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Christian yoga plans community event

Sept. 15 DVD launch party promises music, fun

By Jason Ludwig

It was fairly recently that yoga for Christians was a strange-sounding idea, and listening to a Christ-centered yoga class sounds like a full-contact sermon.

"It's a privilege to be there for people; to be Jesus' hands and feet; to be a friend," said yoga instructor Elena Porter, speaking over a CD that's softly playing James Taylor's version of You've Got a Friend. "Now take the left leg center, then to the sides."

The scene at the Mountain Park Community Church, 2401 E. Pecos Road, was anything but strange, however, to the almost 40 flexible faithful gathered last Thursday to meditate, stretch, pray and relax.

"About five years ago I was really involved in yoga. Yoga has a very spiritual side, any yoga," said Porter, who started the church's program. "But I just wasn't feeling it. I was relaxed, I was calm, but I wasn't feeling spiritual. So I thought, 'What if I put the spiritual focus on God?'"

What would happen is that the idea would turn into an immensely popular activity for people of all ages, shapes and sizes. So popular, in fact, that Porter received so many requests for a DVD that she finally buckled and made one, the launch party for which will be held at Mountain Park Community Church Saturday, Sept. 15.

"It's called 'Be the Difference,'" Porter said of the event. "You talk about wanting the difference, about needing the difference. What about being the difference?"

Indeed, next Saturday's celebration – replete with yoga to live music – will benefit a host of charities, missions and youth-oriented help organizations.

"The main purpose of the event is to bring help to all these charities," Porter added. "We were inspired to do this when we

found these nonprofit organizations struggling to get funds.”

While Porter teaches yoga from a Christian perspective, the tunes during the classes can seem downright secular. She says anything that’s on message for the class is considered, and has in the past included such wide-ranging artists as P. Diddy, Green Day, John Mayer and Bruce Springsteen.

“We theme our classes, so whatever our idea is – if it’s hope, or being hopeful, or bringing hope to others – we’ll play all songs that relate to that theme.”

Rosie Gonzales, who helps Porter with instruction, noted that even those who don’t want to stretch and relax should come out Sept. 19 for the festivities.

“Just come and join us, whether for yoga or for a beautiful night of music!” she said.

Gonzalez added that people of all denominations and from outside the church’s community can benefit from Christ-centered yoga.

“It’s just so relaxing,” she said. “People go home relaxed; they really love it. It’s very spiritual. You’re touching your mind, you’re touching your body and you’re touching your heart, and that’s what we teach, that God is in the heart.”

Yoga mats, DVDs and other items will be available at the DVD launch party, but Porter said the biggest reason is, “because yoga is very moving and the thought of doing it to live music is really a neat concept.”

For information on Christ-centered yoga or on the DVD, visit www.yoitsyoga.com.