

Sept. 15: Be the Difference' yoga event

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Ahwatukee Foothills resident Elena Porter found her Christ-centered yoga program so well received in the Valley that she has created a DVD to further promote the practice.

Porter, together with fellow teacher Rosie Gonzalez, will launch the DVD, titled "Hope," at a community event Saturday, Sept. 15, at Mountain Park Community Church.

All profits from the DVD, priced at \$19.95, will go to local charities.

"When you need hope, you go to God for hope, but what about you being hope to others?" Porter asked.

The certified yoga instructor, who established Yo It's Yoga, the sports ministry program at the church, describes her DVD as an experiential one "so people would feel like they're in my class."

It features 12 people from the Foothills area who demonstrate movements that combine the physical aspects of yoga with the spiritual inspiration of Christian prayer and reflection.

Liz Elston, one such participant, has been attending Porter's program for three years.

"It's an amazing, peaceful experience. There's a roomful of candles; it's dark. . . . It's your own quiet time," Elston said. "You don't have to be a Christian to enjoy this."

Yoga is a spiritual tool - like prayer - that practitioners can customize according to beliefs, values and physical ability. The term "yoga" was adopted by Hindu and other traditions as a description of the path to spiritual growth. Yoga literally means to yoke, or to become joined or linked.

Porter states in her Web site, yoitsyoga.com, "When we practice Christian yoga, we celebrate the act of emptying, dying to self, through the subjection of our minds, bodies, and spirits to the authority of Jesus Christ. We take up the yoke (or yoga!) of Christ, becoming closer to God in our hearts and healthier in the bodies He gave us."

For Elston, the yoga is a "bonus."

"You do walk away with a sense of peace. I think it has brought me closer to God," she said.

The theme for Saturday's live music and yoga event is "Be the Difference."

"People talk about making a difference, like in poverty or in not hurting people," Porter said. "We talk about needing a difference, but what about being the difference?"

Among the charities and non-profits represented at the event are A Cord of Hope, Heart to Honduras, Neighborhood Ministries and Weekend Missions.

Porter's goal is to bring awareness to these organizations.

The church band will also play and local vocalists will sing at the event.

The yoga portion is a 60-minute class to the accompaniment of the live music. Participants are encouraged to bring a yoga mat or towel and water.