THE CALL

Sunday, September 6, 2015

Laughs are on them

Laughter yoga practitioners are among the highlights at city's Live Happy expo

By JOSH SULLIVAN

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WOONSOCKET – To the people passing by the center tent at the Live Happy, Live Healthy, Live Green Expo that was going on at River Island Park Saturday afternoon, it looked like there was a hilarious joke taking place that no one outside the tent was privy to. They would have been wrong. The handful of people smiling and laughing aloud, were laughing for no reason at all.

What was actually going on was a laughter yoga class put on by Let's Laugh Today, a cheerful married couple from Walpole whose entire goal is to bring people out of their shells and simply laugh. Bill and Linda Hamaker were first introduced to laughter yoga in 2008, when they attended a seminar in Stockbridge, Mass. at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. They had seen it in action on TV shows like Oprah and The Today Show, and seven years after trying it for the first time, it became a career.

"The whole concept is that a fake laugh is as good as a real laugh," Linda said. "It's helped me with

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Laughter

Continued from page A1 pain, it's helped me with depression, and it's the reason I feel so passionate about it. We somehow get into the school system and they tell us not to laugh, but we're going to bring it back now."

Many of the techniques the Hamakers use revert back to basic childhood instincts. While sitting in a circle, Bill encouraged everyone not to simply say his or her name, but to laugh and pantomime playing a musical instrument. Giggles littered the tent, as a little less than a dozen grown adults with full time jobs play an invisible piano, and laugh to the tune of "Beethoven's "Symphony No. 5" (Ha ha ha haaaaa. Ha ha ha, haaaaaa).

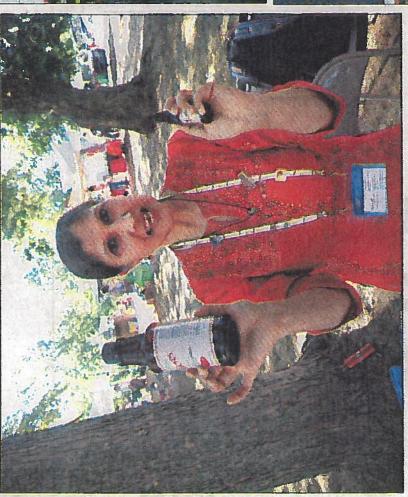
"Kids laugh at anything and everything," Linda said. "Why should kids have all the fun? We're here to take the dull out of being an adult."

And eliminate dullness is exactly what the duo does. By pretending to "shock" the person next to them with laughter and pretending to pop invisible balloons or running around in a circle, the fake laughs turn into real laugh. Laughter releases endorphins into the body that act as natural painkillers, and the Hamakers say that it can strengthen a person's immune system as well as lower blood pressure. Each little activity ends with everyone clapping and chanting "Ho, ho, ha, ha, ha," meant to bring everyone together and lead into rhythmic breathing exercises that make up the yoga part of laughter yoga.

Anyone interested in joining a class should visit let-slaughtoday.com. The group meets at the Unitarian Church of Sharon, Mass. the second Saturday of every month at 11 a.m. and every fourth Monday at 262 Chestnut Street in Franklin, Mass. For other opportunities, call Linda and Bill at 508-660-

2223.

LIVING HAPPY EXPO



Above, Alka Naithani discusses her clean living essential oils and household cleaners 'so pure they are edible' including hand sanitizers made with pure cloves, cinnamon, rosemary, lemon and eucalyptus and all-natural toothpaste during the "Live Happy, Healthy and Green Expo" at River Island Park in Woonsocket Saturday.



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Above, wellness advocate Joanna Sacco, left, applies doTERRA essential oils to the palms of Janelle O'Brien, of Manville.

Left, Jan McGovern, of Dudley, Mass., promotes her Real Time Pain Relief Cream.

Photos by Ernest A. Brown