

Linda Meeks' yoga classes offer physical, emotional benefits

Linda Meeks decided several years ago she wanted to give back to the community. She has accomplished that while at the same time focusing on one of her passions: yoga.

Meeks teaches yoga classes and workshops at the Dallas County Area YMCA, and she said she loves sharing what she has learned over the years about yoga.

Yoga can offer something for everyone, regardless of age or fitness level, said Meeks, who has taught classes at the YMCA for about four years.

"It helps with balance, strength, stretching, focus," Meeks said. "It really is a combination of things."

Depending on each person's individual goals — whether they are physical, emotional, mental or a mixture — Meeks said there is a type of yoga for everyone.

Meeks' primary yoga method is viniyoga, and the movements and breathing she teaches align with it.

Meeks first learned yoga in 1998 when she started going to a yoga studio in Tacoma, Washington. At the time, Meeks was an executive in the information technology department of Boeing.

For Meeks, yoga was an escape from her high-stress job.

"It wasn't just for the exercise," she said. "It was the only time when I was working that I could come down from that stress."

Meeks has been a proponent of yoga after seeing the benefits it had in her life.

"It allows me to know what is going on with my body," she said. "It allows me to be completely focused. I asked, 'What could I give back to the community?' I could give back what I knew worked for me."

Meeks' interest in yoga has taken her across the U.S. She recently returned from California where she took some mindfulness classes. Meeks said she always is eager to learn new things and gain more experience with yoga.

"I've taken about every type of yoga there is," she said. "I always like to try yoga with different people and practices."

Meeks has taken yoga classes overseas as well in the Netherlands and India, where yoga originated. Meeks said in India the focus was not so much on exercise as it was on improving the mental and emotional states through meditation, something Meeks tries to incorporate in her classes.

Meeks, who also is a health and wellness coach, said she always has been involved with fitness and thinks exercise, healthy eating and emotional, mental and spiritual well-being are cornerstones to good health.

Meeks and her husband, Billy, split their time between Washington and their farm near Thomasville. Meeks said she stays close with her family, which includes a daughter and two stepsons in California.

Two yoga workshops at the YMCA are scheduled for March. An introduction class will be 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 7, and a meditation class will be 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 14.

"I want people to be able to help themselves," Meeks said about her goals for the workshops. "I want to give them the tools to help them with their health and wellness."

Meeks encourages anyone who is interested in yoga to attend the workshops. She said socializing is a critical part of working out. Both classes are free for YMCA members and cost \$10 each for nonmembers. Preregistration is required.

When Meeks is in town, she also teaches yoga classes from 9 to 9:30 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the YMCA. Meeks offers one-on-one assistance if attendees are interested, and exercises can be modified for people with specific concerns, such as knee or leg issues.

To register or for more information about the classes or workshops, call the YMCA at [\(417\) 345-1116](tel:4173451116), stop by the YMCA at 932 W. Main St. in Buffalo or email Meeks at linda.t.meeks@gmail.com.