

Lake Forester Article

Sanctuary Yoga relaxes muscles and minds

By LINDA BLASER, lblaser@pioneerlocal.com

They wanted to provide a local place to practice yoga but also a peaceful respite from the day-to-day chaos of life.

Kelli Moorhead and Ilse Sidles of Lake Forest and John Jaksich of Highland Park think they've hit on the right combination.

At Sanctuary Yoga, located at 502 Sheridan Road in Highwood, the serene green walls, dark cork flooring and peaceful music welcome first-time visitors.

"People's lives are hard. We talk too fast, walk too fast, do everything too fast. This is your place to slow down," Jaksich said. "That's really where we're headed with this thing."

The trio has created a welcoming, stress-free environment for experienced yoga clients as well as a place where newcomers will feel right at home. Key to their formula is customer service.

"There's someone at the desk to greet you," which is pretty unheard of at most yoga studios, said Jaksich.

Most people are used to taking classes at a gym or a community recreation center, But newcomers at a yoga studio sometimes feel a little lost.

"People don't know what to wear or what to bring to a yoga studio," said Moorhead. "That can be intimidating. We're not intimidating. We have mats. We have towels. We'll show you where to put your shoes and bag."

Comfort zone

Classes take place in a 1,000-square-foot studio that is kept at a sweat-producing, muscle-relaxing 95 to 100 degrees. The floating dark cork floor is a giving —and forgiving— feature that makes kneeling and elbow balancing a comfortable experience.

Outside the studio is a communal gathering area that features leather chairs, couches and chaise lounges as well as retail products. Artwork centered on the theme "sanctuary" will decorate the walls and will be for sale to anyone who wants to recreate the serenity of the studio at home. Jewelry and some books on spirituality and yoga and other healing products also will be offered for sale.

The gathering space invites clients to linger, to finish their yoga experience or sit and talk. It was arranged so that people "don't feel they need to rush out after class," said Moorhead.

Inviting their customers to linger is an important element in the studio's design.

"It creates a community, a place they feel safe in," said Sidles. "We wanted to create an environment that says: Please come, please try it. We're really welcoming to all."

For more information on yoga classes, the instructors and the studio in general, go to www.mysanctuaryyoga.com.