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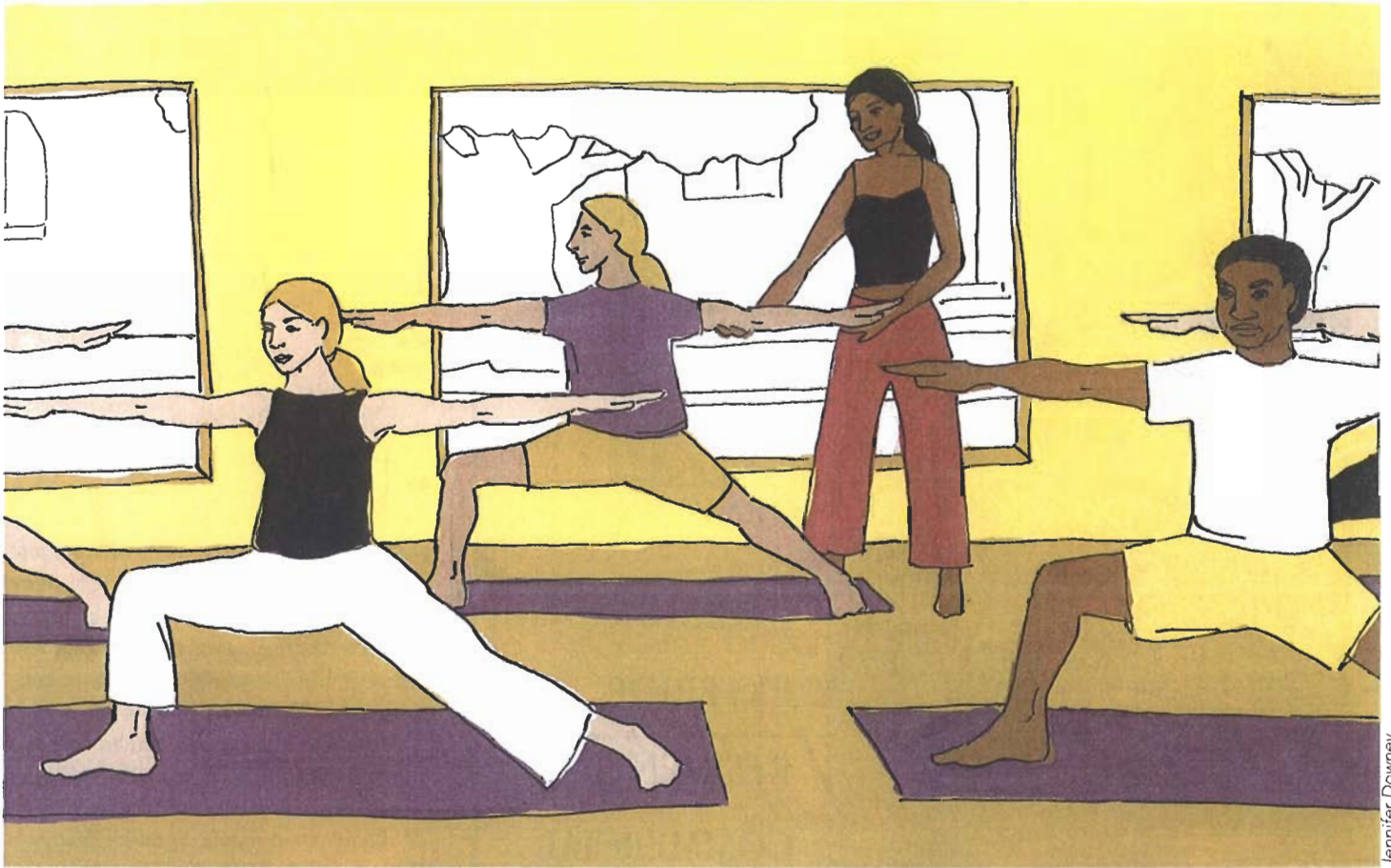
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*Whatever you are,
be a good one.
—Abraham Lincoln*





Jennifer Downey

The Warrior II pose stretches legs, ankles, groins, chest, lungs and shoulders.

Yoga Unties the Knots

Better Living Through an Ancient Tradition

BY JEN SCHRADIE

Jeff Knoth, a rock climber and school principal, loves the mix of a physical and mental challenge. But it's not ascending cliffs or dealing with kids at Washington Elementary he's referring to. It's yoga.

"The beauty of yoga for me is the blending of controlled and purposeful physical exertion with breathing," says Knoth, 50. "It saves me from getting so frustrated and tense about a job that I dearly love."

Knoth started yoga six years ago at the Alameda Yoga Station, a bright and quiet

studio off Park Street. He and his wife, Debi, 51, practice at home in the mornings but continue to attend classes just a few blocks from their house at the studio.

The Alameda Yoga Station was the first yoga studio on the Island when it opened almost 10 years ago. And it has paved the way for other yoga classes around the Island as Alameda residents, in particular, and the nation, as a whole, have embraced this ancient Indian tradition.

Knoth's yoga teacher is Betsy Weiss. She moved to Alameda 16 years ago but had to

drive to Berkeley or Oakland for yoga. "I got tired of leaving the Island for yoga," says Weiss, 38. So she found some business partners and opened up the Alameda Yoga Station in 1995.

"We were ahead of the curve," says Weiss. Yoga wasn't as popular as it is today. And at the time, most of the students reflected the Island's demographics—people who were in the Navy and Coast Guard, along with longtime Alameda residents. Today, more of the yoga students at the Alameda Yoga Station are young fami-

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lies, some of whom have had yoga experience before.

And the classes offered reflect that shift. The studio offers a parent and child class, prenatal and postnatal yoga, along with meditation and tai chi classes. But most of the classes are Iyengar-influenced

"The beauty of yoga for me is the blending of controlled and purposeful physical exertion with breathing,"

classes, which focus on healthy alignment in yoga postures.

Weiss finds that most people come to her introduction to yoga classes to relieve stress or because a physician has recommended yoga.

"In our culture we're trained to get a quick fix," says Sandy Blaine, co-owner of the Alameda Yoga Station. "We want to go to the gym and drop 10 pounds, but yoga is not a quick fix. We only get the benefits when doing it."

Blaine, 43, is the senior teacher at the studio with 18 years of experience and is a trainer of teachers herself. In fact, the Alameda Yoga Station prides itself on only hiring well-trained instructors who know visually whether students are safe in a pose and when they might need props, like blankets or blocks, to adapt a pose to their bodies.

"People have this idea that yoga is tying yourself into knots," says Blaine. "But it's about untying the knots where some muscles are overused and some are underused from imbalances that develop in the body over time."

That's what led Sarah Rogerson, a registered nurse with Kaiser and an Alameda resident, to the Alameda Yoga Station as she approached her 50th birthday. "I had wanted to try yoga for several years because I had become middle age by some strange circumstance," Rogerson said.

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She had been running and biking but felt that her joints were stiffening and that yoga would retain flexibility without injury. She found that result in Blaine's yoga classes. But she also found that the classes were still strenuous, like her other aerobic activity, but with a sustained level of exertion rather than a repetitive motion.

With the strengthening and stretching from yoga, Blaine admits that some of the poses can be challenging, "But as they become easier and more comfortable, daily life movements become astonishingly more comfortable."

But the Alameda Yoga Station isn't the only place for yoga in town. There are also health clubs that have yoga classes. In fact, the Harbor Bay Club began offering yoga classes to its members before the Alameda Yoga Station opened. A variety of yoga classes are available seven days per week at the Harbor Bay Club.

With all of this yoga in Alameda residents don't have to leave the Island.

"I love that the Alameda Yoga Station is in Alameda because I do nothing in Alameda except sleep here. I go to school, work and church elsewhere. I hate that. Yoga is one of the things I can walk to. It's a nice sense of community," says Rogerson. "And the best part of the studio is that it's right above Tucker's Ice Cream."

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