

Here and Now Yoga a peaceful presence in Floral Park

By Taylor Herzlich - June 11, 2024



Dina Denis-Paolucci (left) and Michelle Ingkavet Cavanagh (right) are the co-owners of Here and Now Yoga in Floral Park. (Photo by Taylor Herzlich)

Co-owners Michelle Ingkavet Cavanagh and Dina Denis-Paolucci have opened Here and Now Yoga in Floral Park, hoping the studio will become a hub for arts, culture and community bonding in the village.

The two yoga teachers began their careers as dancers before transitioning to yoga. They joined together to open Here and Now Yoga to help boost others' confidence.

Cavanagh said one of her specialties is inversion, or helping people become strong and confident enough to achieve a difficult yoga pose.

"The confidence instilled in them, it's empowering," Cavanagh said. She said her students feel that if they can do a difficult pose, "then I can go ask for a raise. Then I can become CEO of this next company."

Both Cavanagh and Denis-Paolucci said their favorite part of yoga is forming connections with others, which is why the partners decided to open their own studio.

She knew she wanted to open her own studio with a partner, so she turned to Denis-Paolucci, who was her student at the time.

“Because of her dance background, we immediately aligned,” Cavanagh said. “She’s smart. She’s organized. What more do you need?”

Cavanagh and Denis-Paolucci found the Verbena Avenue storefront in January, and since then the two have been busy filling out paperwork and completing small renovations. They secured their [final permit](#) from the village last week.

Floral Park “meets in the middle” and “it’s perfect for us,” Denis-Paolucci said. She lives in Bayside and Cavanagh lives in New Hyde Park.

“The town is really beautiful. There’s a lot to offer,” Denis-Paolucci said.

Cavanagh agreed, saying Floral Park is close to the city but still has a small-town feel and great walkability.

“When I walked down and talked to other business owners, I feel like they’re just so excited to have us as part of the business community,” Cavanagh said.

While owning a storefront may be uncharted territory for Cavanagh and Denis-Paolucci, each said practicing yoga comes naturally.

“Yoga was brought to me,” Denis-Paolucci said.

The Bayside resident was studying dance at Hofstra when she was invited by a friend to a yoga class.

“I first came to it as a somatic practice, as a way to take care of my body that was rehearsing and dancing,” she said. “It was just a great way to build strength and flexibility and care for myself.”

But after an eye-opening retreat upstate, Denis-Paolucci said she began to appreciate yoga’s spirituality.

Cavanagh has a similar story. A trained dancer since childhood, she was always interested in the arts. In her mid-20s, Cavanagh practiced martial arts and said she used yoga to warm up for her martial art classes.

Both Cavanagh and Denis-Paolucci said yoga became most prevalent in their lives during their pregnancies, both for the lessened impact on their bodies and the mental clarity yoga provided.

"It became a great way to integrate wellness, mindfulness, a whole health being as a parent," Cavanagh said.

In the years that followed, both earned their yoga instructor certifications.

And Cavanagh said she has even been able to use yoga as a tool in her parenting style, especially since her 12- and 15-year-old children are "in the thick of social media."

"It's not natural to be inundated constantly with messages," she said. "When I try to get them to be just with themselves and their thoughts, then they become much more nicer people. They become more creative and innovative and have time to just be themselves instead of being influenced by someone else's message constantly."

Cavanagh and Denis-Paolucci are ready to invite any and all local residents into Here and Now Yoga, whether they are newcomers who prefer "sitting yoga" in chairs, nearby employees who want to take a quick yoga class during their lunch break or artists with their own interests aside from yoga.

"Michelle and I have this artistic background, and that's why it was important we have it as an arts collective, because we do have a broader vision of bringing performance and live art here in this space," Denis-Paolucci said.

The two teachers are currently focused on yoga classes, but aspire to host poetry slams, writing workshops, dance performances, hand drumming, comedy improv sessions and more.

TAGS

Dina Denis-Paolucci

Here and Now Yoga

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