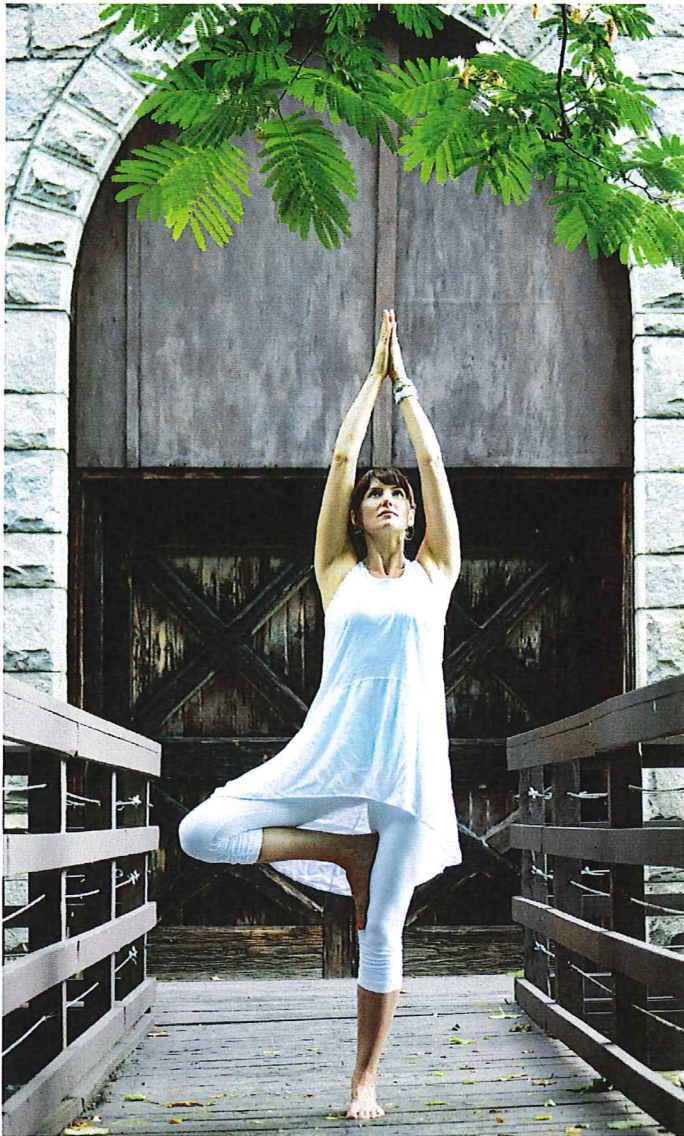


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Dana Walters

Vinyasa teacher's Richmond, Virginia nonprofit brings yoga to the people



After a friend's death five years ago, Dana Walters was inspired to manifest her late friend's dream and cofound the nonprofit Project Yoga Richmond. Walters studied with yoga greats including Rolf Gates, Noah Levine, Judith Lasater, Nikki Myers, Kathryn Budig, and Seane Corn, and keeps her personal practice mindful and steady, dedicating the project's donation-based classes to people who can't otherwise afford it. Yoga for all? That's a mantra worth repeating.

You were called an agent of positive community change by *Style Weekly*. Why?

Probably because I caught their eye through Project Yoga Richmond, which I launched with five friends. We offer donation-based studio classes, plus free and low-cost yoga to children with autism, adults with different developmental challenges, youth in juvenile detention facilities, people in addiction recovery, seniors, and teens in city schools. We roll out about 1,300 mats each month through our classes.

What's a key takeaway from your practice?

I used to have a more-is-more mentality: If a twist felt good, more twist must feel a lot better. But I learned that just because you can move deeper doesn't mean you should in that moment. Now I teach that more is sometimes fun but not necessarily the best choice every time.

What's your favorite yoga pose?

Up Dog. Typically it's a transitional pose, but I pause in it. It's super grounding, requires core strength and inner consciousness, and requires me to open up and soften.

What moved you from being interested in yoga to being passionate about yoga?

That tipping point came when I shifted from teaching poses to teaching people. I credit Rolf Gates with that. He showed me that an understanding of and balance within the chakras ultimately informs how we are in the world. That was a powerful teaching. So now I try to encourage individual inquiry. I try to help others learn that knowing the poses is merely a path toward knowing themselves. JOELLE HANN

in the DETAILS

Walters shares a few more of her favorite things.

Snack

I pop the top off an avocado, take out the pit, add a bit of sea salt, and scoop it out like ice cream.

Color

Our front door at home is turquoise. My mat is turquoise. My watch is too.

Musician

Elena Brower told me about Garth Stevenson. For class, his music is both grounding and soaring.

Pets

I have three senior rescue dogs: two poodles and a Maltese. They remind me to breathe.

Escape

Running or walking on the eight-plus miles of Richmond's city trails that surround the James River.