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**Seniors find newfound
health, mobility
through yoga**

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February 2024



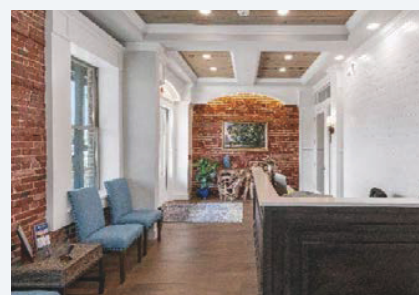
Commitment, Integrity, Compassion.

These are the values Charlie Douglas, owner, and founder of the Douglas Law Firm, lives by in both his personal life and career.

Charlie, born and raised in Putnam County, opened Douglas Law Firm in August of 2013 with one goal in mind; to serve the people of his community to the best of his ability. In just a little over ten years, Douglas Law Firm has expanded to seven office locations throughout Northeast Florida, to include eleven attorneys and close to 25 support staff, but one thing remains the same; the unwavering commitment to serve the community.

Charlie volunteers for Putnam First Cancer Fund, The ARC, Kiwanis of the Azalea City, and Boy Scouts of America. Charlie served as Chairman of the Putnam County Chamber of Commerce. In 2020, Charlie purchased the 100 block in downtown Palatka, and now in 2024 five businesses, including Douglas Law Firm, and one restaurant call the 100 block home. The revitalization of downtown Palatka and Putnam County is one of Charlie's greatest passions.

Throughout Charlie's, and now his team of attorneys, service within the community, Douglas Law Firm has had the opportunity to assist citizens and families in preparation for their future. Whether you are looking to purchase or sell a business, prepare a last will and testament, or protect your assets, Charlie and his team are here and prepared to help.



Learn more about Douglas Law Firm by visiting: www.DHClawyers.com

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Yoga

DISPELLING MYTHS

Instructor shows different ways seniors can partake in yoga

By Brandon D. Oliver

Palatka Daily News
boliver@palatkadailynews.com

More seniors are joining people of all ages and backgrounds in participating in a fun, accessible form of exercise that has been practiced for thousands of years.

Yoga is a great way for people of any age to improve muscle strength, relieve pain and decrease stress, said Kim Simon, the director of programs for Yoga 4 Change. The variety in the types of yoga and the ways it can be taught makes the practice ideal for seniors, she said.

"We say yoga is for everybody and every body," Simon said. "It's a practice anyone can do. I think it's fun."

Yoga 4 Change is a nonprofit that partners with other organizations to provide yoga classes for populations that may find it beneficial. Through Yoga 4 Change, Simon teaches yoga for Putnam County Jail inmates, leads a bimonthly class with Recovery Point at Life Church in Palatka and teaches a variety of classes throughout Northeast Florida.

Many of her classes include senior citizens, some of whom originally worry they may not be able to bend, lunge or balance as they attempt different poses. Simon dispels those beliefs by meeting people where they are and offering alternatives to what many people perceive as the standard way of practicing yoga.

She has taught chair yoga, where people can reap the benefits of the exercise while remaining seated for portions of or the entire class. Simon also alternates what poses are taught to accommodate people with body mobility worries, those who may be dealing with different types of trauma or others in substance use recovery.

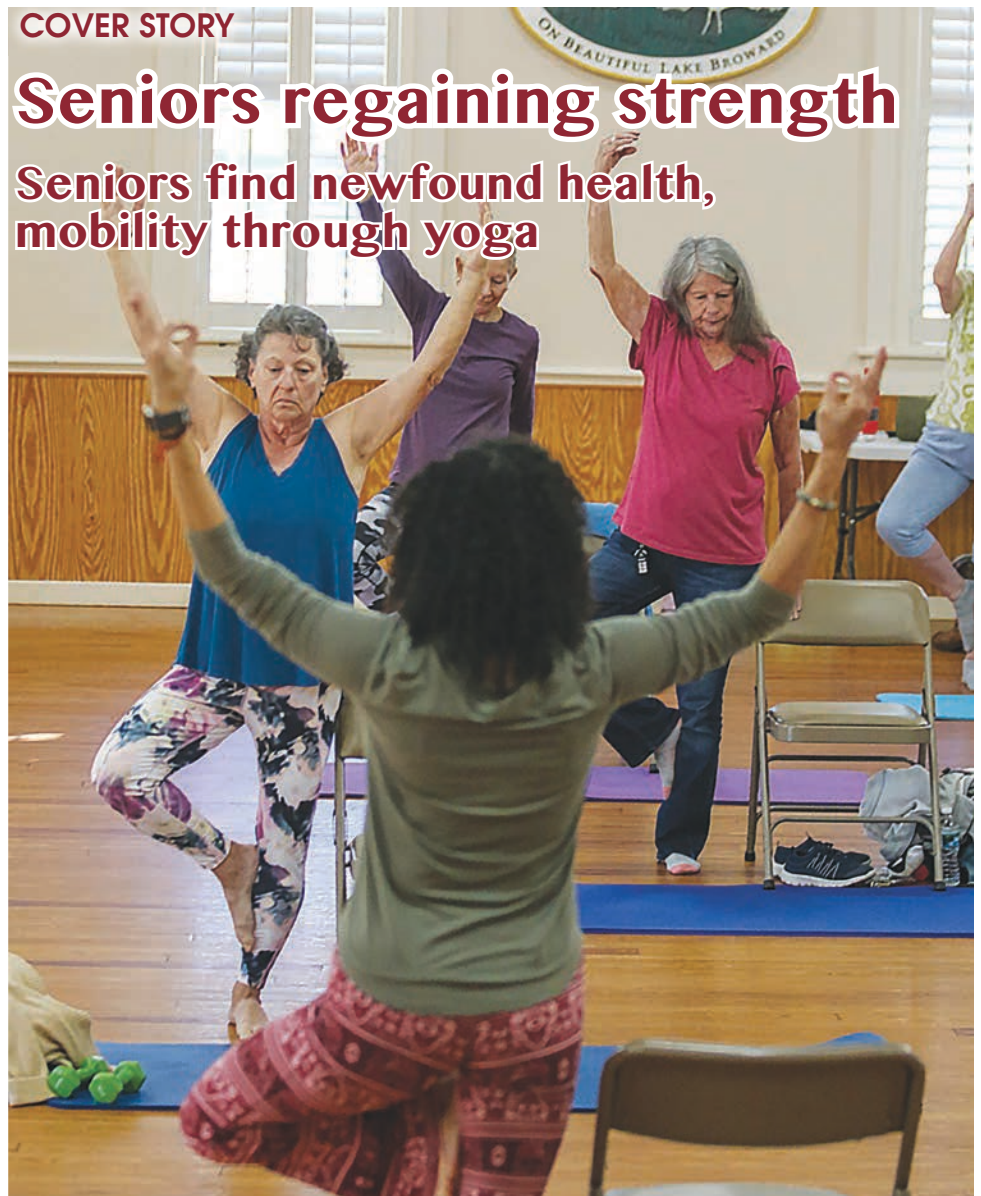
Simon said her students range from people with prosthetics and/or walkers to yoga instructors with years of experience.

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COVER STORY

Seniors regaining strength

Seniors find newfound health, mobility through yoga



SARAH CAVACINI/Palatka Daily News

Irma Rosario leads a yoga class through the tree pose at the end of a chair yoga session in Pomona Park.

By Sarah Cavacini

Palatka Daily News
scavacini@palatkadailynews.com

POMONA PARK – Incense burned in the back of the Pomona Park Community Center on the morning of Feb. 6 as chatty seniors set up their mats and folding chairs for chair yoga.

Instructor Irma Rosario started the class with a calming voice and soft music that resonated throughout the 200 E. Main St. building.

"We'll start with three cleansing breaths so that we can start releasing

all the conversations that we had before we walked into this room," she told everyone.

The one-hour chair yoga class progressed from breathing exercises to arm and leg stretches to weight movements. The class ended with a relaxation period. Attendees ranged in age from at least in their 60s to their 80s. Women and men grabbed a mat, a chair, water bottles and weights to spend their morning socializing

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"It's a pretty big range in our different community classes," she said. "We'll have kids. We'll have seniors. We'll have people in the middle. We pride ourselves on accessible yoga."

Yoga is an individual practice, she said, and practitioners should listen to their body throughout the process so they know how far they feel comfortable going.

Simon advises people to not listen to their negative thoughts when contemplating whether to do yoga. She said many people have come to her class worried about their ability to do it or will be stressed over other issues. However, Simon said, they leave pleasantly surprised by how much they were able to accomplish and how much better they feel.

"People will come into the class bringing all these (stressors) with them," she said. "And after one yoga class, there's significant improvement in mood, stress and pain."

The benefits of yoga are numerous, she said. People who participate in it see a boost in mobility, joint protection, strength and balance, while also seeing a decrease in hypertension and stress, Simon said.

Some of the people who have attended Simon's classes have been on the mend. She recalls a woman who was recovering from knee replacement surgery and used chair yoga to help strengthen her knee while staying active in the process.

"In a chair, there's a way to do that same posture," Simon said of alternating how she teaches. "It offered her a safe way to move and build strength without pain."

To learn more about Yoga 4 Change and its classes, visit y4c.org. To inquire about partnering with Yoga 4 Change to have classes in Putnam County, email Simon at ksimon@y4c.org.



Photo submitted by Kim Simon

A group of people practice yoga on mats and in chairs during a class in Jacksonville that was part of a partnership between Yoga 4 Change and Blue Zones Project.

Strength *Continued from page 4*



SARAH CAVACINI/Palatka Daily News

Yoga class attendee Judi White improves her strength during a chair yoga session at the Pomona Park Community Center.

and improving their body strength. Most students had been learning from Rosario and attending sessions for weeks if not months.

By the end of that morning session, 11 people had joined the class and everyone left the community center smiling.

"Coming out here and being able to learn how to control your breath, especially during stressful situations, how to keep a calm and peaceful mind can help the body heal," said Rosario, who has been practicing yoga since 2010 and became a certified teacher in 2017. "And it helps the body move a little bit more freely."

Chair yoga, also known as seated yoga, is excellent for improving balance, helping people move at their own pace and allowing people to modify yoga poses to make them easier, according to John Hopkins Medicine.

Pomona Park offers chair yoga on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m. and provides gentle yoga for people who want more of a challenge at 10 a.m. on Mondays. The cost for classes

is \$1, and all the money benefits the community center, Rosario said.

"Some of my students have been graduating from the chair and trying the gentle, which is just mostly on the mat," Rosario said. "You can ask a lot of the students. I wish I could bottle all of the things that they say they've seen change in themselves."

Yoga improves strength, balance and flexibility, according to John Hopkins. It helps people who have back pain, may ease arthritis symptoms, contributes to heart health, helps people sleep better, can improve moods and gives people a supportive community.

Pomona Park resident Charles Behm, 63, suffered injuries nearly one year ago and is coming off multiple bypass surgeries. Behm, who said his recovery process has been prolonged, has been attending Pomona Park chair yoga classes for a few months to increase his flexibility and balance.

"I did not plan on it having a little extra benefit," he said after the class. "My shoulders are no longer hurting. I've had injuries, prior sports injuries,

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Strength *Continued from page 6*



SARAH CAVACINI/Palatka Daily News

Melinda Kreisman smiles as she follows yoga instructor Irma Rosario's warm-up exercises.

to my rotator cuff. And so the exercise of (my) shoulders and whatnot has gotten (me) to the point where I can function again pain-free.”

He said his balance isn't yet where he wants it to be, but he continues to improve with every class. Behm is pleased with the results he has seen in the months since starting the class.

“In this class, you see a lot of senior citizens,” Behm said. “You see a lot of senior citizens with varying physical abilities and ... what you see among these people is an increase in sociability, an increase in social contact. And each of them, to their varying degrees, can walk away from here feeling like they've accomplished something.”

Melinda Kreisman, 61, said she has been taking the Pomona Park yoga class three times a week for a couple of months.

A year ago, Kreisman said, she could barely walk to her mailbox. Now, she can use weights during the yoga class to strengthen her arms.

“I couldn't bend. I was stiff as a board,” she said. “I wanted my body to be more flexible, more healthy.”

At the end of the Feb. 6 class, Kreisman spoke with Judi White, who is in her 80s and spent the last stretch of chair yoga using arm weights. White, who has practiced yoga off and on since she was a child, said she has attended chair yoga classes from the time Pomona Park began offering them in February 2023.

“I had a problem, you know, where I had surgery and stuff, so I couldn't even get up out of a chair without help, and now I can even go down,” White said as she bent her knees.

People can learn more about Pomona Park's yoga classes and other events by visiting pomonapark.com.

Yoga in Putnam County isn't limited to Pomona Park. Gentle yoga is offered at the Palmetto Park Clubhouse in Florahome at 9 a.m. every Wednesday through March 13. The yoga instructor asks for a donation to participate.

Island Doctors instructors provide yoga classes at 1023 St Johns Ave. in Palatka and 1114 State Road 20 in Interlachen. The classes are free to Island Doctor members. Find out more at islanddoctors.com/health-events.



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3 fun and effective outdoor exercises for seniors

The benefits of spending time in the great outdoors are significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spending time outdoors may improve mental health and the vitamin D the body absorbs while outside can have a positive effect on blood cells and the immune system.

Seniors can benefit from the great outdoors as much as anyone. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, which strengthens bones. That's especially beneficial for seniors, as the National Council on Aging notes that bone density often decreases after age 50, which can increase the risk of fractures.

Spending time in the great outdoors also provides a social benefit, encouraging individuals from all walks of life, including seniors, to get out of their homes and spend time with other people.

With so much to gain from spending time outside, seniors can consider these three outdoor exercises as they seek to maintain or improve their overall health.

1. Walking: Walking is free and effective. In fact, WebMD notes that a brisk 30-minute walk can improve blood flow, contribute to a stronger heart, strengthen bones, and even help people sleep better at night. In addition, a 2022 study published in the journal JAMA Neurology found that people between the ages of 40 and 79 who walked about 9,800 steps per day were 51 percent less likely to develop dementia than people who didn't walk much at all.

2. Cycling: Riding a bike is both fun and a great form of outdoor exercise. Though many studies regarding the health effects of cycling have looked at the value of riding a bike to work, a scenario that does not apply to retirees, the results of such studies still offer insight into just how valuable it can be to ride a bike. For example, a 2020 study published in the journal The Lancet found that people who cycled to work were 24 percent less likely to die of heart disease and 11 percent less likely to develop cancer. Seniors, whether they are

still working or retired, can incorporate cycling into their daily routines and enjoy all the fun and health benefits that riding a bike provides.

3. Hiking: Hiking is a bit more strenuous than walking, particularly when individuals choose to traverse steep and/or rocky terrain. WebMD notes that hiking after age 60 can help people reduce their risk of falls and fractures; lower their risk for a host of ailments, including coronary heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes; reduce blood pressure, even in adults who have already been diagnosed with hypertension; and maintain healthy bones and joints. Hiking is not a one-size-fits-all activity, so seniors, especially those who would characterize themselves as novice hikers, are urged to speak with their physicians prior to hiking trails that are not flat.

Seniors can consider these three fun activities and others as they answer the call of the great outdoors. Walking, cycling and hiking offer a great reason to get out of the house and reap the health-related benefits of spending time outside.

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Strength training for seniors



A balanced diet and exercise, which includes a combination of aerobic activities and strength training, is necessary to maintain long-term health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do to protect their overall health. Exercise helps to delay or prevent many of the conditions that come with age. Adults ages 65 and older should aim for the recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking, and at least two days of activities that strengthen muscles.

When it comes to muscle strengthening, seniors can follow these safety guidelines as they embark on their strength-training journeys.

- Speak with a healthcare provider first. Get the green light to proceed with an exercise regimen before beginning by having a discussion with your general practitioner about your fitness goals. Your doctor can recommend strategies that are safe and point out any exercises that may compromise your overall health.

- Master basic exercises first. Anyone new to strength training, which is sometimes known as resistance training, can start out slowly, even using just body weight, to provide resistance. Resistance exercises can include squats, crunches, modified pushups, planks, and lunges.

- Graduate to resistance bands. When you're ready to move on to something else, consider resistance bands as an alternative to free weights. The bands can help you develop good form before introducing weight. Good form is key to avoiding injury.

- Work with a trainer. Working with a certified personal trainer can help you learn how to use free weights and strength-training machines correctly. A trainer also can create a routine that includes the right number of sets and repetitions to gradually build and maintain muscle mass. If you decide against hiring a trainer, gym staff members may guide you through equipment and demonstrate proper form.

- Exercise with a friend. Strength training with a friend or family member can provide motivation and keep you on target to meet your goals.

• Build up gradually. Your first strength session should only last 10 to 15 minutes, according to Tiffany Chag, C.S.C.S., a strength coach at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. This enables you to gauge soreness. Wait until soreness abates before beginning your next session if you are new to strength training.

Strength exercises are a vital part of maintaining health as a senior. Such exercises help maintain muscle mass and also improve balance and bone health.

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Pre-workout tips for seniors



As physically active individuals age, they typically must change how they approach exercise. For example, rather than jumping two feet first into new activities like they might have done when they were younger, seniors may have to think about injury prevention and ways to improve their endurance prior to lacing up their sneakers. For most, that may boil down to taking various pre-workout steps.

- Get enough rest. The body requires adequate sleep and other rest during the day to stimulate muscle growth and repair. Exercise may not be as effective and it may be more dangerous if seniors are engaging without enough sleep. In addition, sleep deprivation can reduce reaction times, which can adversely affect workouts.
- Emphasize stretching. Stretching can improve flexibility and reduce the risk of muscle injuries. It also can improve range of motion in the joints. Stretching before and after a workout prepares the body for exercise and helps it recover.
- Wear the proper footwear and clothing. Sturdy, supportive athletic shoes and well-fitting workout wear can make working out more comfortable and safer. The National Institute on Aging recommends finding

footwear designed for the specific activity you'll be engaging in. Footwear that offers sufficient heel support and nonslip soles is beneficial as well.

- Warm up. Give the body an opportunity to acclimate during a warm-up period that will facilitate healthy breathing. Warming up also loosens up the joints and muscles for the exercise ahead. After a workout, seniors should cool down to reduce their heart rates and prepare for recovery.
- Carefully consider pre-workout supplements. Pre-workout powders and pills have become quite popular for exercise enthusiasts. Manufacturers may advertise that their products are loaded with vitamins and minerals that will help energize the body for a workout. However, they also may be fortified with caffeine. Do not take a pre-workout supplement without first consulting your physician, as certain products may adversely interact with medications you're taking for preexisting conditions.

Pre-workout steps can keep seniors safe and reduce injury risk from exercise.

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