

The Yoga of Horsemanship

Nationally acclaimed Yoga teacher lives and teaches in Graham

By: Frank Bradley
Sentinel Writer

Whether her students are in the saddle or on a mat, Cathy Woods teaches them to improve their strength, flexibility, mental focus and to increase awareness through

yoga.

Cathy who lives in Graham County has long been a student and teacher of yoga. She says while yoga was once considered new age, it has since become a mainstream activity that is suitable for anyone. Homeowners, retired people, regu-

lar real people have taken it up, she said. Among yoga's benefits is an increase of one's flexibility, calming of nerves, more breathing awareness, a lowering of blood pressure and the ability to sleep better.

Cathy began the practice of yoga 20 years ago when she was living in

Tampa, Florida. "I had a friend who was an instructor and she invited me to try it," she said. "I started taking weekly classes, and each week, it had such an impact on the way I felt for the rest of the week that I found myself diving fully into it. I was determined to learn more about it and

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Cathy Woods

yoga

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was fortunate enough to hear about Amrit Desai, a Yogi from India, who had opened a small school in Florida. His whole philosophy and style resonated with me. He was the founder of the Kripalu School of Yoga.

Though she has maintained her connection to Kripalu lineage, Cathy teaches "yoga of her heart." Her website says her principles of teaching are to assist students in creating an overall healthy lifestyle, helping them to embark on their own inner journey to Peace, Joy, Wellness and Love. Her style, she says, can be easily understood and applied, regardless of age, health, lifestyle or spiritual belief. Cathy has earned the highest registration available through the Yoga Alliance, a national registry that recognizes teachers who meet quality standards for yoga instruction.

Cathy teaches weekly classes in Robbinsville and Bryson City and is a regular retreat leader at national yoga centers, where she specializes in introducing students to yoga through her "Launch Your Yoga Journey" workshops. She

also hold life skills retreats for corporate clients.

Next month Cathy will be teaching a seminar at the Winding Creek Stables in Asheville on "The Yoga of Horsemanship." She says horses will be provided and no horse or yoga experience is necessary. Yoga, she says, is the practice of being totally present doing one thing at one time. This workshop connects yoga and horsemanship to experience what it means to be fully present, a life skill that participants can apply to any activity.

"This is not a riding instruction or training workshop," she said, "But rather it explores the parallels of yoga and horsemanship. The workshop costs \$50. For more information, you can visit www.cathywoods-yoga.com.

She and her husband Robert, a wood-turner, have their own home studio, which allows for quiet reading and prayerful time. She has also recorded a CD of guided meditations called "Deep Peace Inner Stillness," which is available for purchase.



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Cathy at the Gleanings Foundation, Robbinsville, NC