

FACES IN OUR MIDST



THE BEAT GOES ON . . .

Music and work with the aging have been the passions of Arlene de Silva's life. Last year the former music director at St. Leo's and past executive at the Council on Aging was able to bring these two loves together in a drumming program for refugee seniors that reconnected her to St. Leo's.

Arlene had always been aware of the soul-stirring effect of music, but after leaving the Council she learned more about the physical health benefits of music she became involved in developing a coalition to bring these benefits to a wider range of people.

Research shows that drumming can reduce blood pressure, help with pain, uplift moods, enhance immune systems and can actually improve health. Music and Wellness, the collaborative she founded won the state grant to provide programs for senior refugees in Hamilton County. In addition to drumming the program also provides ESL, citizenship preparation, and community involvement through the engagement with the arts. Among partners in this project are the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Art Museum, TriHealth, the Millvale Rec Center, and St. Leo's.

As health care spending increases in the United States, communities strive to improve the health of their members and reduce future health care expenditures. Federal, state and local funding cuts often limit communities from offering healthy living activities.

In order to meet the increased need, Global Music & Wellness, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization was incorporated in 2010. The mission of the organization is to offer evidence-based recreational music making and wellness programs to improve quality of life of people of all ages, regardless of their challenges, backgrounds, ethnicity, ability, or prior experience.

Though the drumming program has increased her involvement with St. Leo's, Arlene has remained connected through teaching music to parishioners and the Maestoso Choir which has presented Christmas concerts here over the years.

Using music to work with those who don't speak English is a natural for Arlene. After all, music is the universal language.

To see a video of our drummers, go to: <http://saint-leo.org/WorksofMercy/BurundiRefugeeMinistry.aspx>

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate