



DEBBIE CHASE JENNINGS/CITIZEN-TIMES

Jewels Newman, left, Carrie Gerstmann, center, and Mendy Knott warm up for their "New Earth Celebration" an evening of music and poetry at the green door.

'New Earth Celebration' marks women's creativity, spirituality

By Heather Rayburn

STAFF WRITER

Folksinger Carrie Gerstmann, poet Mendy Knott and percussionist Jewels Newman share a common interest in women's history.

That interest has turned into a collaboration entitled "A New Earth Celebration," an evening of music, dance, poetry and humor which begins at 8 p.m. Friday at the green door on Carolina Lane. Admission is \$5.

"A great deal of the show will be geared toward the celebration and acknowledgement of the creative force in women," said Newman. "It will be a very empowering experience."

"It's also a call to heal the planet," added Gerstmann.

Proceeds will benefit an Asheville-based group called Whisper "a non-profit organization which offers classes, events, performances, and rituals that explore and honor women's spirituality."

It operates out of the Goddess Store at 382 Montford Avenue.

"I don't want to give the impression that this is a religious event. It's more of a spiritual event," said Knott. "And I feel like there is a great need in women

for this kind of group mindedness.

"It comes out of an earth-centered tradition - not just Celtic, but Native-American, African, Wiccan and the ancient wisdoms," said Knott.

Knott, originally from Atlanta, works one day a week at Malaprop's Bookstore to support herself as a full-time writer and poet. She hosts Malaprop's monthly women's poetry night, "A Cafe of One's Own," and recently had one of her plays produced in Atlanta.

Newman was born in South Carolina, but grew up all over. She picked up the drum in '88 and has since studied under several master drummers. "My inspiration comes from my heart, the earth and the sky," she said.

Gerstmann, originally from Chicago, attended a liberal arts college in Maryland where she studied philosophy. As a fan of feminist writers, her songs center on the theme of women's power. Her music is rock-edged with Middle Eastern and gypsy influences.

The three performers said that they do welcome men to their show. "We're not doing this to exclude men," said Knott. "But women don't get much of a chance to say 'yeah, us.' During this show, in that moment and that place ... women rule."