



Holistic in the Neighborhood

Mychal Mills and Rodney Salomon with Dean Nelson seated at rear

A new approach to heal communities in Asbury and beyond

by Dan Jacobson
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ASBURY PARK — This is a great triCity story if there ever was one, incorporating an alternative and progressive approach in taking on some of the most vexing social problems we face.

It's the story of Rodney Salomon and Mychal Mills, who've gotten together to start a remarkable program to spread all the good stuff — mindfulness, yoga and meditation, along with a healthy lifestyle, fitness and nutrition — to troubled neighborhoods in Asbury Park and hopefully beyond.

I think they should call it Holistic in the Neighborhood.

And while the initial idea was to target youth, it's now become an all-ages initiative. We'd love to see this grow big. These are two impressive and charismatic 28-year-olds with great potential. Even better, their dynamism is rooted in a humility and peacefulness.

To draw attention to their youth program, a year ago the two started a series of monthly open mic nights — where people of all ages get up and do anything, whether dance, play an instrument, sing, rap or just tell their story. The open mic nights are now packing Asbury's

Kula Cafe at the Springwood Center on Springwood Avenue.

What shocked Salomon and Mills is how quickly the open mics attracted people of all ages, from a seven year old to a person in their 60s. It completely took off. Last month's had between 40 to 50 people. Two people came from Philadelphia. They've now started a second open mic at Lunchbreak in Red Bank.

Want to see what this is all about? Attend their first anniversary open mic at Kula Cafe on Saturday, December 19, with a Holistic Fair starting at 5 pm and the open mic at 6:15. The Fair will feature free healthy smoothies and t-shirts provided by Dean Nelson of Dean's Natural Foods — who turned us on to this story — as well as programs such as a meditation workshop out in the Kula Farm greenhouse next to the center.

Salomon and Mills are into all the good stuff for people to live a mindful life and heal: meditation, yoga, healthy nutrition, fitness, aromatherapy and more — things once considered alternative, but now increasingly accepted into the mainstream. All things that bring peace to the individual and the community.

But you haven't seen much of this in tough urban areas, where crime, drugs and gangs ravage communities. Lots of other things

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