

Encinitas man aims to make city a 'music mecca'

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ENCINITAS — Todd Pyke has big dreams for Encinitas.

He envisions the city he has lived in for the past six years as a "musical mecca" along the lines of New Orleans, a place where people with musical dreams see them come true.

Pyke recently founded the Encinitas School of Music for that purpose. His students, ranging in age from 6 to 60, are learning how to play guitar, bass, drums and keyboards, and Pyke wants to do everything he can to help them tap their creative energy.

"This is my contribution to the community," Pyke said during an interview at his studio in his Leucadia home. "It means a lot to me to do this. I'm on a path of service, and I know I'll never be rich."

His plans include buying musical instruments that he will sell for low prices to his students "to get the instruments into the hands of people who want them." He has already purchased 20 guitars that

he loans to students as part of Teen Scene, a city of Encinitas Parks and Recreation after-school program in which he teaches students from Oak Crest and Diegueno junior high schools, he said.

"They can keep the guitars until they're ready to buy their own," he said.

Pyke's staff includes Chris Meadors, who teaches bass, drums and guitar, and Joanne Lillegard, who teaches keyboards and guitar and is bilingual. "I hope to hook up the Latino community with her," he said.

Pyke, a San Diego native, started teaching guitar at age 18 after he'd already been playing for eight years, having been inspired by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin, who blew Pyke away with the song "Whole Lotta Love."

His father whetted Pyke's musical appetite when he brought home a classical music tape, and Pyke realized music's endless possibilities.

He was in his first band, "Deception," at age 15, and on his way to performing in several

bands before he began teaching on the side "because I needed the money," he said.

At age 21, he moved to Wyoming, where he was playing, teaching and "kind of spinning my wheels."

But the open spaces and lack of entertainment gave Pyke a lot of time to think about his future. When he got back to San Diego, he was much more focused, musically and spiritually.

Teaching gives Pyke the ability to affect another person's life positively, he said.

"I like watching the flower blossom," he said. "I know I'm giving this person a discipline that will help in their life. I like knowing that the world may receive a piece of art down the road that they wouldn't have without my help. And I really thrive on that one-on-one relationship."

Pyke also likes to watch his students show off what they've learned at the two recitals he organizes each year (the last one was Nov. 15).

He started doing them in 1996, when he was teaching at



BILL WECHTER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Music instructor Todd Pyke, right, gives a guitar lesson to Jed Rapp Goldstein, 12, of Encinitas.

a local music store.

Pyke said he is starting to see how much students and their friends and families are getting from the recitals — and how much he is getting out of them, too.

"The momentum has really

built up," he said. "This last recital was the biggest cast I've ever had, and the smoothest show yet. The stage is the path to self-awareness."

For more information on the Encinitas School of Music, call Pyke at (760) 943-9840.