

History-Rev 1/2024

## HISTORY OF HATHA YOGA CLUB

### **1980's-1999 - Marionette and Mountain View**

Looking back to the late 1980's an idea of a yoga club was in many Sun Citians' heads. Within a short period of time they found an instructor of yoga and the birth of Happy Yoga Class was conceived.

***Aimee Schwartz*** was credited for being the founder of our club and she was also an instructor. Amy moved to Sun City after living in New York and Florida. She was a certified instructor (1969) from New York. During the first few years the volunteer instructors were Sun Citians and not paid for their instruction. *Ingrid Peterson* was also an instructor in our early growth. Classes were held once a week in the morning and the day of the week was determined by the volunteer instructor's availability. The club grew to about 25+ yogis that met once a week, usually on a Wednesday morning for 2+ hours in one of the smaller rooms at Marinette Recreation Center. For a time a larger room was provided at

the Marinette location. It wasn't long before the interest in the club grew and the members living in Phase I wanted classes to be closer to their homes, thus the move to Mountain View. There the club was called the Mountain View Recreation Center Yoga Club. The classes were usually 2 and 1/2 hours including a 20-minute relaxation savasana; but met only from October through May! Class fees were \$1 then \$2 and annual dues of \$5.00 were started about this time.

Life at Mountain View: Each December, a Christmas potluck party was held. Funds received from members were divided up and a payment was made to the various instructors based on their sessions they taught. Generous donations were made to the Maintenance Crew at Mountain View for their assistance with building a storage room for the yoga club under the stage, and other courtesies extended to our club. RCSC worked with the new club's officers and also received generous donations from our club.

Members came with blankets, pillows and blinders to their yoga classes, reminding some of being at a slumber party. The club continued to have one class a week and a full class it was, often 40-50 yogis. Instructors were still volunteers but later were paid \$15 for a session. A local newspaper journalist wanted to write about our club but came very late to the class, and just in time to take wonderful pictures of members in their savasana poses, snuggled under blankets, with a few sleeping!

Not everything went smoothly. The board had a constant struggle to find a sound system that would work effectively for our members in the large gymnasium. At this time members were asking for more classes, especially evenings or weekend classes, as many residents were still working. There are growing pains within all endeavors, but a joy and a bonding with yogi members was evident, all while being run by volunteers, board members and monitors. Because of our strong groundwork in our early years as a club, we were able to build on our former successes, and meet the growth of our club.

## **2000-current**

### **2000-2002**

*Caroline Kilgore*, President (2000-2002) During this time the club grew to approximately 150 members. Caroline's Mother-in-law, *Mary Kilgore* was also an involved member. After *Aimee Schwartz* (Founder/Instructor) suffered a stroke, Caroline Kilgore modeled the poses as Aimee gave the guided practice. Aimee was accompanied by her husband on the stage at Mountain View so she could continue providing the passion she so enjoyed. Caroline was a very active member and officer of our club. She also has the honor of being a Rosie the Riveter at the young age of 16!

(Rosie the Riveter is a cultural icon of World War II, representing the women who worked in factories and shipyards during World War II, many of whom produced munitions and war supplies. These women sometimes took entirely new jobs replacing the male workers who were in the military. Rosie the Riveter is used as a symbol of feminism and women's economic power.)

Caroline, at almost 91, was still teaching swimming in our community!

### **2003-2006**

Presidents often served for 3 years, like *Anita Paulson* did in 2003, 2005, 2006.

Guidelines were put in place for the members' comfort. As many members had allergies and were sensitive to perfumes, we had the members who wore fragrances be on one side of the auditorium and everyone else on the other side. It is a huge room, if you've been to a movie at Mountain View you'll know the size we had!

Another concern that was not anticipated, was our 20 minute Savasana which tended to be too long for some to stay involved in the "relaxation" aspect. The pose caused un-yoga-like snickers, snorts, along with puffing exhalations that sounded like a steam engine! Perhaps that is why our savasanas are now approximately 10 minutes long. With so many in attendance (classes were 100+) the instructor could not give enough individual instruction or attention. In the summer months a video was often used for the class. This brought new changes in the number of the classes, times, and locations.

## **2007-2008 Bell Center**

For a short time the club had evening classes at the Bell Recreation Center while still holding day classes at Mountain View. These were very popular classes and the two main instructors were *Frank Cafiero* and *Carlyn Haun*.

*Rhea Talley* was our President 2006, 2007, 2008 where she was very involved in finding new instructors for our club. Rhea shared her knowledge of the RCSC BP12 and made sure our Club's Rules and Regulations were in line.

## **2009-current Sun Dial Recreation Center**

### **2009-2012**

*Helen Tomich* was our President 2009 - 2012. During this period of time we were able to move all of our classes to Sundial, replacing the Stretch and Slim class previously held in our current room. Each year we put in a request to become a Designated Club, we hope that will be achieved soon.

During Helen's presidency, *Carlyn Haun* (instructor) became the liaison between the Board and the

Instructors. This is a new voluntary position on the board and has been very beneficial to both the instructors and the Board.

We started the year 2011 with 6 mat classes, Monday and Wednesday evening and Tuesday - Friday mornings. In the community, Banner Health bought out Sun Health and the chair classes they were offering were discontinued.

As our Sun Citians wanted to have chair classes offered in our club, *Carlyn Haun* received training to instruct "Chair" style of classes. Our Club's first Chair Class was added in August of 2011! Two of the original members were still practicing chair yoga in 2018. Several members are in their 90's and practice regularly!

The traditional yoga practice is performed by standing or from a mat, but since everyone is not able to do these postures from the floor, the need for Chair classes arose. These Chair classes provided an alternative to our traditional yoga and were designed for members with physical limitations,

balance issues, or recovering from a medical procedure. Participants in Chair yoga can improve both their sense of well-being and life with simple stretches and breathing exercises. These classes are followed by a guided relaxation also. This is a great opportunity for our yogis and continues today.

## **2013-2014**

*Peggy Baker* was our President 2013 - 2014. At the end of 2012 we had 349 members in our club!

With the continued growth of our membership the board made the decision to add four early morning classes to alleviate the large class sizes. Window coverings, which were approved by the RCSC, were bought by the club and installed in 2013. This allowed us to have more privacy from the hallway facing windows and eliminated the glare from the exterior windows. The other major improvement to our yoga room was the removal of the old carpet. Our wish was granted by the RCSC and RCSC installed our wood floor at no cost to us!



## **2015-2016**

*Donna Sorensen* was our President 2015 - 2016.

Membership was 549 at the end of 2014.

"Here and now is where yoga begins" - Yoga Sutra 1.0.

The Board reached out to our 7 instructors for workshop topics, and we had excellent topics presented to the board. We selected several 2-hour workshops for our members to benefit from. Past topics have been The Ground Floor, Meditation, Healthy Back-Open Hips, Synergy, Awaken your Chakras to name just a few. *Carlyn Haun*, our Instructors' Liaison, started a monthly meditation circle.

We also trained several monitors (15) to take on new responsibilities, such as signing membership cards, and their title is "Lead Monitor". We are so thankful for our members who volunteer their time for the club.

Our walls were painted during this time and our echo busters were installed in September 2015 (these

helped with the echo in the room) and our white walls were painted new soothing yogi colors. Our Guest Policy was put in place for non-residents and occurs May through October only. Guests may come to a yoga class with a member, and pay a \$10 fee. Membership for our club is now over 550. We have 14 mat classes and 4 chair classes per week.

## **2017**

*Nancy Flann* was our President in 2017, and she was previously a Vice-President for 2 years. Due to Instructor changes, Nancy was involved with recruiting new instructors and continued with a variety of workshops for our members. Our membership continues to grow and we are thankful for our volunteers who monitor and serve on our board. We look forward to an active and rewarding future!

## **2018**

*Mark Foster* was our President in 2018. He became the first male President of our club. During this year, the club's practice space at Sun Dial became a dedicated room of the Club and a sign --

simply saying "YOGA" -- went up by the door. 2018 was a year of growth and records: class attendance topped 15,000 for the first time, with record summer attendance, and year-end membership reached an all-time high of 668. This helped maintain membership (\$5) and class (\$3) prices.

After repeated requests, the mirror covering the room's back was removed and the area painted. Again our workshops were well received and became a year-round feature. Class offerings also expanded with new winter-only-classes: "synergy", "restorative", and "gentle" yoga classes.

## **2019**

*Donna Sorensen* was our President 2019-2020

## **2020-2021**

*Sue Carlson* was our President 2020-2021

## **2022-2023**

*Candy Beutler* was our President 2022-2023

Post Covid times changed many things in our world. As the world and the club recovered from the pandemic closures, and the subsequent hesitation to return to yoga classes, membership in our Hatha Yoga Club was reduced by more than half.

Prior to Covid, our membership was around 800, now in 2022 we had about 300 members. This reduced membership and lack of winter residents resulted in less revenue. For the first time in its history the club faced unprecedented financial challenges.

The Board of Directors made the difficult decision to increase class prices and membership fees. Club fees had remained unchanged at \$3 since 2011. As we all know, a \$3.00 fee for a 75 minute class with the caliber of teachers that this club offers is unheard of. So, effective August 1, 2022 class fees increased from \$3 to \$5 and annual membership fees increased from \$5 to \$10. Chair class 6 week session increased from \$25 to \$30 per session.

The Board remained committed to keeping losses at a minimum with a membership drive. In September 2022 we held our first Open House. It was well attended and immediately gained more than 20 new members.

Also in the fall of 2022 we introduced a new updated web page. Mike Smith, after many years, stepped down as Webmaster. His long support of the club was greatly appreciated. The task was taken on by Candy Beutler with the volunteer help from a member of the Mac Club, Rich Cornwell. Rich initially built the site for us and instructed Candy on how to maintain it. A testament of how the City of Volunteers really works.

**2024-**

*Mary Shoff* was our President 2024-

## Past Presidents:

Aimee Schwartz Founder of our Yoga Club

Aimee Schwartz: Founder of our yoga club and our first instructor

Caroline Kilgore: First President 2000, 2001, 2002, Mountain View

Anita Paulson: President 2003, 2004, 2005

Rhea Talley: 2006, 2007, 2008

Mary Abdoo: 2009 (Presidency completed by Helen Tomich)

Helen Tomich: 2010 - 2012

Peggy Baker: 2013 - 2014

Donna Sorensen: 2015 - 2016

Nancy Flann: 2017

Mark Foster: 2018

Donna Sorensen: 2019-2020

Sue Carlson 2020-2021

Candy Beutler 2022-2024

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