

# Women honor their wisdom



Rhianna Mirabello from The Dreaming Goddess, left, and Alissa Moon crown Lynn Martin at her "queening" ceremony. Her crown was made of items from nature that her friends said reminded them of her. SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Ceremonies celebrate menopausal stage of life

By Stephanie Fagnani

For Living & Being

For many years, 51-year-old Holmes resident Lynn Martin followed a new-age spiritual path, practicing shamanism and becoming a Reiki master.

So as she approached her 50th birthday last summer, she was naturally drawn to the concept of celebrating her entrance into the next stage of womanhood with a symbolic "queening" ceremony.

These ceremonies typically involve the gathering of a group of female friends to honor the life of the woman entering the menopausal phase of life, which in ancient cultures was known as the crone stage. According to Rhianna Mirabello, an ordained, non-denominational minister and owner of The Dreaming God-

dess in Poughkeepsie, it's a significant rite of passage for a woman who has already been through the maiden and mother stages of life and is ready to re-examine who she is as she steps into her next half-century.

Traditionally, a woman was considered a crone, or a wise woman, when she reached 50, Mirabello said. However, now that the average woman's lifespan is 80 years old, women 50-70 are often said to be in their queen phase, Mirabello said. She recommends the book "The Queen of My Self" by Donna Henes as a resource for women who want to further pursue the subject.

"The queening ceremony is about honoring the journey that you have taken to get here," Mirabello said. "It's about empowering you to step into the next phase surrounded by the women that you love and having them reflect back to you the gifts that you have given them. It's really about sisterhood and it validates our connection to our friends," she added.

Under Mirabello's direction, Martin's celebration took place on Whaley Lake in Pawling near her home with 15 of her closest friends. Martin took a ceremonial swim in the lake and her friends made a crown for her out of items they each found in nature that reminded them of her.

Martin was also given other gifts and a ritualistic foot bath by her friends, which Mirabello said is a type of blessing for the feet as they prepare to step into the next phase of life.

"It was just amazing," Martin said. "I never felt as loved as in that moment. Somehow it pumps you up full of love and confidence and a sense of accomplishment and gives you the strength to push through that next phase. It was extremely powerful for me," she said.

According to Barbara Threecrow, a ceremonial leader and teacher of the Earth ways based in Ulster County, the feminist movement ushered in a new-age way of thinking about a woman's aging process, causing many neg-





Rhianna Mirabello from *The Dreaming Goddess* interacts with Lynn Martin during her queening ceremony. SUBMITTED PHOTO

ative connotations associated with getting older to slowly dissipate. While 50 used to be considered over-the-hill, Threecrow said there is now more of an interest in how significant women are when they reach that age and how they should be honored and respected for their wisdom.

"The missing piece in cultures today is the celebration of all the stages of women and understanding the significance of these particular stages," Threecrow said. "(Aging) is what you make of it. But if you have the support of your sisters, the women together make a celebration of this. They are opening a new doorway for you. Your life is now beginning in another stage and it's a beautiful opportunity. It's not the end," she said.

Jennifer Kluska, an ordained interfaith minister and spiritual counselor with an office in Kingston, agrees and said that of the three stages of womanhood — the maiden, the mother and the crone — this over-50 stage is perhaps the time of the most spiritual growth for women. The woman in this stage has seen and witnessed many lessons throughout her life and she can now focus her attention inward, she said.

"When the blood stops flowing ... the wisdom she has is held within," Kluska said, "It's a great time of spiri-

tual growth and (you can) take off all of the shackles that society has said you are supposed to be now and figure out what do you want to do with your time. It's a freeing time to experience and there is still so much to give in terms of wisdom," she added.

The book "The Red Tent" by Anita Diamant, is a piece of fiction loosely based on the life of the biblical Dinah that can help women gain a sense of what it may have been like for women of all ages to learn about life from each other during those times, Kluska said. In the book, women gather in a red tent when they are preparing to give birth or having their menstrual cycles.

For Martin, having a group of her friends acknowledge her first 50 years of accomplishments and learning how she had affected their lives was a "life changing" experience.

"That kind of communication is so powerful and when you have it in numbers there are no words for it," Martin said. "It really is all about love and you walk away with this emanating love that makes you feel like you are walking on a cloud," she said.

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Spiritual teacher Barbara Threecrow says attitudes toward aging are changing for women, giving them an opportunity to embrace their wise older selves. SUBMITTED PHOTO

## RESOURCES

» *The Dreaming Goddess*, 44 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie. In addition to queening ceremonies, Rhianna Mirabello performs other rites of passage events including mother and baby blessing ceremonies. Mirabello can be reached there at 845-473-2206.

» Barbara Threecrow, in addition to teaching others about the spiritual aspect of the relationship to the Earth, is also a ceremonial leader, an author and works in women's circles providing counseling and spiritual healing. Her website is [www.barbarathreecrow.com](http://www.barbarathreecrow.com). She can be reached via email at [Barbara@barbarathreecrow.com](mailto:Barbara@barbarathreecrow.com)

» Jennifer Kluska, an ordained interfaith minister and energy healing practitioner, can be reached at [www.jenniferkluska.com](http://www.jenniferkluska.com)

» The book "The Red Tent" by Anita Diamant can be found on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

» Donna Henes is an internationally acclaimed spiritual teacher, popular speaker and award-winning writer specializing in multicultural ritual celebrations of the cycles of the seasons and the seasons of our lives. She can be reached at [www.donna-henes.net](http://www.donna-henes.net), 718-857-1343 or via email at [CityShaman@aol.com](mailto:CityShaman@aol.com). She is the author of "The Queen of My Self: Stepping Into Sovereignty in Midlife" (Monarch Press, 2004).

» The Women in Transition Psychotherapy Group meets every Monday night from 8 to 9 p.m. at 1983 Route 52, Suite 6 in Hopewell Junction. Cost ranges from \$20 to \$30. Contact Diane Light-Spiro at 914-265-1008 for more information.