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Porter shares personal peace with church's yoga class

Susanne Tso
 Special for The Republic
 Aug. 30, 2006 12:00 AM

Elena Porter took her first yoga class 10 years ago, but it didn't quite live up to her expectations.

She felt the promised tranquility but not the spiritual benefits that yoga was supposed to deliver.

"I really liked it and it felt peaceful and calming but it didn't feel spiritual. The practice of yoga just wasn't talking to my soul," Porter said.

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She began to experiment with the ancient discipline at home, practicing to a mix of Christian music and inspirational secular tunes. In the process she discovered the missing spiritual link and wanted to share it with others.

When the sports pastor at Mountain Park Community Church sought the congregation's input on developing a sports program that would serve the community, Porter saw an opportunity. She offered to teach a Christian yoga class and to her delight, the pastor agreed. That was in early 2003.

"When I opened the first class there were only two or three people who showed up. That was pretty exciting for me because I didn't know if anyone would show up," she said.

One was the sports pastor and the other was a lady who had just moved to Phoenix from Minnesota. The woman, Rosie Gonzalez, and Porter became instant friends and before long, the two were on the way to the Lourdes Wellness Center in Collingswood, N.J., to earn Christian yoga certification.

"When we first met these ladies (at the Wellness Center), I told them how it was really amazing that there was something called Christian yoga certification. We met this wonderful woman named Barb who said she'd been teaching it for 20 years. I said, 'You mean I didn't invent it?'"

Porter and Gonzalez teach free "gentle" and "flow" (more challenging) classes weekly for as many as 40 participants. Porter's class meets 6 p.m. on Mondays; Gonzalez's class is 9 a.m. Saturdays at the church, 2408 E. Pecos Road.

"We're very passionate about this," said Porter, a mother of five whose desire is "to give from my heart and move souls."

"There were so many times in my life I said, 'I've got too many kids, I can't do that.' But when you find what makes your heart sing, you never feel that way."

Susanne Tso is a freelance writer living in Ahwatukee Foothills. Contact her at sctso@fastq.com.

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Elena Porter

Age: 43.

Family: Husband Cliff and children Kristina, 23; Krystal, 21; Daniel, 20; Jack, 19; and Chad, 7. One grandson.

Moved to Ahwatukee Foothills: In 1987 from her hometown of La Mirada, Calif.

Education: 1983 graduate of the Computer Learning Center in Chico, Calif.

Business: She owns and operates Southwest Software from her home.

Favorite saying: "Help someone if you can and get right with the Man" from the song *Help Somebody* by Van Zant.



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