

Nonprofit helps people preserve their cultures

By Rosemary Zibart | The New Mexican

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During the '90s, Charlotte Pollard spent a lot of time traveling around the world in developing countries and, whenever possible, she stayed with indigenous families.

"After a few years, I started wondering what I could do for these people," said Pollard, a Santa Fe resident since 1993. In 2000 she created One Heart, Many Rhythms. The mission of this small, volunteer nonprofit is to work with indigenous people to help them preserve and express their cultures.

The name of the organization is derived from its vision statement: "We are all connected. The way we express ourselves is unique. We are of one heart beating with many different rhythms. It is in our diversity that we can create unity."

A former management consultant, Pollard is now employed by the advocacy group New Mexico First and commutes daily to Albuquerque. But she continues to relish the opportunity to connect with what she calls the "first peoples of the world."

"I started out giving small scholarships to individuals in India and Mexico and other places," Pollard said, "so these young men and women could advance their education and develop skills like nursing or teaching that they could bring back to their communities."

In addition to the board of directors (all women) that helps raise money, Pollard has developed a board of advisers — 12 individuals from different parts of the world. They inform her of needs in their regions and track money donated for projects.

"The amounts we give are very small — the average is \$3,000 — and the annual total for all funding is \$30,000," Pollard said. "But these little grants still have a big impact."

A project in the highlands of Peru, for example, is the Cusi Huayna Youth Group. These young people meet regularly to keep alive the traditional music, dance and ritual for Quechua people of the Andes. Another funded activity in Canada is the Environmental-Aboriginal Guardianship through Law and Education, or EAGLE, whose purpose is to empower Native people to use legal knowledge to protect their environment.

One of Pollard's favorite projects is the Nyi School of Art on the Yarapa Gorge, five hours by boat from Iquitos, Peru. The school helps Amazonian children develop their abilities and creativity in painting. The object, however, is not to turn out professional artists.

"The purpose of the classes is to encourage these children to observe their environment — the animals, birds and plants," Pollard says. "If they appreciate their homeland, they're more likely to take care of it."

Students learn to use plants and other local materials to make paints and to use tree bark for paper.

"The art also gives the children an opportunity to express their feelings in a culture that's being stressed because of many changes," Pollard said.

Recently, she met Mary Mill, owner of Mill Atelier, 530 Canyon Road. A big fan of folk art, Mill decided to host an exhibit after hearing about the Nyi School and seeing examples of the children's work. The exhibit features 34 works of art by children ages 9 to 17. It opens with a reception from 5-7 p.m. Nov. 16 and runs until Dec. 16.

For more information, call Charlotte Pollard at 474-4228 or go to www.oneheartmanyrythms.org. To contact the Mill Atelier, call 989-9213.