

Poised for growth

Yoga studios on the move

Yoga is coming to Manchester's North End.

Yoga Balance (625-4000, www.yogabalance.info), which has been in Manchester since 2004 and has called several locations home, is now located at 135 Hooksett Road.

Yoga Balance, which used to be located on South Main Street, tripled its studio space with its most recent move, which manager Kate Dube said will make a more permanent home for the studio. She said the new location is elegant and more modern than the studio's previous spaces. The studio will host an official opening ceremony from 4 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 9. The public is welcome to attend and Mayor Ted Gatsas and Sen. Lou D'Allesandro are also expected to attend. Dube said instructors hope to get Gatsas and D'Allesandro to do some yoga. The studio moved earlier this month.

"We were looking for a while to move to a new studio, but we wanted to make sure it was the right space and the right fit for us," Dube said, adding the studio worked with the same designer who created Firefly American Bistrot and Bar in Manchester. "They were able to transform the big space into the perfect area for us," she said.

It was also important to stay in Manchester, Dube said. And the new location offers plenty of parking.

The studio has had a couple ownership changes in the past several years, but that hasn't prevented Yoga Balance from increasing its membership, which Dube estimated was more than 1,000 people. With the proximity to Southern New Hampshire University, Yoga Balance is also looking to stir some interest among students. The studio offers a full array of yoga styles.

Despite the poor economy the last couple years, the yoga industry has held strong and has grown.

"Right now, people are experiencing a lot of stress," Dube said. "About where their careers are going and how they're going to feed their families. I think as well, in this day and age, they want the answers to the questions of who am I and what is our purpose here. What is it that brings happiness? I think in terms of society asking those questions, and with the economic times, more and more people are trying to come to yoga."

Dube said there are about 16 million people actually practicing yoga. They want the calm state of mind and the peacefulness that it provides.

Dube said Concord and Portsmouth have strong yoga followings and Manchester is still sort of discovering yoga. Yoga Balance is trying to target younger people as 15- to 25-year-olds are the biggest growing segment. The studio offers more energetic styles of yoga to appeal to those people.

"Everyone can do yoga," Dube said. "I think some feel like they're not flexible enough, not strong enough, not young enough, not thin enough. It's not about what you can't do. It's about what you can do."

— *Jeff Mucciarone*