

Live in Joy Yoga and Wellness

Helping Others Make Healthy Connections

by Linda Sechrist

A 23-year friendship and harmonious teamwork are only two of the threads that weave together the connection between the personal lives and working careers of Janet Watkins and Julie Fischer. The cofounders of Live in Joy Yoga & Wellness, who share a common desire to make a difference in the lives of others, aspire to role-model and teach individuals how to live a joy-filled life by demonstrating and living the principles of holistic wellness.

When recurring bouts of pneumonia and bronchitis that did not respond to traditional allopathic medicine sent Fischer in search of alternative modalities, she discovered not only the fascinating world of healing, but also myriad opportunities to channel her restless energy into the exploration of a new way of life. "As a Thai massage therapist and co-owner of our studio, my way of life is 180 degrees in the opposite direction of how it played out when I was as a Deutsche Bank sales associate who worked with bonds and other investment-related financial instruments," explains Fischer, with a smile.

The nudge to take a leap of faith from the world of finance and travel to explore shamanism came when Fischer's 50-year old boss died unexpectedly. "Up until that time, I kept thinking that someday I would be a health practitioner of some type," she recalls. "My boss' death made me recognize that someday needed to come sooner, rather than later."

After her children graduated from everything and she no longer had major financial obligations, Fischer set out on a spiritual quest that led her to Alaska and the Southwest. During that



period, she discovered Thai massage. "I do other types of massage, too, and still spend my leisure time involved in anything that has to do with spirituality and healing," she remarks, adding that the diverse activities required to operate a full-service yoga studio provide a great outlet through which she can use the talents and skills that create balance and happiness.

While Fischer was on the road to transformation, Watkins was stuck in high gear and running in her own parallel lane. A business administrator in the construction industry for 19 years, Watkins had children to support and see through their maturation process as well. Also a seeker, she viewed the spiritual world from a more limited viewpoint. "I thought I was born, I worked, and then I died," she explains. A devastating life experience in 2000 woke Watkins up to the fact that the world she lived in was limited to her head, and that she was missing an awareness of connection with her body. Observing Watkins' compulsion to spend two to three hours daily in the gym, her personal trainer suggested a yoga class. She enrolled.

"For months, I left at the end of every class because I couldn't rest in the corpse pose," Watkins recollects. "The day that we had a substitute

teacher who was trained in Kripalu yoga, I recognized that something was uniquely different with her method and my emotional response, because I was able to rest in the corpse pose; unfortunately, all I could do was cry."

Eventually, Watkins enrolled in formal yoga training and found a Reiki master to help her connect with her subtle energy body and heal her emotions. Along the way to level III Reiki training, she experienced a great sense of release and relief. "Reiki opened me up and helped me learn to trust myself, others, and my own process of transformation," says Watkins, who, like Fischer, drew from the courage within to step forward into the unknown.

Whenever Watkins and Fischer share their life reviews, the result is the same: a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for a cleansing process that left behind a sense of fragmentation, shame and guilt, as well as mental and emotional suffering. Today, the cofounders employ a well-stocked and nurturing toolbox; Live in Joy Yoga offers Thai and other forms of massage, as well as Reiki, Pilates and several different styles of yoga. The studio also offers an eclectic mix of workshops and drum circles in a colorful and inviting space.

Watkins and Fischer use and offer all these holistic tools so that others can realize a healthy connection, not only to their body, but also to something larger than all of us. "It's opening up to these connections that enables anyone to lead a joy-filled life," says Watkins.

Live in Joy Yoga & Wellness, 118 W. Merchant St., Audubon 08106. Call 856-546-1006 or visit LiveInJoyYoga.com. See ad on page 7.

