

What's Up with Wellness



VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 1

The Wellness Initiative

FALL 2007



Today, kids in school are pulled from one urgent input to another—from cell phone to email, Palm Pilot to iPods—they are forced to mold their analog bodies to the digital age. The sheer volume of information they are bombarded with keeps them in a state of physiological arousal.

The Wellness Initiative attempts to help students and their teachers and families find balance in the reality of their chaotic lives. Lessons on breathing, posture, focus, equanimity, choices, flexibility, and teamwork all serve our mission to improve the holistic well-being of children (and society as a whole). My wish, as we start this new school year, is for schools to value

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Help Us Rise to the Challenge!

The Wellness Initiative received a \$40,000 Challenge Grant from an anonymous individual donor and needs to raise that amount by October 1 to meet the challenge. Every dollar donated up to \$40,000 will be matched by this donor. This \$80,000 will allow us to deliver our yoga, stress reduction, and nutrition programs to the low-income students in Denver and Boulder schools who most need them.

Our 2007–08 programs include classes for pregnant and parenting teen moms, low-income and minority elementary, middle, and high school students, immigrant students who struggle to learn English while earning a high school diploma and thousands of kids enrolled in an online charter school who are confronted with tremendous stress and life challenges. TWI programming helps all these children, and their teachers, learn tools to improve their mental, emotional, and physical health.

Help us help those less fortunate by visiting www.wellnessinitiative.org to donate. You can sponsor one or more



classes, help us buy equipment, materials or just make a general donation. At press time, we are almost a quarter of the way to meeting the challenge. Stretch your hearts and wallets so more children can live healthier lives!

TEACHER PROFILE

Crystal Hinton

Crystal Hinton began practicing yoga in 1997, quickly finding that her practice was leading her to a new and challenging career. Since 2003, Hinton has been studying Anusara Yoga, developed by John Friend, working her way toward certification. She currently spends her time teaching private and public classes at Samadhi Yoga Center, and serving as a volunteer for the Chanda Plan Foundation, an organization she co-founded as a means to create holistic care for the disabled community. During the summer, she also teaches yoga for Summer Scholars, a non-profit that reaches out to at-risk children.

Bringing yoga to youth in the schools was a natural next step for Hinton who feels that by bringing yoga to children, “we’re passing it on at such an important time of their lives, [while] witnessing each child discover more about themselves.” And at the school level, she continues, you have the opportunity to reach more children.



Certified through YogaEd., Hinton is currently teaching for TWI at Lake Middle School and assisting researchers Michelle Vanchu-Orosco and Michelle Fury with the first TWI Pilot Study, studying the effects of the yoga and wellness program on the mental and physical well-being of the students. (See full story below.)

Excited to be a part of TWI and the first pilot study, Hinton also adds that beyond the physical and mental benefits, she hopes to “bring to each student the encouragement to live from their heart.”

CLASS PROFILE

Lake Middle School, Denver

This fall, The Wellness Initiative will be conducting its first pilot study examining the effects of the TWI yoga program on 6–8th grade youth at Lake Middle School in Denver.

As part of the program, all 6–8th graders will receive one yoga class per



Wayne Carter, head of the PE department practicing tree!

week, based on the YogaEd. curriculum, which focuses on breathing, postures, relaxation, and visualizations to enhance children’s physical and mental well-being.

Michelle Vanchu-Orosco, a University of Denver PhD candidate is the lead investigator for the study; Michelle Fury, MA, who works on the Ponzio Creative Arts Therapy Team at the Children’s Hospital, and is also a TWI instructor, is assisting Vanchu-Orosco with the study and will be teaching half the classes. Crystal Hinton will be teaching the remaining classes to the students. In order to track the student’s mental well-being, the pilot will be testing their attention span and stress

levels utilizing the Perceived Stress Scale. They will also be testing their physical well-being through flexibility tests, balance, and breathing capacity. Vanchu-Orosco, Fury, and Executive Director, Debbie Huttner, are very excited about the pilot study, and especially about the prospect of bringing yoga to the entire 6–8th grade population at Lake Middle School. Says Fury, “I’m excited to see these kids discover that doing something good for themselves can be fun, exciting, and theirs for a lifetime. Yes, we want to measure the immediate effects of yoga on children’s mental and physical well-being. But I think it is the possibility of yoga practice to change kids’ relationship with themselves and others to then become happy, healthy, and aware adults that excites me the most.”



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Schools 2007-8

- Colfax Elementary
- Columbine Elementary
- Creekside Elementary
- Peak to Peak Elementary
- Mesa Elementary
- Northridge Elementary
- Lake Middle School
- Fairview High School
- Florence Crittenton School
- New America Schools
- New Vista High School

Get in Touch!

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Snack Attack Nutty Butter Balls

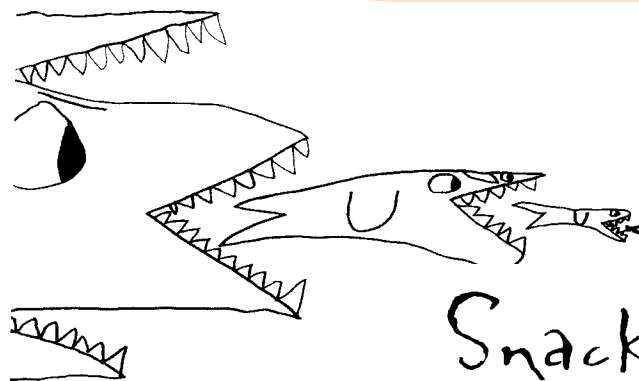
Yield: 36 Balls

Recipe reprinted with permission from *Lunch Crunch* by Mary F. Taylor and Catrine Turillon, 1997 The Yoga Workshop.

- Ingredients
- 1 1/4 cups raisins
 - 1 cup creamy nut butter
 - 2 1/2 tbs. nonfat milk or dairy-free protein powder
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon

Preparation:

1. Finely chop the raisins. Place them in a mixing bowl and stir in the nut butter and powdered milk or protein powder as well as the cinnamon. Mix well. Add additional milk or protein powder if the mixture is extremely sticky. Form into balls and chill, covered.



Snack Attack

Letter from the Executive Director continued from page 1

this mission in the same way schools value high test scores or athletic excellence. I believe this will serve children (and our environmentally and politically imbalanced world) in the future.

Last but not least, I'd like to welcome Jennifer Wert who recently joined TWI as our first full-time Deputy Director. Her hard work and the dedication of our teaching staff and Board will continue to be invaluable in helping us positively impact the health and well-being of Colorado youth!

Debbie Hutter



yoga JOURNAL

Saturday Afternoon Special Event: Yoga for the Whole Family (2:00pm - 2:45pm)

Debbie Huttner, Executive Director of The Wellness Initiative

Yoga is for families! Explore relating in new ways as you move, breathe, play, partner, and explore teamwork together through yoga. Open to all ages, extended family members, and caregivers. Free and open to the public.

12th Annual **Colorado Conference**
September 23-30, 2007 | Estes Park, Colorado

DONOR PROFILE

Lululemon Athletica

Lululemon Athletica, a yoga-inspired, athletic apparel company, is dedicated to giving back to the community, and since arriving in Colorado in the fall of 2006, they've played a role in the growth of The Wellness Initiative.

From August 30th–September 6th, Lululemon Cherry Creek is holding a clothing and mat drive to gather gently worn/used clothing for children ages 7–17. The clothing will be donated to the children of TWI low-income partner schools. Says Debbie Huttner, executive director, “these clothes will give them something to wear to the yoga classes and hopefully to keep “moving in” in the future.”

On September 6th, from 6–8 p.m. join Lululemon and TWI for a sneak-preview of the fall styles. Appetizers will be served and 10% of the proceeds will be donated to TWI. In addition, on September 8th, Lululemon is hosting a fashion show, and 10% of proceeds from anything purchased that day will also be donated to TWI.

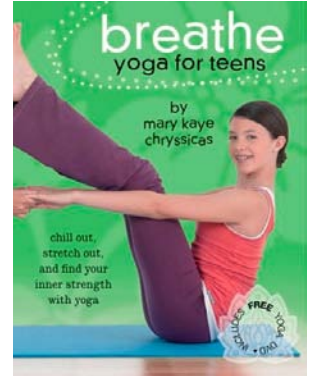
Says Lululemon Colorado Community Coordinator, Elaine Waterman, “Education on nutrition, stress management and yoga can help students deals with everyday pressures in a calmer, more effective manner. With the support given to parents and teachers, TWI created a network that can change children’s lives as well as the world they live in. We are happy and proud to partner with The Wellness Initiative in any way and look forward to seeing the great things their students can achieve!”

BOOK REVIEW

breathe: yoga for teens

DK Publishing
By Mary Kaye Chryssicas

The teenage years can be especially challenging, with hormones fluctuating and bodies growing and changing. Perhaps that is why teens take to yoga so well: it offers an oasis of calm, or, as Mary Kaye Chryssicas writes, a way to “chill out, stretch out, and find your inner strength.”



Chryssicas’ new book, *breathe: yoga for teens*, is a great resource, filled with useful sidebar information, and colorful photographs of teens practicing yoga. The book is divided into 13 sections, beginning with a brief history of yoga. Chryssicas also includes a list of basic yoga tenets, including *santosh*, or acceptance: “Accept who you are and those around you. Try not to judge others by the way they talk, what they wear, or who they spend time with. Everyone deserves a chance.”

In the following sections of the book, Chryssicas introduces yoga postures. She moves from a gentle warm-up to “confidence builders,” including warrior postures and lunges. She ends the book with “restful poses” and meditation techniques.

The final section of the book is an interactive “yoga journal,” perfect for teens. Chryssicas provides a q&a page so that teens can write about their yoga experiences. One of the questions asks: “Have you ever had a relationship that was stressful? How did your body and mind react to stress? List your symptoms.” These types of questions can help teens become more conscious of their stress and teach them how to manage it. *Breathe: yoga for teens* is a great guide for teenagers, providing an introduction to skills that will benefit them for a lifetime.

—Ashley Simpson Shires

