

Yoga more than just for exercise

Spiritual practice dates back over 5,000 years

By Brynn Campbell

Those Lululemon shorts better be blessed. Yoga has become one of the 21st centuries' biggest trends.

From clothing to spas, food, restaurants and fitness centres, businesses have tried to link this spiritual practice to whatever product they are trying to sell.

Little do people actually know that this sweaty, stretchy, spandex "workout" is actually an ancient spiritual practice originating from India. Ancient yoga texts date back over 5,000 years old when Hindus used this practice as a form of spiritual growth through self- realization.

In Sanskrit, the word yoga can be translated to the word 'yuj,' or to yoke or unite. The union is to unite oneself with your higher self. To unite with your higher self helps each individual realize his or her higher potential, and that each individual is divine.

The yoga philosophies explain that the biggest problem in the world today is ignorance. The only way to transform ignorance to bliss is through transformation of the mind through meditation and self-observation.

Shelly Zebedee, an Ashtanga yoga teacher and practitioner in Belleville, said she believes that, "most people perceive yoga as a physical exercise that will help them to stay flexible and relaxed.

I think it is used for many physical endeavours in the West like losing weight, staying young, shaping the body, which are almost the opposite of what yoga is all about, which is releasing all attachment to the ego-self. This means all of our self-talk about whether we look good enough, skinny enough and young enough."

Yoga is not necessarily about what you can do with the physical body; it is about disciplining the mind. Zebedee said that the only way to gain this mental discipline is through daily practice.

"Yoga is like a great art. It's like playing



Photo by Brynn Campbell

Shelly Zebedee holds urdhva padmasana, upward lotus posture. Yoga is much more than a way to get fit or lose weight.

an instrument," said Zebedee.

"It takes practising day after day for years to create the most beautiful music. Sitting down at the piano once a week is fun for awhile, but won't really get you too far and will become boring after awhile.

With lots of commitment and practice, the most beautiful music can be played. It's the same with yoga."

Zebedee was introduced to yoga when she was 16 and said she believes that all those years of practice have paid off.

"Yoga has helped me to change myself at my core and therefore it has helped me with all of my life's problems," said Zebedee.

"Yoga has helped me to find peace inside of myself, to stop looking for it outside

of myself and to learn love and compassion for all beings. I am still working at all of it. It is not something that happens in a day or a week or even a few years. The process is magnificent and more rewarding than I ever could have imagined."

Alumni status has added value for Loyalist graduates

By Sharon Kallaste

You're all in for life as Loyalist College alumni. No membership required — it's already paid.

Alumni are enthusiastic, broad-skilled Loyalist grads. In five weeks, Loyalist will unleash their 45th batch of fresh grads to embark upon the world.

To mark that special occasion, the college has announced its first - annual Grad Bash to be held March 8 from 11 a.m.–8 p.m.

"It's the first step in letting our soon-to-be graduates know that they will still have complete access to the career centre, The Parrott Centre, special insurance rates, Perkopolis and discounted services at Club 213, the college bookstore and the fitness centre," said Michelle Randolph, alumni services co-ordinator.

A prominent misconception for new graduates is that to become an alumnus, you have to pay a membership fee, when in fact the membership fees are prepaid

through the annual ancillary fees.

Ivy Hayes, placement co-ordinator and supervisor for the general arts and science program, is one of many Loyalist graduates under this assumption. Hayes graduated from the general arts and science program in 2001. Asked about her student experience and alumni ties with the college she said, "I'm not a member of the alumni. I always thought you had to join."

"The faculty here at Loyalist really took a genuine interest in helping you be the best you can in preparing for employment when you graduate. I was so impressed that when an opportunity came up last April for a contract position within the program I applied.

"Our college has a really great reputation out there in the community. Our students are well sought after," said Hayes.

Hayes also volunteers with the Canadian Diabetes Association, Hastings & Prince Edward Branch that has offered student placement positions for the past six years.

'It is important for Loyalist students to understand that their alumni status gives them continued added value for the rest of their lives'

alumni services co-ordinator Michelle Randolph

"It is important for Loyalist students to understand that their alumni status gives them continued added value for the rest of their lives. It is about building loyalty – loyalty to Loyalist. It's not just about money. It's more about working with a client and knowing about their life," said Randolph.

There are many ways Loyalist alumni can contribute to the success of future

graduates as well as receive support with their own career paths, college officials said. Alumni can become a mentor; sit on program advisory committees, and of course give financial gifts through the Annual Appeal Fund and The Alumni Association Bursary that are disbursed to enrolled students.

The Alumni Association Endowment Fund eased 13 Loyalist students' financial needs through grants amounting to \$11,900.

The fluctuating fund represented 14 per cent of the \$172,098 the college's awards and bursaries presented at the undergraduate awards ceremony.

"I think it's definitely a benefit to the students and the donors to hear the "follow-up stories from individuals who have received such bursaries," said Joanne Farrell, awards officer at Loyalist College.

Alumni Services produces the alumni magazine *Lasting Connections*. It is an avenue to follow the lives of Loyalist gradu-

ates.

"We want to know the stories from our alumni, new successes and accomplishments and contributions to their new fields of interest and to the communities they affiliate with," said Randolph.

Part of this is acknowledged through the Distinction Awards program that has been in place since the early '90s. Colleges Ontario also runs the Premiers Awards which has six categories.

Loyalist has developed a substantial alumni database of 30,000 strong since its founding year of 1967. With recent improvements to the College IT and servers, the joint efforts of the alumni association and alumni services now have the task in updating the database to bring it to a comprehensive support tool for both the college and the alumni.

"Social media can facilitate increased employment opportunities for alumni. It is also a great opportunity to share their accomplishments and successes with fellow alumni," said Randolph.

Greeks worry about economic impact on their homeland

Greece...

Continued from Page 1

"Greece, it's a beautiful country," says Nicky Kotsovos in her Belleville home. "Beautiful, beautiful islands."

Kotsovos left Greece with her then husband at the age of 18. She left for love, she says, not the need to earn money. Kotsovos says her father was doing well as a farmer in the peninsula of Peloponnese at the time. "I was too young, no brains," she says. "I met my husband and I followed him."

Both Kotsovos and her former husband have since worked in the restaurant business in Canada. "The Greeks in Canada have done well," she says. "They started off washing dishes, and most of them have restaurants now."

Kotsovos thinks Canada should welcome Greeks who wish to immigrate. "Canada should do that for any country," she says.

Much of her family still lives in Peloponnese. "People there have farms," she explains, both for subsistence and for business. "They can survive."

She said it's the region's dependence on tourism and the urban centres that concerns her.

From Kotsovos's perspective, the Greek crisis is a result of irresponsibility on a governmental and individual level. "Before, people didn't appreciate the things they had," she says. "Some people save, but most Greeks didn't."

"I think it will take a lot for things to get better," says Kotsovos, "If they do."

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Aristeidis Maroulis works in the restaurant his family has owned for decades. His parents have been in Canada for 32 years. He and his brother were born here.

Maroulis's family is from a small town on the island of Kefalonia. Family members of his who are still in Greece are in the



Photo by Chloe Ellingson

Since moving to Canada three years ago with his wife and three children, Kanellos Fountoukis has run The Plaza Restaurant in Wellington. The family is in the process of expanding their restaurant business to Gravenhurst.

businesses of running restaurants and fixing engines. Maroulis says his family has "had a slowdown," but says it's nothing like the situation in Athens.

His opinion on the Greek economy mirrors the many reports in the media of the Greek people's mistrust of their government. "The government should have stepped up," he says, "but they didn't."

While Maroulis doesn't feel closely connected with Greece's current situation, it still hits home. "If Ontario continues spending and doesn't fix its deficit," he predicts, "we'll be like Europe."

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When Bill Yeotes is not exercising at the Belleville YMCA, he's hanging out at his daughter's vintage clothing store.

He says his family members have long been business people in the area, with their Canadian roots reaching back 90 years.

Yeotes has seen the area's Greek community grow. "When I was growing up, the Greek community was 12 families," he says. "Now there might be 200 in the area,

or more."

Yeotes talks about the first wave of immigrants, which came after the Second World War, and predicts a second wave anytime now. "A lot of university graduates are leaving to go wherever they can make a living," he says. "I'm sure Canada would be a prime destination."

"I've been to Greece 10 times," says Yeotes. "It's the cradle of western civilization, but it's not rich in resources."

He thinks Greek bankruptcy is a viable option. "Iceland went bankrupt. Argentina went bankrupt. It's not unusual for coun-

tries to go bankrupt," he said. "Eventually they came out of it."

Yeotes says he's not very close with his local Greek community. He has family in Peloponnese and Athens, but doesn't often talk to them. His interest in the Greek economy has more to do with economics than it does Greece, and the situation doesn't plague him. "I don't worry about it," he says. "There's nothing I can do about it."

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Anastasia Argiris can't get Greece off her mind as she sets up her Belleville restaurant for lunch hour. "My family is worse than other ones," she says. "If they don't pay, they'll cut the hydro."

Formerly construction business owners in Peloponnese, her two brothers have been out of business for the past three years. "They aren't fixing anything anymore," says Argiris.

"My father is in the hospital," she says, and explains that her siblings "don't have money to put gas in the car and see him."

Like Fountoukis, Argiris wants to sponsor family members to come to Canada, but says she doesn't have enough work for them.

Asked about why the Greek economy is in its current state, she first blames the Greek government. "They give too much money out," she says. "The government gives \$15,000 to people starting businesses."

She also emphasizes the lack of frugality in Greek citizens. "In Greece, they're spending their money," she says. "Here, we save our money."

Argiris has a prudent financial mindset, but feels guilty about what success she's achieved. "For me it's very hard," she says. "Even if I make a little bit of money, I feel bad for them."

"I live their problems," she says. "Things have changed. Our lives have changed."