

NORTHWEST PASSAGES

THE PEOPLE AND PLACES OF NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

APRIL 26, 2006

**ALL FORM,
NO SUBSTANCE**
David Brown



The great D.C. garbage go-round

One man's trash is another man's treasure. Nowhere is this tenet more alive than on the streets of Washington, where a never-ending exchange of garbage is taking place every day. It sounds disgusting, but it's actually one of the city's most efficient operations.

Not long after I moved to Dupont Circle, I noticed the trend of putting stuff out on the street, not for the trash collector who drives around in those big orange trucks, but for the trash collector who lives in your neighborhood. Old furniture won't fit in your garbage can, so you stick it out on the street in hopes that some fool will take it. And some fool usually will.

I first tried this technique with a battered

antique trunk. I knew my garbage service wouldn't take it, and as it was falling apart it had no resale value. And I certainly wasn't about to waste my time donating it to those freeloaders at the Salvation Army.

I certainly wasn't about to waste my time donating it to those freeloaders at the Salvation Army.

So I stuck it out on the street with a sign declaring it "FREE," just to prevent any confusion about a piece-of-junk empty trunk sitting on the sidewalk.

Within two hours, it was long gone. I had never been more excited to get rid of something, except maybe acne. A few weeks later, I tried a whole series of items I had originally been planning to sell. There wasn't enough stuff to warrant a sidewalk sale, so I took the whole box and set it out on the front stoop, again with the "FREE" sign.

I ran back upstairs to look out the window and see if it was attracting any attention. By the time I got there, some dude in blue jeans and a T-shirt was rummaging through the box. He wasn't grabbing anything, just browsing, and I cursed him through the window. "C'mon, buddy, there's good stuff in there," I pleaded. "Don't try to act like you

See **Garbage**/Page 27

Yoga Week events stretch out to non-yogis

By **VICTORIA SOLOMON**
Current Staff Writer

The art of politics, the art of business, the art of argument: In these arts, Washingtonians are well-versed. But in the arts of yoga and meditative breathing, D.C. residents are a little less flexible — at least according to local yoga studios, which will reach just a little further out to their neighbors this week with free and discounted classes.

Starting Saturday and continuing through May 5, 10 local studios will offer at least one free class daily and other classes at \$5 apiece during the city's first "Yoga Week." Especially welcome are beginners with tentative feelings and only a little knowledge of the Eastern practice of yoga, organizers say.

The idea for the week was born in a conversation between Annie Mahon, the director of Chevy Chase's Circle Yoga and Budding Yogis, and Theo Adamstein, founder and principal owner of SomaFit in Glover Park.

Mahon, a 10-plus-year yoga practitioner, said she was chatting with Adamstein about the success of a recent "spa week" offered at SomaFit, a studio that incorporates yoga, spa services and personal training. Mahon said she dreamed of some type of "yoga week" and asked, "Wouldn't that be fun?" From



Photos by Judy Licht

Annie Mahon (above and at right), director of Circle Yoga and Budding Yogis, leads a class at her Chevy Chase studio.

there, the pair didn't look back.

"Yoga Week connects the yoga studios together in a non-competitive way," Mahon said. "That's the whole spirit of yoga — cooperation and working together."

Mahon said her studio already fills up during the day with nearby residents who are brand-new to yoga, but she is always excited about bringing in someone who knows nothing

about yoga.

"It's not like some secret handshake or something you have to wear ... it's a way to engage your body and get to know yourself," she said of the practice.

SomaFit founder Adamstein is a prominent architect and entrepreneur and a model of a businessperson who benefits from the physical workout and

See **Yoga**/Page 23



With new music, women's chorus maintains female focus

By **GINA TRIPPI**
Current Correspondent



Bill Petros/The Current

Washington Women's Chorus, led by founder Donald Paul Richardson, rehearses Saturday for a May 7 anniversary concert, which will feature a new, commissioned work.

It's all about women: the story of a woman, composed by a woman, sung by women.

The Washington Women's Chorus will conclude the celebration of its 10th anniversary with the international debut of a new choral work, "Hannah's Song," written by New Zealand composer Katherine Dienes, on Sunday, May 7, at the National Presbyterian Church on Nebraska Avenue.

While the chorus has offered 52 area premieres in its short history, "Hannah's Song" is the most ambitious, marking the first time the chorus has worked directly with a highly regarded composer of international acclaim, according to chorus founder and artistic director Donald Paul Richardson. The music is based on the Old Testament prayer of Hannah in the book of Samuel.

"Hannah's Song" is likely the first
See **Chorus**/Page 26

YOGA

From Page 21

mental respite of yoga classes.

"We lead very stressful lives," Adamstein said. "We work too hard, and long hours. [Yoga] is a way of de-stressing — it's wonderful for your mind and your body, and it's like a minivacation. ... What we're really asking people to do is take an hour and a half off your day. You might be surprised — and there's nothing to lose, because either it's free or \$5."

In Mahon's studio early Saturday morning, first-time yoga practitioners gathered on soft mats in a Zen-fully sparse room on shiny hardwood floors and fixed their attention on their teacher as she led them through basic stretches. She encouraged them to take their time and to clear their minds as they reached for their toes and stretched out their limbs.

Usually, they end up feeling better when they leave the class, she said.

"People in Washington live in their heads," she said. "They've taken up residence [there]. This is a way to get them out. ... It allows you to be more in your body."

Apparently, a growing percentage of Washingtonians agree.

According to a statistic from Yoga Alliance, a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to teacher registration, the number of registered yoga teachers in the metropolitan area has been flourishing, jumping from four registered with the organization in 1999 to 1,104 currently.

Randa Thompson, creator of California-based Yogafinder.com, one of the largest yoga databases in the world, said D.C. has one of the fastest growing yoga markets in the country.

Adamstein said it makes sense that people in D.C. enjoy yoga. "It immediately gets you out of your day-to-day world," he said. "I personally find it very calming. ... People who sit behind a desk, in meetings, on planes and trains — this is a way to get yourself moving. It's a physical activity, but



Photo by Judy Licht

Beginners try a "down dog" yoga pose in a class at Chevy Chase's Circle Yoga, one of 10 studios participating in Yoga Week.

there's something about it that's calming to the mind."

John Schumacher, a 33-year yoga teacher in the D.C. area and the founder of several studios, including Yoga Week participant Unity Woods in Woodley Park, said this has not always been the case.

When Schumacher opened his first yoga studio decades ago, he got letters from people asking what kind of flavors they served, as though it were a little ice-cream parlor or frozen-yogurt shop, he said. "There was much less interest or knowledge of what it was."

Schumacher studied with B.K.S. Iyengar — considered a founder of

one of the modern practices of yoga, "Iyengar" Hatha yoga — in the early 1980s and recently hosted his visit to D.C.

"I think it's good for D.C. and society in general," Schumacher said of yoga. "It's a realization of the interconnectedness of everything and everyone. It makes us more conscious and more compassionate. It opens the door to better avenues to better health and a more relaxed, serene state of mind," he said.

In addition to 10 participating studios, the Mid-Atlantic Yoga Association is also a co-sponsor of the event.

HABITAT

From Page 22

and grasses. A neighbor's grape vine has been encouraged to tumble over the adjoining wall and onto a pergola to provide some natural shade.

Richard Griffis' next project is to seek permission to put up a bat house in a tree on some common ground just beyond his house. His son Roger, a birder, makes them, he said. He doesn't think his neighbors would object to the idea: "Bats are good at keeping mosquitoes under control."

In fact, his neighbors have been supportive of all that he and his wife have done to date. One, in fact, has been so impressed that she put in a birdbath of her own. She is now considering adding a bird feeder to her balcony space.

The most common battle the Griffises engage in is with squirrels. "It's a continuous struggle to get them away from the bird seed," said Richard.

It's not just the animals and birds that benefit from the Griffises' project. They both believe their venture is teaching their two grandchildren good environmental practices. Anne Griffis said her 9-year-old granddaughter, Rya, loves being outside. And 22-month-old Matteo, "makes a sound of bees that are buzzing. He can also make the sound of an owl, and he just loves butterflies."

Studios participating in Yoga Week:

- Capitol Hill Yoga, 221 5th St. NE.
- Circle Yoga and Budding Yogis, 5615 39th St.
- Hot Yoga, 3408 Wisconsin Ave.
- SomaFit, 2121 Wisconsin Ave.
- Bikram Yoga, 1635 Connecticut

Ave.

- Spiral Flight, 1826 Wisconsin Ave.
- Unity Woods, 2639 Connecticut Ave.
- Flow Yoga Center, 1450 P St.
- Tranquil Space, 2024 P St.
- Georgetown Yoga, 1053 31st St., second floor.

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