

By Lisa Evans

# Yoga at Any Age

*Stretch yourself to better health and happiness*

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

MGI Wealth would like to extend a warm welcome to Financial Planners Todd Thompson, Stephen Cock and Vickie Snow to its Independent network in Ottawa. Todd, Stephen and Vickie bring with them a combined total of 45+ years of knowledge and experience in the financial services business. MGI invites you to contact them either by phone at 613.288.2500 or email at the addresses below.



**Todd Thompson**  
tthompson@mgiwealth.com

**Stephen Cock**  
scock@mgiwealth.com

**Vickie Snow**  
vsnow@mgiwealth.com

**Ask us about our next scheduled seminar.**

**MGI Financial Inc.**  
202-1680 Woodward Drive  
Ottawa, ON | K2C 3R7  
**613.288.2500** | [www.mgiwealth.com](http://www.mgiwealth.com)



The word “yoga” conjures up images of rubber gumbys twisting themselves into pretzel shapes, their ankles wrapped around their necks and their arms linking behind their backs. If you haven’t done a headstand in 30 years and the idea of sitting cross-legged sends you into a panic, you may think yoga is out of the question.

This couldn’t be farther from the truth. A new trend is emerging in seniors’ community centres and retirement homes that allow older and less flexible adults to experience the mental and physical benefits of the ancient practice of yoga. This moderate version — called “gentle yoga” or “restorative yoga” — uses modified poses and adapts to the physical abilities and needs of older adults.

Monica Cordes is a certified Kripalu Yoga instructor and has been teaching group yoga classes to seniors at community centres and retirement homes for over 12 years. She is the owner of Gentle Yoga Studio in Markham, Ontario. Monica says that the greatest misconception of yoga is that one has to be flexible in order to benefit. In fact, “It’s the ones that are not flexible that need to do yoga,” she says.

Many first-time students feel intimidated, thinking that because they can’t reach their toes, they are incapable of doing this form of exercise. In fact, yoga is an extremely adaptable exercise that bends to accommodate each individual’s needs and abilities, and is

*Continues on page 40*

Yoga... continued from page 38

particularly beneficial to older adults. Monica says “the older we get, the more yoga has to offer.”

Gentle yoga engages both the mind and body through slow controlled movements, gentle stretching, range of motion and deep-breathing exercises. Poses target a wide variety of problem areas and help to improve mental and physical strength for individuals of all ages and physical capabilities.

Yoga has proved particularly helpful in relieving the symptoms of arthritis pain and osteoporosis, the two most common physical ailments that plague seniors. Monica’s students have reported feeling greater flexibility, a noticeable decrease in joint and muscle pain, improved range of motion, increased energy levels and improved balance after practicing yoga.

In gentle yoga, poses are modified using the wall or chair for support. While



2011/2012 YOUR CITY YOUR THEATRE **G C T C**  
 Great Canadian Theatre Company

**VARIETY IS THE SOUL OF PLEASURE**

MUSICAL | DRAMA | CLOWN | IMAGINATION | SUSPENSE | COMEDY

**SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE NOW.**  
 Call the Box Office at 613 236-5196 | www.gctc.ca

VARIETY QUOTE: APHRA BEHN

**C** It's All About **COMMUNITY**

**For the “downsizers” among us...**  
 Hyde Park Canada is actively building a strong legacy of village-based communities in the retirement housing market with new sites, apartments, suites, and even hassle-free income-property opportunities with steady, monthly returns. So...what's not to love?

Visit us at [www.hydeparkrichmond.com](http://www.hydeparkrichmond.com) and click on the category of your choice.

**Hyde Park Jamieson Mills, Almonte:** Thirty, 1, 2 and 2-bedrooms-with-a-den, underground parking, starting at \$173,600. Call Karina Witten at 613 686-1222, extension 113. Tues. - Sat. - 11 - 3

**Hyde Park Richmond:** Thirty-five 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, starting at \$150,000 and retirement suites from \$176,800 to \$213,800. Call Grace Geertsema at 613 686-1222 extension 105. Mon.-Fri. noon to 4, Sat. 11 - 3

**Income Property:** Buy a fraction of or a whole suite. We look after the tenant search, maintenance AND taxes. Call Ken Lantier at 613 686-1222 extension 107.

**Hyde Park Canada**

yoga studios typically teach students to hold a pose for a long period of time, gentle yoga classes take into account the limitations of the bodies of older adults.

“Seniors have complicated joints,” says Monica, “and holding a pose for several minutes can do great physical harm.” Gentle yoga classes are modified to include a greater flow, moving in and out of poses, and not holding any one pose for long stretches of time.

Monica uses a therapeutic approach, adapting her classes to meet the various physical needs of her students.

“I don’t talk about how deep you can go in a pose, or how to get a deeper stretch. My focus is the opposite. It’s about doing the practice to your own ability level.”

Students are taught to listen to their bodies, work within their physical limits, and most importantly, “to move within a pain-free zone,” says Monica.



emotional and physical health. Most adults have become accustomed to shallow, or reverse breathing. As we inhale, our chest puffs out and our belly gets sucked in. As we exhale, we relax and expand the belly. Yoga focuses on deepening the breath, bringing it back to its natural pattern. Anyone who has watched an infant sleep will notice that as the baby inhales, their belly inflates. This is a deep-breathing pattern that adults have come to reverse over time due to the stress we put on our bodies.

By challenging the body to return to this deep-breathing pattern, we can increase the flow of oxygen to the brain and the muscles, helping our body and mind to relax, lowering blood pressure, reducing hypertension, controlling stress and improving mood. These exercises can be beneficial outside the yoga studio. Monica says some of her students have reported using the deep-breathing exer-

Each pose has a unique set of physical and/or mental benefits that are targeted to a particular problem area. Monica gives the example of a back bend that is particularly helpful in improving mood and reducing anxiety. The chair camel is a slight back bend in which students kneel with their back towards a chair and place their hands on the chair with their arms behind them, rolling their shoulders back to open up the heart. It is a very uplifting pose and great for fighting depression.

One of the most common mental ailments plaguing seniors is dementia. While it is unknown what causes this degenerative disease, the concentration and deep-breathing exercises in yoga have been proven to help alleviate the symptoms that occur in the early stages of this disease.

Deep-breathing exercises are a core component to gentle yoga practices and are extremely beneficial to



Ottawa debut of

# Going Blind

Coming out of the dark about vision loss

A unique documentary by director Joe Lovett that captures the human perspective of vision loss and explores the lives of those affected.

## Special Presentation

**Saturday, June 4, 2011**

**1:00 p.m.**

**Mayfair Theatre**  
1074 Bank Street,  
Ottawa, ON

A Q&A session about blindness and low vision will be held after the screening. Tools and vision aids will be on display with demonstrations presented by **Visual Rehab**.



*"Inspirational and captivating"*

- The Village Voice

**613.226.1437**  
www.visualrehab.ca

**VISUAL REHAB**  
LOW VISION DEVICES



## New Edinburgh Pharmacy **Guardian**

- Private Pharmacist Consultation
- Home Health Care Products
- Hallmark Greeting Cards
- Gifts • Cosmetics

Monday - Friday 8:30am - 8:30pm  
Saturday 8:30am - 6:00pm

*Daily, Weekly or  
Monthly Packaging  
of Medication  
Available*



5 Beechwood Ave.,  
Ottawa  
613 749-4444  
Fax 613 749-4008  
**Delivery Service**


**Beechwood Postal Outlet**  
Monday - Saturday 8:30am - 6:00pm  
613 746-4720

cises they learned in yoga class to relieve their anxiety while sitting in a doctor's waiting room.

A central component of yoga is meditation that follows the eastern teachings of Buddhist philosophy and Eckhart Tolle.

"We're teaching a lot about life, not just doing the poses," says Monica. By incorporating these eastern philosophies and meditation methods into the practice of yoga, students can explore the emotional issues such as depression and anxiety that often plague seniors.

"This age group is one that often feels a deep sense of loss," she adds. Many have lost spouses or close friends, those who are retired may feel a sense of loss of personal fulfillment that often comes from work, they may feel the loss of their memory functions and physical abilities. The deep-breathing exercises and meditation allow the body to de-stress and the mind to focus away from the more difficult parts of life.

Yoga isn't simply about contorting the body into impossible shapes. The deep-breathing, stretching and slow controlled movements of gentle yoga have positive physical and mental benefits for older adults, proving you are never too old to do yoga! 

*Lisa Evans is a freelance writer from Toronto.*



## Billings Lodge Retirement Community **Thank You for**

allowing us the opportunity to serve your  
retirement needs since 1984.



### Retirement Living

Various room sizes all with Inclusive Care Package, Meals, Snacks, Assistance with Personal Care, Registered Staff On-site 24 hours, Health Clinics (dental, feet)

- Medication Supervision
- Emergency doctor
- Activity and leisure programs
- Lodge transportation for outings

### Suites Available



### Apartment Living

Studio, one & two bedroom

### Alzheimer's Unit

- Secured floor dedicated floor-staff Nursing and Leisure
- Assistance with all activities of daily living.
- Separate dining and leisure areas
- Secured patio and garden
- Ongoing assessment by Health Care Team



Our Dining Room is open to neighbourhood seniors who would like to enjoy the occasional meal with us. Membership is limited to ensure availability and service. If you have an interest in joining our "Meal Program" please call Laurie to make inquiries.

**Come for a tour, stay for lunch.**

**1180 Belanger Avenue, 613-737-7877 or 613-737-7878**  
**[www.billingslodge.com](http://www.billingslodge.com) - [lauriebillingslodge@rogers.com](mailto:lauriebillingslodge@rogers.com)**

