

Yoga for Youth at Risk

Thanks to you, our generous supporters, the Ottawa Radha Yoga Centre is into its second successful year of offering yoga to youth at risk. This newsletter will help you see how your donations have been put to work.

"People were truly amazed that we were offering this service free. One woman called me an angel and almost kissed me! And another said she felt like they had just won the lottery."



Amanda Jahnke, our Youth Coordinator, has been directing and teaching the Yoga for Youth at Risk program since January. She has spent a great deal of her time establishing partnerships with community organizations.

Community Partners

Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa
Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alternate Secondary School
St. Mary's Home
Pincrest-Queensway Health and Community Services
Youville Centre
Hopewell Eating Disorder Support Centre
YouthNet
Bethnay Hope Centre

Youville Staff are Enthused

Located in a bright, sunny building in Ottawa's Sandy Hill area, the Youville Centre is a place where mothers can complete high school education while developing strong parenting skills. Its mission statement is to motivate, educate and nurture young parents and their children.

Staff at the Youville Centre are excited about the benefits that yoga is bringing to the girls. Amanda started teaching a noon-hour class at the centre in early 2006.

The girls come to class curious about yoga and looking for ways to deal with their very stressful lives. What they find is exposure to something they would not have come to otherwise, and a "jewel of a half hour in a safe place," according to Bill Gibson, a science and math teacher who is attending every class.

The connection with Amanda is huge for them," says Caterina Pace, Support Program Coordinator at the Centre. "They love her gentle approach. She works with the girls where they are at."

While the program is still new, some of the girls are already using what they are learning outside of class. A few have done yoga on the weekends, especially the breathing. Others are using it to help them quit smoking.

Caterina and Bill say that it is still early but they are very committed to continuing the yoga program at Youville. They are looking for the perfect place in the building to hold classes, and thinking about expanding to include a mother-baby class. Next semester they are planning to integrate yoga into the *Healthy Life Skills Group*, something that would bring the benefits of yoga to even more of their students.

It was great. I want to do the relaxing more. It allows me to balance my mind and my emotions.

Tommy, Youth Services Bureau

I did positions I didn't know I could do. For one hour a week I fully relax and let everything go. With the breathing, you take everything you've been dealing with and let it go.

Shawn, Youth Services Bureau

Your support makes a real difference in the lives of these young people!!

Can we count on you for our next

**Silent Auction
November 18, 2006**

OTTAWA RADHA YOGA CENTRE

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Amanda Talks about Her Experience

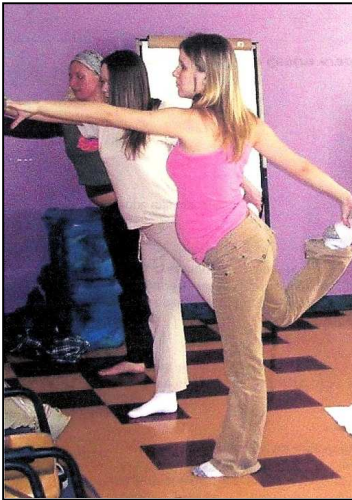
Yoga makes our world a better place and develops awareness of our bodies, thoughts and actions. Practicing yoga has lifted me and given me faith in myself, in others, and a positive direction in life. With the intention of caring for ourselves, we also learn how to care for one another, our community and the earth. It encourages us to be the best we can be. Through the experience as Youth Coordinator of the Yoga for Youth at Risk Program, I feel very grateful to be able to inspire others to bring yoga into their lives.

I love the class at the **Youth Services Bureau**. These are kids from 15 to 19 who are sleeping on the streets, staying in shelters or low income housing. They feel strongly that something needs to change in the world. With yoga it's like 'Oh, I need to change too'.

Sara, a young mom, has been taking classes at the **Youth Services Bureau** since they started in January. Here's what she had to say about her experience:

I had hit a spiritual low point. I'm Jewish and haven't had time to read any spiritual literature in a while. It's difficult to put things spiritual into words. Spirituality is beyond words. Physical relaxation opens up an avenue of feeling connected to my pure soul.

I love the beginning. It's like a sort of winding down. Some poses give me a feeling of empowerment, particularly the standing ones. In the child's pose, I feel safe and secure. The classes have offered me unobstructed introspection. I bring the stretches home and stretch while I meditate to keep my circulation moving.



The young women at **St. Mary's Home** are pregnant or have recently given birth and they really benefit from the relaxation. They are creating relationships not only with each other but with their babies and their own bodies as well.

I feel like I do after taking a shower when you really need one! Even my baby relaxes. It's almost like he's sleeping.
Michelle, expecting mother, St. Mary's Home

My back is getting stronger so I don't slouch as much.
Tabatha, expecting mother, St. Mary's Home

As of May, yoga will be part of the curriculum in the *Active Healthy Life Styles Group* for teen mothers at **Youville Centre**. Until now, I have been giving noon hour classes to young mothers – the staff participates too. One young mom said after this class that she felt like she'd been to a 'Relaxation Paradise'.

We have a new partnership with **YouthNet** thanks to a grant from the United Way. This six week yoga session is part of a mental health intervention program for youth.

The classes at **Hopewell** are always a heartwarming experience, as these young women are recognizing the need for healthy bodies, healthy minds, and hopefully gaining more acceptance of and respect for themselves.

From April 27 until the beginning of June, I will be teaching Outdoor Yoga at the **Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alternate Secondary School** as part of the *Life Skills* course and *Outdoor Education Program*.



Through **Pinecrest-Queensway Health and Community Centre**, I work with one project called *Buns in the Oven* for pregnant and parenting immigrant women and another project, *United Sisters*, for girls from 9 -14. All the participants are so receptive to the self-discovery of their bodies and having the opportunity to practice self-care.

As an overall goal for the Yoga for Youth at Risk Program, I want to focus on building a firm foundation for our program to continue reaching out to others for years to come. We need partnerships and secure funding. **The fund-raising efforts here at the RYC are very important**, but it's not enough, so we are also seeking grants and partnering opportunities.

For more information on how you can support us, please see the enclosed letter.