

Crazy Wisdom Kids in the Community

Continued from page 77



Belightful Yoga



Lisa Ballo

Belightful Yoga is a mobile yoga studio that brings yoga classes to people's homes, schools, businesses, and community centers across southeastern Michigan.

Lisa Ballo was an executive at an advertising agency when she noticed that many of her co-workers were consistently stressed out and fatigued. Ballo managed her own stress by practicing yoga, and she brought her knowledge to her co-workers. "I received yoga training so that I could begin to teach others." What began as yoga classes for co-workers grew into a full-time career for Ballo. Now a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) and certified Yoga Ed Instructor with more than 20 years experience, she is the founder and owner of Belightful Yoga, a mobile yoga studio that brings yoga classes to people's homes, schools, businesses, and community centers across southeastern Michigan.

The idea for a mobile yoga studio came to Ballo during her time at the advertising agency. "I realized that while most people love and benefit from yoga, many are just too busy to commit to weekly yoga classes held in a traditional studio. Getting to classes can be difficult. Our lives are hectic and complicated," said Ballo. Belightful Yoga began in 2009 and remains an entirely mobile yoga studio. "That's the uniqueness of this program. It's convenient. We will come to you, wherever you are. People are just so busy, so stressed out. It can be very hard to make it to a class. Let us come to you!"

Belightful Yoga has 15 teachers with a wide range of yoga specialties who teach classes for people of all ages, from young children through senior citizens. For Ballo, though, teaching children is her passion: "As I began to teach, I fell in love with the children, especially children with special needs. I saw instantly how much benefit they get from yoga. Teaching children with special needs is what I love the most."

Ballo said that while all children benefit from yoga, for children with disabilities or special needs and those on the autism spectrum, yoga may enhance their lives in especially important ways. "It helps with motor skills, flexibility, and strength. It can

"As I began to teach, I fell in love with the children, especially children with special needs."

-Lisa Ballo, founder of Belightful Yoga

also help children with attention deficit disorder or those on the autism spectrum with self-regulation. The repetition of poses can help the children learn routines in a fun way. It's about strengthening the connection between one's mind and body, while teaching relaxation, flexibility, and self-awareness," explained Ballo.

According to Ballo, parents of children with special needs report noticeable changes in their children after regular yoga classes led by Belightful Yoga instructors. One mother observed a significant decrease in her child's anxiety and said that medications could be reduced. Another said that her son became more relaxed and that his stuttering diminished.

Belightful Yoga's instructors are skilled at tailoring their classes specifically for children and families with different special needs or for groups supporting children with special needs. "Our teachers all have different specialties," explained Ballo. "For example, one of our teachers is a special education teacher who took specialized training in yoga therapy. All of our teachers have basic yoga training and many have more specialized training, as well."

"For our students with cerebral palsy, for example, we can work with them right in their home. For the parents, they don't need to even leave the house, to get siblings out the door. It just takes one level of stress out of a process that is aimed at reducing stress."

Belightful Yoga offers classes for the Down Syndrome Guild of Southeastern Michigan (for teens and young adults) and many of the centers in the area supporting children with autism. Belightful Yoga has also worked with a camp in Livonia for survivors of traumatic brain injury and with children with cerebral palsy. "That's one of the benefits of our mobile studio," said Ballo. "For our students with cerebral palsy, for example, we can work with them right in their home. For the parents, they don't need to even leave the house, to get siblings out the door. It just takes one level of stress out of a process that is aimed at reducing stress."

For parents of children with special needs, yoga classes can offer them time to network with other parents, time to take a break for themselves, or time to practice yoga with their children. Ballo emphasized that the word "yoga" means "union." "It's both a union of one's mind and body and a sense of community while practicing," she explained. "There's a sense of community that's created, of coming together and supporting one another. That might mean parents and kids coming together to practice together or that might mean a time for parents with similar challenges to network among themselves or just to take a needed break. It's all beneficial."



In addition to her work with children and families with special needs, Ballo and her staff work with parents, teachers, and children's organizations to create yoga programs for all ages and abilities. For example, Belightful Yoga works with many area Girl Scout troops, sometimes helping the Scouts earn their patches or complete a Journey. "We can provide one class or a series of classes in a large basement, a school, a church, even outside!" In some cases, the parents will choose to enjoy adult time while the Scouts practice yoga; other times they join in alongside their children. "Sometimes, troop leaders like it so much that they have asked us to create a mother/daughter series of classes for them. We've also done just moms' groups while the children are doing their own class."

Although Ballo said that a series of classes is more beneficial than just one class, even one class can provide benefits to children. "Parents find that we can teach tools that can be very helpful during stressful times at home," said Ballo. "For example, if a child is having anxiety, the parent can pause and the parent and child can take a few rainbow breaths together. Even in one session, we can give kids and parents some tools that help everyone calm down."



Schools also work with Ballo to address specific concerns or issues. "Sometimes parents and schools will call us with a concern like bullying and we can work with them to create a class that gives kids strategies," said Ballo. "As long as we have a place to hold the class, like a school room, we are happy to make it happen. That's a great benefit of our mobile studio." Ballo said that after school classes might include skills such as, "breathing exercises, visualizations, guided imagery, very fun, playful activities for children. We can also help the children work together on partner poses and help them do affirmations, repeating words like 'I am balanced. I am strong.' These classes help them feel strong and confident, especially if they are dealing with bullying situations."

Teachers and administrators who have worked with Belightful Yoga have found it to be a positive experience for their students. Chris Schoenherr, Head of School at Four Corners Montessori School in Madison Heights, found that offering yoga for his students, "builds self esteem and supports physical wellbeing by focusing on breathing, visualization, yoga poses, and games."

In addition to working with children, the Belightful Yoga mobile studio also conducts classes in senior citizens' facilities for older adults and an on-going yoga series for corporate clients, including DTE Energy in Ann Arbor.

"As long as we have a place to hold the class, like a school room, we are happy to make it happen. That's a great benefit of our mobile studio."

-Lisa Ballo

The uniqueness of the Belightful Yoga program, said Ballo, is that it comes to the student and is tailored to each student's needs. "Let us come out to you. No matter where you are. No matter your age, your ability. This is for everybody and for every body. It's also about learning acceptance, especially for children with special needs or for seniors. It's about celebrating the gifts they have, which can be especially important for someone with a disability," Ballo explained. "It's about empowerment, feeling strong, and focusing on what they can do."

For more information about Belightful Yoga or to discuss creating a class, email info@belightfullyoga.com, call (248) 761-6815, or visit www.belightfullyoga.com.



Windrise Retreat Center

Celebrating our 20th year of hosting women's and men's retreats, business meetings, milestone birthday celebrations and family reunions.



Enjoy private use of a 140 acre estate with pristine woods and hills on the Flint River. Peaceful trails for meditation, bird-watching, hiking, biking, snowshoes or skiing. Relax by the pool or canoe the river. We are a 4 season destination only one hour north of metro Detroit.

New! Sculpting weekend seminars with Estela Monjo of Galeria Mariposa. Fall and winter sessions forming.

Windrise Retreat Center
Tel. 313-407-0953 • Metamora, MI
www.windrise.com



Iridology Seminar

Steven Horne, AGH, St. George, Utah

- Constitutional and Metabolic Types
- Physical and Emotional Interpretations
- Chinese and Native American Herbal Medicine

Saturday, October 26th, 9 am – 5 pm, \$97

Courtyard Marriott, Boardwalk, Ann Arbor

This seminar will sell out – limited to 100 students

To register, contact Cindy Klement

734-975-2444

CRAZY WISDOM KIDS

**An ongoing section of
The Crazy Wisdom Community Journal**

Articles, calendar listings, advertisements, music and book reviews, and other features... focused on raising conscious and spirited kids...

Mindful Parenting

Good Eating Habits

the Healthy Household
Integrative Medical Care for Kids

Dads
and Babies

Yoga and Kids

Mothers and Daughters

Eco-friendly family living

(If you like our CW Kids section, and would like to be contributing to it, contact bill@crazywisdom.net. We welcome story ideas, illustrations, feature writing, and photographs)