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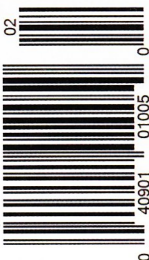
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VOLUME 1 : EDITION 2



At Hot Yoga Burlington, Dan Carver (left) attends a Saturday morning hot yoga class where students of all ages practice. ERIN SIEGAL MCINTYRE

Fit

to be tried

Stimulate the brain and body
with yoga, dance, spinning



At Hot Yoga Burlington, a Saturday morning hot yoga class allows students of all ages to get their zen on. ERIN SIEGAL MCINTYRE

BY CHERYL HERRICK

It's no secret that keeping minds engaged and bodies active can lead to healthier aging.

It's easy enough to do the crossword puzzle in the newspaper, read a book or play a word game on an electronic device.

But becoming or staying active isn't always as easy. Some people worry about exacerbating old injuries, looking foolish or going to a class alone.

The Burlington area is full of opportunities to learn something new that will fuel body and mind.

Bill O'Connor, 61, knows what it's like to be intimidated when trying something new.

"Fifteen years ago, my wife Andrea dragged me kicking and screaming to a yoga class. I was a gym rat and I had no interest in trying this out," he said. "But just 10 minutes into the class, Andrea looked over at me and I told her I was going to do this for the rest of my life."

O'Connor has made good on that promise. After years of teaching in other studios, he and Andrea opened Hot Yoga Burlington in 2010. His classes are for all ages, but he especially enjoys introducing baby boomers to what yoga has to offer.

"It's so important that people just get moving before it's too late. I am reintroducing people to activity," he said. "Yoga is easy to do, but it has a great deal of benefit. And what American is not going to like that?"

The hardest thing about yoga, according to O'Connor, is "getting to class on time. The second hardest thing is telling your left from your right."

He jokes, but he's serious about the benefits yoga offers.

"There are seven things we need to be able to do in order to function

independently as we age, and yoga helps with all of them," he said. "Humans need to be able to carry and lift things, to pull things, to pick something up off the floor, to twist, to walk, to climb (like getting up out of a chair), and to squat at least a little."

He said he especially likes the benefits of hot yoga, offered in a studio heated with infrared heaters.

"It accelerates the body's warmup. Five minutes in there, and your fascia (connective tissue) are practically liquid," he said. "Your cardiovascular system starts going, and then you really get so much out of the movements."

France O'Brien, a 60-year-old student from Burlington, agrees there's a lot to gain from yoga in general and from hot yoga in particular.

"I'd been doing (a more static type) of yoga for years, and someone recommended that I come try this," she said of hot yoga. "This has changed my body. I feel both more muscular and leaner than I used to."

She advises newcomers to give it the old college try.

"People leave feeling more relaxed and better," O'Brien said, "but you have to come a few times to get that full feeling."

Put on some dancing shoes

Another way to heat things up is with an evening of dance with Latin rhythms.

Victoria Moore, 51, owner of Burlington's Salsaline Dance Studio, said people of all ages will find themselves at home in her classes.

With a long background in dance, Moore opened her studio in 2003 when "salsa was just booming." Even with her experience and comfort with dance, she knows it can be intimidating for newcomers.

She wants prospective students to know her studio environment is



At Hot Yoga Burlington, Ann Bove practices during a Saturday morning hot yoga class with students of all ages. ERIN SIEGAL MCINTYRE

different, with room for dancers of all levels.

"It's more of a social gathering, except we have classes that we divide by levels, just like school," Moore said. "It's just like we don't expect a first-grader to do a fifth-grader's work."

Newcomers will feel right at home with other dancers just starting out.

"People say, 'I have two left feet,' or they have medical conditions, or can't balance well. But the person next to them is in the same predicament and there's no one there to intimidate them," she said. "So, everyone there is at their level, and they advance together."

Students come from all age groups. Students 18 to 22 years old work as staff and assist with teaching. There's a core group of dancers in their 30s, 40s and 50s, and then there are people in their 60s and 70s.

People come for different reasons, Moore said.

"Some people come to this after bad marriages or broken relationships," she said. "We see people coming in their middle age. They want to be active and healthier, and they're also looking for that social thing that isn't just the gym alone."

The dance floor is a great equalizer. Differences noticeable outside the studio fall away.

"People come who you wouldn't expect. You have the doctor, the lawyer, and then the regular amazing everyday people, and they're all the same once they're in the studio," Moore said. "Black, white, religion, sexual orientation ... you don't have to be a man to lead or female to follow. It doesn't matter how old you are or your orientation; that's not a limitation whatsoever."

Moore said she knows she's part of what makes people feel welcome, especially her older clientele.

"I am middle-aged. People associate salsa with young people, but I

portray the energy that it's exciting to be at this age," she said. "When people come and see that I keep fit and have all this energy. People come and they say, 'If she can do it, I can do it.'"

She's a true believer in what dance can do for people.

"What I tell everyone is that they can go and do any activity, but there's no other physical activity that touches every single sense of the human being," Moore said. "There's music you enjoy, there are the movements that are so light you don't realize you're doing it, you're being held, there's the scent of your partner. Every sense that a human has is activated when they dance."

Go for a spin

If dance isn't your thing, maybe indoor cycling or spinning classes are worth a try. Students ride a special stationary bike while an instructor chooses music, motivates and sets the pace. Classes are usually about an hour long.

"Spinning can especially appeal to baby boomers after the years of the grueling activities that have worn out our joints," said Dianne Villa, senior program director at the Greater Burlington Y. "It's great for the knees, and that means it's great for boomers who are active and have worn out their knees."

But spinning is not just for seasoned athletes, Villa said.

"Spinning is great for any level of fitness," she said. "In one class, you'll have a beginner and also a triathlete there getting their biking in during the winter."

While it might seem intimidating for that beginner pedaling next to the triathlete, Villa said everyone is encouraged to go at their own pace.

"In most classes, the lights are usually dim and good instructors will



At Hot Yoga Burlington, Mark Pasanen (orange shirt) practices during a Saturday morning hot yoga class with students of all ages. ERIN SIEGAL MCINTYRE

tell you, "This is your journey today. It's not about the person next to you," she said. "And because we're stationary, no one is going faster than you. The bikes aren't moving ahead of each other so it's not a race and not competitive. And everyone hears the beat of the music a little differently so they find their own pace."

The music is an important part of the class. Some instructors play rock-and-roll, some play techno. The music determines the pace of the class and can influence how hard students work.

"The music is used to create a journey and that's where individual teachers' personalities shine through. Songs set the pace: If you're climbing, the music is a little slower, and if it's a downhill journey, it's a little faster," she said. "And when the instructor gets to know their participants, they start to customize their playlists for motivation."

Spinning is for people who see cycling's benefits.

"It's an amazing no-impact workout for any level at all because each person determines individually how hard they work," Villa said. "If one day someone is just going to have a 'flat-road journey,' and they're going to keep their heart rate nice and steady, that's OK. They're at that point. Nearly anyone can do it."

It's a great complement to warm-weather cycling and sometimes it's what leads right to it, she said.

"For some people, they realize the benefit of cycling once they see what it's like to do the spinning," Villa said. "They wonder, 'What would happen if I went out and did this and saw beautiful Vermont on a bike?'"

Check it out

Burlington Hot Yoga

294 N. Winooski Ave. Burlington **802-999-9963**

Visit <http://hotyogaburlingtonvt.com/schedule-rates>.

Beginners should look for a Level 1 class. Reserve online or arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. Dress for a very warm studio. It's helpful to bring a sticky mat to stretch on, but some are available for sale or loan. Classes are \$15 each; first-timers can bring a friend at no additional cost.

Salsalina Dance Studio

266 Pine St. Burlington **802-598-1077**

Email info@salsalina.com.

Beginners are welcome at walk-in classes on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 7. Partners aren't necessary. Wear smooth-soled low- or moderate-heeled shoes and comfortable clothes. Classes are \$15 per person.

Greater Burlington Y

266 College St. Burlington **802-862-9622**

Spinning classes are offered on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. Classes are included with Y membership. For nonmembers, it's \$12 for a day pass, which includes access to classes.

See group class schedule at <http://www.gbymca.org/healthy-living/health-well-being-and-fitness/group-fitness-classes/spinning/>

Other things to try

» Osher Life Long Learning Institute at the University of Vermont offers year-round classes for adult learners 50 and older. Visit <https://learn.uvm.edu/osher-life-long-learning/>.

» Queen City Tango offers Argentine tango classes on Thursday and Friday. Learn more at <http://www.queencitytango.org>

» Community Sailing Center offers classes for adults. See details at <http://communitysailingcenter.org/sailing/adult-programs/>.



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