

# Yoga Matters

Yoga Alliance  
Integrity. Diversity. Community.

November/December 2007 Issue

*"All gifts are given in love and appreciation. The love and the gift can only be as great as our acceptance of it." Swami Kripalu*



*"...doing work without attachment  
one attains the Supreme Being."*

– Bhagavad Gita

Seva means selfless service. It implies being connected to all things. It's a way to express your own humanity and divinity. It's more than just a physical act; it's part of a spiritual practice – expanding the hearts of the giver and receiver. It helps you develop a spirit of true self-surrender and humility... the path of Karma Yoga.

This season, let's seek opportunities to perform seva every day; to reach out to people who are less fortunate financially, less confident emotionally, or less secure spiritually. Stretch your empathy muscles. If someone is negative or attacking you, find a way to respond with compassion instead of firing back. If someone looks sad, offer a smile. When others receive honors, rejoice with them. Embody the qualities of joy and allow them to stream from you. As the Dalai Lama says: "...give with radiance on your face."

The holidays can be very stressful for many people. As yoga teachers, it is an ideal time to extend our service through meditation sessions and restorative classes, as well as stress management workshops. As it gets cold in certain parts of the country, it's also the perfect time to plan a healing retreat someplace beautiful and warm. And, since the best teachers should always be students, remember to treat yourself to a yoga class with your favorite teacher or plan your own personal getaway. As we know, to be fully present for

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A Sister's Inspiration  
by Deborah Sherman



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**Yoga Alliance on the Road**  
(Please stop by and say "Hi!")

The 5th Annual *Yoga Journal* San Francisco Conference  
January 18-21, 2008 –  
San Francisco

The Second Annual IAYT Symposium On Yoga Therapy and Research (SYTAR)  
March 6-9, 2008 – Los Angeles

The *Yoga Journal* Boston Conference  
May 16-19, 2008 – Boston



others we must take care of ourselves.

Yoga Alliance is embracing this season of service. The YA staff was happy to perform its own small act of seva by donating used computers to Joshua House – a children's home in Maryland. We are also pleased to make available the beautiful 2008 calendars featuring RYT's. Thank you for your submissions. We count on your continual commitment to the cause to make this coming year the best yet for us all.

The New Year will bring many opportunities for enlightened community-building. Be sure to join us at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual *Yoga Journal* San Francisco Conference at the Hyatt Regency from January 18-21, 2008. *Yoga Journal* extends a \$20 discount to RYT's for this event ([www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com)). I encourage you to visit the YA booth and allow YA staff and me the chance to meet you!

Also, Yoga Day USA is coming up on Saturday, January 26, 2008 ([www.yogadayusa.com](http://www.yogadayusa.com)). In its ninth year, this annual nationwide celebration was designed to raise awareness about yoga's benefits by offering free or low cost workshops in communities all across the country. Many of these events are also fundraisers for charitable organizations. With your involvement, we aim to reach an ever-expanding universe of yoga practitioners and enthusiasts – spreading the message of healthy living and total *being*. Remember to send us photos showcasing your efforts and reports outlining the rewards!

We once again are delighted to be among the distinguished sponsors of the International Association of Yoga Therapist's second annual Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research (SYTAR), March 6-9, 2008 in Los Angeles. This professional gathering is designed to benefit yoga teachers, yoga therapists, yoga researchers and health professionals who use yoga in their work. The SYTAR program and registration pages are accessible through [www.iayt.org](http://www.iayt.org). Yoga Alliance registrants receive a \$100 SYTAR 2008 registration discount, and hotel room rates at the newly renovated Los Angeles Airport Hilton are just \$119 per night. SYTAR offers up to 21.5 contact hours in Yoga Alliance approved continuing education credits.

As B.K.S. Iyengar said: "Happy is the [person] who knows how to distinguish the real from the unreal, the eternal from the transient and the good from the pleasant by his discrimination and wisdom. Twice blessed is he who knows true love and can love all God's creatures. He who works selflessly for the welfare of others with love in his heart is thrice blessed. But the man who combines within his mortal frame knowledge, love and selfless service is holy and becomes a place of pilgrimage, like the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Saraswati and Jamuna. Those who meet him become calm and purified."

With this in mind, we at YA urge you to be a beacon of light for all who come in contact with you. Find stillness in the busyness of the season. As written in the Upanishad, "Who sees all being in his own

## ya survey

Last August, many of you took part in a survey being conducted by IAYT about yoga injuries. The complete results are not yet available, but the survey's authors did respond to an October *Time* magazine article, "When Yoga Hurts," in the November issue of *LA Yoga*.



## Yoga For Life

### A Sister's Inspiration By Deborah Sherman

Enter my sister... you know the type – first born, "type A" successful, perpetually smiling, joyful, eager and energetic. After raising five children to become successful adults, my sister Mary Pat Schermerhorn began her yoga journey. Also an avid golfer and hiker, Mary Pat's lifestyle was one of health, energy and enthusiasm.

Our family was devastated when at just 56, Mary Pat was suddenly disabled by a mysterious viral form of arthritis, Polymyalgia Rheumatica. It took doctors a full year and a variety of experimental treatments to diagnose her condition.

With every joint aching and immobile, my sister continued to practice her yoga. She persevered and fought back. Today, at age 68, she is strong and recovering. She continues to be a courageous example to all of us and, of course, practices her yoga philosophy daily. Mary Pat learned the truth of the saying that "your real yoga practice begins when you put your mat away."

With a masterful balance of action and resolve, inner fortitude and faith, Mary Pat has overcome her disability. She found the true meaning of yoga in the union of her physical and spiritual strength



self, and his own self in all beings, loses all fear." Let's move into the New Year with a united sense of fearlessness, eyes open to the miracles around us. And, as always, on every day and in every occasion... find a reason to say, "Jai!"

Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy,  
Ph.D., MBA, RYT, CHHC

## seva sightings

### Yoga Bringing Peace to Combat Veterans

Yoga is offering a respite from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for a group of combat veterans in Massachusetts thanks to two creative and dedicated teachers.

Central Mass Yoga Institute in West Boylston offers two classes each week, one at no charge, to combat vets representing over a half a century of conflicts – World War II, Viet Nam, Operation Desert Storm and Iraq.

The classes are taught by owner Lucy Wagner, E-RYT 500 and Joan Platt, RYT 200. Joan offers a 75 minute class while Lucy offers one hour of yoga plus one hour of meditation.

We first heard about Joan and the class in a report on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" last spring. In that story, Michael Jakonski, a Marine veteran who served in Viet Nam, said that he first came to yoga for relief from a stiff neck but soon found that it helped him with his anger and depression. He told NPR that he had spent 40 years "scraping by" with his anger and depression and that prior to the Iraq war he had scoffed at the notion of PTSD.

"But the Iraq war threw me for a loop," he told NPR, "(I) found myself on the top of a mountain crying one day and thought 'I've got to do something about this.'" That something was yoga. He is not alone in his discovery.

Everything in the classes, which began in 2005, is geared towards relaxing, slowing down and becoming mindful. During classes Lucy and Joan help their students to feel happy, peaceful and liberated. "The differences we see are astounding. Many had been depressed, withdrawn and easily angered," Joan said. "Now they smile and laugh more and are able to relax more easily. Those inward focused, sad faces are now blooming."

Joan said all of the veterans have expressed what a tremendous difference the classes have made in their lives. "They feel a sense of peace and calm...they feel safe and relaxed in a way that they can't in other parts of their lives. Yoga class offers them a perimeter of safety and for them to feel safe is a wonderful thing." Some of the vets have even started their own home practices.

when her illness forced her to adapt her active ways and focus on inner fortitude.

She remains active but is careful to balance her busy schedule with regular yoga classes, continuing to deepen her practice by focusing on balance, breath and precise alignment. Her in-depth knowledge about how to modify and adapt her poses has allowed her to keep her practice therapeutic and stress free. Mary Pat's sunny attitude provides a fantastic example for us all on how to face life's difficulties, both physical and mental.

Deborah Sherman has been an RYT in Phoenix since 1995.



### Call for Wisdom

Add your wisdom to our Yoga Alliance library. We are continuing to build our library for both our website and *Yoga Matters*. You can help by sharing tips and information to help others become better yoga practitioners, teachers and business people.

Our photo library also is growing and, as always, we welcome your photo contributions as well. Please remember that a professional photo is not required for any submission. Many of our favorites are candid shots showing teachers working with their students. Your photo should be in the highest resolution possible, preferably an 8 ½ x11" at 300 dpi. Please remember to send a release along with your photo and let us know whom to credit for the shot.

Please send your photos and/or articles of 500 words or less to:  
**Yoga Alliance (Share)**  
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