mlanjeni's Magical Theatre, an African illusions act; and John Woolman as Master of Ceremonies (Steve Gulick of Central Philadelphia MM). Forty children from Mount Holly public elementary school and forty from Rancocas Friends School enjoyed the morning together, and said goodbye in dance as Jeanne Iyesha Lauenborg led them in Dances of Universal Peace.

# Types & Shadows

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Another ongoing happening is the "Long Gone Coffeehouse" which was begun in 1994 and pops up for 4 or 5 months at a time before breaks. On the last Friday of each month the surrounding community (and beyond) flooded into the Meetinghouse. Refreshments were given for the price of admission but coffee was sold to cover costs. The community not only came out to socialize and hear the poets, but also brought refreshments and helped with the coffee and cleanup. Friends from various Monthly Meetings came to sing, read their poetry, play guitar or just be there. Groups, individuals, young and old from the surrounding community came out to share their talents and love.

The arts truly can bring people together.

Looking around at a crowd of people, many of whom did not know one another, but whose eyes were filling with tears while listening to Sheila Truncellito (Crosswicks MM) tell a story of old love, I felt oneness. It was a crowd of young and old, streetsleepers and doctors, poets and dreamers. It was good.

*Doris Pulone is a charter member of FQA and former coordinator of Burlington Quarter, Philadelphia YM.*

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