

BBC will film drum therapy

■ Irondequoit man leads circle for people with Tourette syndrome.

CHRIS SWINGLE
STAFF WRITER

A film crew from British Broadcasting Corp. will be in Perinton on Saturday to film people whose Tourette syndrome tends to become invisible while they drum.

Tourette syndrome causes people to involuntarily cycle through repetitive shrugs, blinks, twitches, whistles, throat

clearing, spoken words or other movements. But when people with the neurological disorder get caught up in the rhythm and focus of participating in a drum circle, the so-called tics often halt.

The BBC documentary will be broadcast in the United Kingdom for an arts series called *Imagine*. The 50-minute documentary

will focus on New York City neurologist Oliver Sacks and his latest book, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, a 2007 *New York Times* best-seller about the power of music to move, heal and haunt people.

Sacks' book mentions a drumming circle in which he participated in New York City that was led by Matt Giordano, 25, of Irondequoit,



Giordano

who also will lead Saturday's drum circle in Perinton.

"Music here had a double power; first, to reconfigure brain activity, and bring calm and focus to people who were sometimes distracted or preoccupied by incessant tics and impulses; and second, to promote a musical and social bonding with others,

To learn more

■ If you or a family member has Tourette syndrome and wants to participate in the drumming circle, e-mail tsa@touretterochester.org or call (585) 987-5196.

■ For more about Dr. Oliver Sacks' book, see <http://musicophilia.com>.

so that what began as a miscellany of isolated, often distressed or self-conscious individuals almost instantly became a cohesive group with a single aim — a veritable drum orchestra under Matt's baton," Sacks wrote in his

book.

Sacks also wrote *Awakenings* (adapted into a film starring Robert DeNiro and Robin Williams), *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* and *Uncle*

DRUMMING, PAGE 4B

Drumming

FROM PAGE 3B

Tungsten: Memories of Chemical Boyhood.

Giordano, who experiences tics throughout the day, presents drumming performances and drum circle experiences through his business, Drum Echoes. He has been hired by schools, human service agencies and other groups, often incorporating a first-person disability awareness talk. "I've been all over the country, Canada, Puerto Rico," said Giordano.

He has loved drumming since he got his first drum at age 2, which is also the age when his sudden jolts and obsessive tic movements began.

Giordano believes that tics are a form of rhythm and that drumming can reroute the body's need for tic movement among people with Tourette syndrome. He has found that most people with Tourette syndrome have a better sense of rhythm on the drums than other people.

Judi Hall of Perinton has participated in Giordano's drum circles, as has her son, Christopher, who's 18 and has Tourette syndrome. "They become a team," Hall said. "I can't tell you how wonderful it is."

About 200,000 people in the United States are known to have Tourette syndrome.

The documentary will feature interviews with Sacks and will include a small number of people from the book. "We want their human stories to allow us to learn more about the power of music — about the many ways it can affect our lives and its complex relationship with the brain," Sharon Green, a researcher involved in the documentary, explained by e-mail from the BBC in Scotland. The broadcast date is not yet known.

Giordano wants more people to understand and accept people with Tourette syndrome and is glad he and others in this area might become part of the documentary.

"I think it's pretty cool," he said. "It's a very nice honor." ▽

CSWINGLE@DemocratandChronicle.com