

Teen yoga stretches mind and body

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It's not a religion, it's not just for girls and it's not slow or boring.

"It" is yoga. Teen Yoga to be exact and the form is the newest activity the Teen Center offers Menwith Hill youth.

"I always thought it was slow and too calm, and only for older people," said Elliot Theedom, a 13-year-old in the class.

Teen Yoga, which began in June, is designed to improve concentration, flexibility and more.

"Yoga, unlike any other form of 'exercise,' gives teens a deep self-confidence from the inside out," said Patricia Grube, the teen yoga instructor.

As well as strengthening the body and increasing flexibility, teens get to explore the use of meditation to develop mental focus and stillness within. A place where outer pressures have no influence, where you know who you are, why you are here and what is truly important in life. When one knows this, one can ride the wave of life ... instead of it riding you."

Mrs. Grube is a certified yoga teacher trained in Hatha yoga (Iyengar Tradition) and has also received training in Kundalini yoga. She was a professional cheerleader and has coached cheerleading.

"I do have a background in coaching cheerleading to teenagers, so it's a way of combining my ability to teach teens in that setting with yoga," she explained. "I feel like if I spark their interest now as teens, then as adults it will be easier. I'm finding some real shocking revelations – for instance some of the teens cannot touch their toes when bending over – which at this age they should not be losing their flexibility so soon."



Shannon Ratliff, 13, performs a twisting movement pose with her hands on her shoulders during the Teen Yoga class at the Teen Center Aug. 17.

Mrs. Grube said teens tend to sit more than in years past – compiling time at school with sitting at a home computer or playing video games.

The instructor has been impressed so far with how well the teens in her class have taken to the non-physical elements of the form.

“When they first started, when we did some of the meditations, they would giggle and be really chatty, but now they can be still and quiet – which for teens I think is remarkable,” said Mrs. Grube. “Oh yeah, it’s amazing. And that focus is going to help them in school to be more attentive to their studies.”

Twelve-year-old Monique McCreary said the music and relaxation with lavender eye pillows is her favorite part of the class. The ways to appreciate the class vary as much as the myriad of exercises the students learn.

“Yoga calms me down and helps me sleep at night,” said 13-year-old Franchesca Ives.

Mrs. Grube began taking yoga classes in 1998 as therapy after

several auto accidents – to include being hit by a car while walking. Her injuries forced her to go to the chiropractor three times a week.

“When I started taking yoga, it pretty much eliminated the chiropractor for me,” she explained. “In the beginning, I did yoga for the therapeutic affects of it. Later on I appreciated the mental, spiritual and meditation aspects of yoga.”

Mrs. Grube, a new yoga teacher who began instructing two years ago to share the benefits with other women after enduring 26 hours of a 27-hour labor un-medicated, brings yoga to life by using enthusiasm to combine elements of dance with yoga and mixes in “upbeat, funky, and at times fast and riveting” music from around the world, she said.

Mrs. Grube said the biggest reward she receives from being a yoga instructor is seeing the practice physically and mentally help people in her class.

“The changes that present themselves – I like that the best,” she said. “The challenge for me when I first started this teen class

was how do I make this class so that it's fun? I always heard from the teens 'Oh, it's for old people,' or 'Yoga makes me fall asleep.' So they had these misconceptions of what yoga really was. They hadn't considered that there was a dynamic yoga process as well. That's where all the music comes in and all the movement. Some of the things we do are quite fast. That will keep their interest. Later as they get older they may want to explore more types of yoga – but at least I've caught their interest."

Mrs. Grube said Shari Tharp was a great contributor to bringing yoga-in-motion to the Teen Center.



Top right: Patricia Grube instructs the Teen Yoga class at the Teen Center. The class is free and runs from 1530-1615 on Wednesdays.

Top Left: A common misconception is that yoga is for girls. Brothers Elliot and Christian Theedom disprove that myth while performing the "Partner Turtle" pose.

Bottom: The class features many motions and stretches intended to increase flexibility, strength and more.