

## **A Visit with Karen Allgire, co-owner of Green Tara Yoga & Healing Arts by Kaye Lowe, writing for the Heights Observer**

Julie Roberts' character in *Eat, Pray, Love*, isn't the only one traveling to India for yoga study. Cleveland Heights' Iyengar Yoga instructor, Karen Allgire, recently returned from a month in Pune, India, where she studied for the third time at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute. I visited with Allgire at her studio, Green Tara Yoga & Healing Arts, to learn more about her experience. As we talked her quiet demeanor, pleasant personality and calmness was apparent. It led me to want to discover more about Karen and how she gained her serene presence.

### **Why did you pick Cleveland Heights for your studio?**

I have great affection for this city and would not want to live anywhere else. I love our progressive values, our diverse population and our unique, locally owned businesses. I enjoy our access to downtown, University Circle, and the Metro parks. I love Cumberland Pool, Cain Park and our beautiful old homes and canopy of developed trees.

### **What is Iyengar Yoga?**

Iyengar Yoga is a form of classical yoga as developed and refined by living yoga master B.K.S. Iyengar. This method utilizes alignment and breath to create integrated action and awareness. The hallmarks of Iyengar Yoga are precise attention to correct alignment, the use of props as teaching tools, individual correction and adjustment of poses, and creative sequencing of poses to create specific effects.

### **How has practicing Yoga benefited you?**

I feel strong, flexible and fit. Yoga has brought me deeper body awareness enabling me to work harder with less strain. It has improved my posture, my balance and my breathing. I feel calmer and am better able to handle the ups and downs of life. The practice of yoga has made me reflective and more aware of how my actions affect others. Yoga teaches us to be unattached to the outcomes of our effort, because we can't control results, but only our actions. This view has helped me to be less anxious about the future and more grounded in the present.

### **Tell us why you traveled to India.**

Within the system of Iyengar Yoga, serious students and teachers are encouraged to go to India to study at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI). There we train directly with the Iyengars for complete immersion in yoga for a one or two month period. I have now made three month-long trips to Pune, India, to study at RIMYI. Each day we have a 2-3 hour practice time and a 2-hour class. We also have the opportunity to watch B.K.S. Iyengar practicing. It is very inspiring to see his amazing postures at the age of 91! What I enjoyed the most were the long practices. To have two or three hours per day of completely uninterrupted to yoga practice is something that is almost impossible to achieve at home.

### **How did your travels to India help you in your teaching of Yoga?**

Through my studies in India, I have been able to improve my teaching and deepen the learning experience for my students. I can now take one or two themes and weave them into the entire class, so the students leave with a clear understanding. I think the knowledge I gained in India has transferred directly to the rate of learning for my students.

### **What is your favorite aspect of teaching Yoga?**

I think the most rewarding aspect of teaching yoga is supporting growth and awareness in students. I love helping them recognize that they themselves brought about that transformation through attentive, intelligent

practice over a period of time. I truly enjoy the connection I make with each individual, especially when some new learning has taken place. I can see the light of new understanding in their eyes. That is just such a joy.

**How does the ancient art of Yoga fit into modern day life?**

Yoga is a practical subject. It exists to help people experience health in the body, awareness in the mind and serenity in the spirit. Those values can never become old, as everyone wants to be free from illness and experience joy and peace. In the midst of our very busy lives, I encourage students to fit in small moments of yoga throughout the day and to eventually develop a regular practice. Even ten minutes of yoga can make a difference in how we feel and how the rest of the day goes. Each of us has to make spiritual practice a priority and figure out how to make the time for it, while still tending to the duties of work and family.

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