



USHA YOGA FOUNDATION

BRINGING YOGA TO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

PROJECTS WE SUPPORT

Mysore, India, Survivors of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking, Nancy Yu

At present, we take care of 95 rescued children with the intention of protecting them from the clutches of the flesh and sex trade. We provide shelter, education and skills development training to make them independent and self-reliant. I teach yoga to small girls under 12 years of age at 7am 5 times a week, and hold self-practice class every weekday for teenage and college girls and every weekend for the older boys.

I am inspired by the lifelong renewal of the body and mind that the yoga practice cultivates. I am constantly amazed by the energy, determination and unbounded love that exudes from these children. Some have lost their voice or are depressed. Some are so deeply traumatized that they are very sensitive to touch. Some measure their self-worth on their past experience or how much attention they get. I just want them to realize that each of them is special, capable of being loved and finding deep joy. I know that yoga is transformative in this way.

Temple of Humanity, Khaknar, India, Yoga in the Schools, Narendra Kumar

Yoga is now compulsory in primary and secondary schools in Madhya Pradesh, India's largest state. Yet, most school teachers do not practice or teach yoga! The Khaknar tribal block in Madhya Pradesh has over 150 primary schools and 35 secondary schools. The NGO, Temple of Humanity, is sponsoring the first of a series of yoga teacher trainings in Khaknar this Feb, 2009. Yogis worldwide are welcome to apply to the Usha Foundation and join these efforts...

The Community Head Injury Service, Aylesbury, Bucks, U.K., Dr. Giles Yeates

I am a clinician in the UK working with adults who have sustained an acquired brain injury (ABI) from a traumatic event (e.g., road traffic accident), stroke and other causes. I am also a yoga practitioner and work within a multi-disciplinary team of other clinical neuropsychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, medics, occupational therapists and vocational consultants. Our team aims to provide a holistic community response to ABI, integrating physical, psychological, family and community perspectives.

Following ABI, survivors often struggle to cope with ongoing physical (pain, altered sensation and mobility restrictions), emotional (depression, anxiety, anger), cognitive (difficulties remembering, thinking, concentrating) family (relationship breakdown, divorce, separation, isolation) and wider social restrictions. We are constantly seeking to develop new initiatives in our clinical service and thanks to Usha, we are keen to establish a regular yoga session for the people who use our service.

Los Angeles, California, USA; Woman's Shelter, Anonymous

Almost twenty years ago, my family and I escaped Vietnam on a boat built to ship rice that instead carried 180 refugees out of present day Ho Chi Minh City. For two years, we lived in the refugee camps of Malaysia and the Philippines. A transition into a life free of violence began

when I discovered yoga, not only as an outlet, but a way of believing and living. I now help underserved and economically disadvantaged women achieve self-sufficiency and inner peace. With each day I realize their need for assistance beyond economics. It is a battle of mental and physical strength. It is also a battle that can be won through unity of body and mind.

WE-ACTx Yoga Rwanda, Yoga for Trauma Recovery

WE-ACTx is an international medical organization that works to bring HIV and other medical care and treatment to genocide rape survivors and their families. The organization is now providing Yoga classes to HIV-positive women and children. The classes offer traumatized women and their children the chance to not only use and regain control over their bodies, but to find some equilibrium and peace of mind.

Yoga instructors are teaching a wide range of people, including a large and enthusiastic co-op of seamstresses and the patients of Icyuzuzu, a WE-ACTx-run clinic, as well as some of the 300 HIV-positive orphans who meet on weekends and WE-ACTx's own staff in Kigali.

Baltimore, Maryland, USA; Inner-city School, Juvenile Detention Center, Elana Omari,

I pray that my classes in inner city schools will help to decrease the number of violent acts amongst teenagers that occur too often in Baltimore City. The majority of youth get into mischief due to lack of schools, neighbor recreations centers, no nearby parks or even playgrounds. Once you learn and practice yoga, before you know it, you have participated in a self-healing process. This powerful healing puts you in a place to create something meaningful in your life.

Norwich, England; Yoga for Anxiety and Depression, Marie-Claire Jenkins,

Three years ago I was diagnosed Bipolar II (manic depression). Years of medication made me very sick. After one year of regular yoga practice, I was described as calm, confident, self-sufficient, and strong mentally. I no longer needed doctors. I now take immense pleasure in supporting others who experience depression, anxiety, stress and other emotional issues. As people experience yoga, they see that so much more is available to them. My students report feeling a sense of grounded calm, greater security and possibility, a more positive outlook and a sense of community after having felt isolated for years.

Ellie Kaufman, Chicago, Illinois, Eating Disorders through Theatre Company

I do not know any woman who has not dealt with body image issues in her past. I want to live in a world where girls do not start dieting at the age of ten and where the energy of young people is not spent obsessing over numbers, but rather on figuring out what they love to do, and finding ways of changing the world for the better by doing it.

Usha Yoga is a registered tax exempt 501-c3 organization, supporting projects worldwide.

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