

photos by David Brian Avis



People at Purrington's Cat Lounge experience yoga in a group of both human and feline friends.

Folks on mats commune with cats

BY NICHOLAS ALLISON

Rising up from a bent position, one arm extended before you, the other behind, your feet planted in a lunge position. You breathe, in, out, in, out, and find yourself relaxing into the Warrior II pose. Then, out of the corner of your eye, you spot a cat batting away at a toy, ignoring the yoga warriors who fill the room.

Purrington's Cat Lounge, located in Notheast Portland, is a unique place where one can get a bite to eat, play with the cats and decide to adopt one. It is a way for shelter cats to interact with humans and for prospective owners to get a feel for what the cat is like at home.

On Sundays, from 6:30–8:30 p.m., for \$20 per session or \$60 for four sessions, Purrington's offers a yoga class surrounded by cats. It is an interesting way to interact with them, especially if they are feeling friendly that week.

The yoga class has two instructors, Alicia Johnson and Heather Klawender, who alternate each week.

Johnson described the class as, "a relaxing environment for both beginners and advanced students."

And she was right. Even someone with no experience at yoga could go in and still feel like they accomplished something when they left. Even if they didn't, the presence of the cats makes guests smile, and that makes it worth it.

Experienced yoga enthusiasts can also benefit from it, according to Eric Cheong, a long-time yogi himself.

"It is very relaxing," said Cheong. "[Yoga] wasn't always about these pristine environments, and this, and other more informal environments, offer a new perspective." When asked about the effect the cats had on the yoga experience, he said, "It was a very good class, having the cats around made it feel more natural."

Husband and wife Sergio and Kristen Castillo are the owners of Purrington's Cat Lounge, and they founded it after seeing a video of a cat café in France. The

conversation swiftly switched from 'Wouldn't it be cool to have something like that here in Portland' to 'How can we make this happen in Portland?'

After they got the doors open, they approached a friend of theirs about the idea, as they knew special events would be the lounge's bread and butter. The rest was history, and shortly thereafter, Purrington's Cat Lounge started hosting yoga classes every Sunday.

If you have insecurities about doing yoga, whether you are a guy that is told it is not manly or you are a girl who just isn't sure about it, or anything in between, don't worry.

"There are no judgments. If you like cats, or you like yoga, you should come. It's a very accepting place," said Cheong.

So show up, try it out, and if it is not for you, well, you can enjoy the time with the cats. You could even adopt one, should you desire.