



NIA DANCERS WARM UP AT THE REACH CENTER

Navigating Nia

Eugene's favorite yoga-meets-dance-meets-martial arts workout **BY DAEMON LEE**

Nia is a form of exercise that mixes yoga, martial arts and dance techniques, but never mind what it is exactly: That analyzing part of your brain has no place here. Nia is about the joy of having arms and legs and knees and shoulders. It's exploring the movements that your body loves.

Although it started in 1983 in San Francisco, Nia has quietly grown in popularity, with classes offered at Eugene Yoga, Celebration Belly Dance and Yoga Studio and The Reach Center, among others.

"It's definitely a fitness class, but doesn't look like a fitness class or feel like a fitness class," says Amy Palatnick, who co-leads a Nia class in South Eugene. "It's more like an experience. You're having a very multileveled experience. It's definitely physical but also emotional and spiritual."

Palatnick and co-instructor Sarah Gregory teach their Nia classes at The Reach Center on Harris Street and, on a recent chilly morning, Gregory starts off the class of about 40 people by easing in slowly. "Feel the ground beneath your feet," Gregory says. "Feel grounded to the earth."

Everyone stands in a circle and, while soft music plays, they feel their bare feet press into the floor.

The tempo soon increases, filling the exercise space with fast-paced music. "Let's warm this room up!" Gregory says. The class spreads out into rows, with Gregory at the front, and dancing begins. The moves are simple and repetitive, because the important thing is to feel the energy and to be creative. "Experiment, see what your neighbor is doing!" Gregory says.

The sweatshirts soon come off, and Gregory has everyone in the room moving, stepping forward and back, spinning to the left, lifting arms to the ceiling. Between dance sequences are periods of freeform movement as everyone in the class gyrates however they want. Gregory bounces through the room, encouraging the chaos. "Feel your skin!" she says. "Love your body!"

Then she gathers the class together again and leads everyone in a series of kicks — to the front, to the side, to the back — all in rhythm to the music. As Gregory guides the class, she seems more facilitator than instructor, encouraging and setting an example but never demanding.

Gradually, the beat of the music slows, and Gregory encourages the class to relax. Soon everyone is sprawled out on the floor, eyes closed. One last circle together to end the class, and then it's time to go. People leave the class feeling both energized and relaxed.

"I was exhausted and had the biggest grin on my face," Berry Broadbent says about her first Nia experience seven years ago. "It gets me out of my head."

"It changed me," says Lonni Welchman, another regular. He says he thinks that people who try Nia once will come back for more.

The drop-in rate is \$10 at The Reach Center, though the second class is free to encourage people to give it a second chance. "Every class is different," Palatnick says.

Ten classes are available for \$80, but no one is turned away for lack of funds. Beginning in January, Gregory and Palatnick will offer weekend classes.

"It's like dancing with your family," Palatnick says. "It's a very big-hearted experience." ■



SARAH GREGORY DEMONSTRATES MARTIAL ARTS-INSPIRED KICKS

INShape

FITNESS | GROUP X | CHILDCARE

New Year, New Classes, New YOU!

INTRODUCING PIYO™ IN 2015!

A BLEND OF PILATES MOVEMENTS AND TRADITIONAL YOGA POSES TO REJUVENATE & INVIGORATE

FREE WITH MEMBERSHIP!

OFFERING 40 FREE CLASSES WITH MEMBERSHIP**

OPTIONAL CHILD CARE FLEXIBLE MEMBERSHIPS

**INCLUDING PILATES, YOGA, ZUMBA & MUCH MORE!



2681 WILLAMETTE ST. | 541-687-2200
INSHAPEATHLETICCLUB.COM

Tired of Chronic Pain?

MVA Insurance Accepted

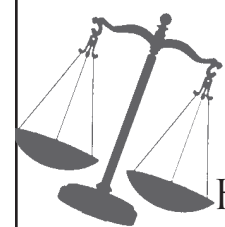


VISCERAL MANIPULATION
 CRANIAL MANIPULATION
ROLFING®
 STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION
 37 YEARS EXPERIENCE

www.jeffreyburch.com

(541)-689-1515

By Appointment Only • LMT 9092



HEAR YE,
 HEAR YE !!

LEGAL NOTICES

place your legal notices in the Eugene Weekly
FAST, EFFICIENT SERVICE

call: 541.484.0519
 email: legals@eugeneweekly.com
 fax: 541.484.4044

Eugene Weekly qualifies for posting legal ads