

Hula Hoop Dreams

Whirligig Hoop Troupe presents *O, Jabberwocky! A Hoop Spectacular* benefit show

They say that “to hoop is to smile with your body.”

Those are words to live by for the founders of the Whirligig Hoopers, Jennifer Hill and Susan Anderson. When we first met these hoop dancing friends back in November of 2010, they had just begun offering hoop dancing classes in the Wyoming Valley and their hoop jams in the park were starting to take off. Nothing beats spending a sunny afternoon in the park with friends hooping under the shade of a beautiful old cherry blossom tree. At that time, word was also beginning to spread about their artistic and practical handmade hoops, too. Like any sport or artform, one needs the right equipment and tools for the job, and hooping is no different.

We recently reconnected with Hill and Anderson and a few of their hooping companions, ranging in age from 20 to 70-somethings, at Body Language Studio in Kingston, and they brought us up to date on how the troupe has grown and how their own hooping skills have blossomed. They also shared details of an event they’re presenting on Friday, June 8, at Downtown Arts, *O, Jabberwocky! A Hoop Spectacular*, to benefit the Osterhout Free Library’s Early Literacy Program.

While chatting and hooping — waist hooping, knee hooping, arm hooping — with us in the spacious studio with mirrors covering one wall, Hill and Anderson said the old adage really is true, practice does make perfect. As they’ve continued to hoop, and study the art of hoop dancing by participating in hooping workshops, their skill level has increased tremendously. Today, they can even fire hoop (a goal of Anderson’s when she first became a serious hooper about two years ago). They also enjoy creating original choreography. You’ll have the chance to see their choreography on Friday night when local hoopers take center stage at downtown Arts for *O, Jabberwocky!* Friday night.

Based on the famous poem by Lewis Carroll, the show includes eight choreographed pieces to illustrate the poem and its characters, from Mimsy and Tove to the famous Jabberwocky himself. Such a project is a perfect blend of Hill’s talents, as she is not only a hooper, but an accomplished writer and poet who owns Paper Kite Press in Kingston. “There’s a part in the show



PHOTOS (LEFT&ABOVE) BY TOM BONOMO

Founders of the Whirligig Hoopers, Susan Anderson (left) and Jenny Hill (above) demonstrate fire hoop dancing at River Common, Wilkes-Barre. The cast of *O, Jabberwocky!* (below) rehearses for the show.

If you go:

What: *O, Jabberwocky! A Hoop Spectacular* to benefit the Osterhout Free Library’s Early Literacy Program

When: Friday, June 8, 7 p.m.

Where: Downtown Arts, 47 N. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre

Tickets: \$10 at the door

Information:
whirligighoopers.com



that includes shadow theater,” Hill explained. “It’s something that I saw recently in Philadelphia done at a vaudeville show and I loved it. And two of the hoopers are also musicians, so they’re doing accompanying music to the shadow theater.” Music for the show includes an eclectic

mix of everything from vaudeville style to techno, jazz and swing.

Tickets are \$10 at the door, and proceeds benefit the Osterhout Free Library’s Early Literacy Program.

— julie imel

Good for the body & mind

Not only is hooping fun, it brings with it great physical and spiritual benefits. Any hooper will tell you, the activity is relaxing and fun and can help you turn around even the most difficult day because, like any exercise, it will help the body release endorphins. To really get in touch with the feel of the hoop and focus, Hill and Anderson suggest closing your eyes. It may sound odd, but try it. The sense you get from closing off the world while you hoop is similar to the state of mind a yogi experiences.

As for physical benefits, hooping is a great way to burn calories and stay in shape. According to the Whirligig Hoopers, hooping helps sculpt your body, improve flexibility and endurance, boost your creativity and expression, and offers a cardiovascular workout while burning up to 210 calories in 30 minutes (that’s almost enough to burn off an entire Snickers bar!).

To learn more about the many benefits of hooping, check out *Weighted Hula Hoops: Hoopla or Good Exercise?* by Dr. Edward R. Laskowski at www.mayoclinic.com/health/weighted-hula-hoops/AN01638.

If you’re interested in taking a Hoop Fitness Class, the next session is scheduled for Monday, June 4, from 6 to 7 p.m. at Body Language Studios, 239 Schuyler Ave., Kingston, on the third floor. This class is perfect for beginner to intermediate hoopers. (It’s recommended that you wear workout clothes that aren’t too bulky.) The cost is \$10, which includes use of a hoop. For more information and a complete schedule of classes and events, visit whirligighoopers.com.