



Photo by Julia Bluff

Cathy Weiss demonstrates some moves taught to pole fitness students at Yoga Flirt in Atascadero.

## Yoga Flirt offers good workout

Julia Bluff  
STAFF WRITER

**T**his is about feeling good inside your body and nothing else," said Cathy Weiss, CEO and founder of Yoga Flirt, while gesturing to the two towering poles anchored in the center of her Atascadero studio, Yoga at the Vines.

Launched in November, Yoga Flirt is the first studio on the Central Coast to offer pole dance fitness classes. Specifically geared for women, the classes combine sensuality and muscle-sculpting exercise in a way that often inspires a complete mind and body transformation in its students.

Carefully shrouded from the prying eye by curtains and bamboo room separators, Weiss said that Yoga Flirt is not about performance in front of an audience, but rather it is a intimate means for every woman — regardless of her age, shape or size — to discover who she truly is and learn to be comfortable in her own skin.

"It really becomes moving meditation and it becomes feeling your authentic self on the inside," she said of the exercise form. "It is more empowering; it is more like you are uncovering a part of yourself that you have hidden for a long time. The women start to feel really good about themselves and then that is an enhancement to their relationships, because when you are feeling good then your relationship is better."

Weiss' passion for pole dancing/pole fitness started in an unlikely place. A yoga enthusiast and former-elementary school-teacher, she first stumbled across the modern fitness craze after watching an episode

of "Oprah," featuring pole dance fitness enthusiast Sheila Kelly. The idea immediately appealed to Weiss and the then-L.A. resident signed up for classes to try her hand — and the rest of her body — at the pole. She took the classes for two years straight and like many other women, felt a sort of transformation taking place.

For the first time, Kelly said that she felt comfortable with her own petite frame, and not because the workouts had changed her body — though they had — but because the exercises almost forced her to embrace things about her body that she had formerly considered flaws.

"Even more than yoga for me, [pole fitness] was the first time I was ever really comfortable with my body, with my size," she said. "[The insecurities] melted away. It is a huge internal transformation, as well as physical because it really changes your body shape."

After moving from Los Angeles to the Central Coast, the certified Yoga instructor founded Yoga at the Vines in October of 2007. Though initially focusing solely on Hatha-style yoga, Weiss was inspired to create Yoga Flirt after offering a single introductory pole fitness class at her studio a little over a month and a half ago.

"It was a huge hit," she said. "The women loved feeling flirty and sexy while getting a killer workout. Everyone wanted more, regular classes."

Weiss' own extensive background in fitness allowed her to combine the meditative properties of yoga with the uninhibited femininity of pole dancing in a truly unique way.

"Yoga tends to be very linear and very masculine," she said. "What we are doing with Yoga Flirt is softening it and making

it a little bit curvier and a little bit more feminine. It is more organic movement."

Yoga Flirt classes are anchored around a principal of female connectively. Class sizes of just eight women per course breed an intimate atmosphere of friendship, comfort and support in which every single woman's unique personality can be reflected during the workout. In addition to being fun, the pole dancing also provides clients with a deceptively intense workout, toning especially the arms and core muscles.

"It is deceptive because the movement is very slow," Weiss said. "You have never moved so slow in your life and yet you walk away like drenched in sweat; you totally got a workout."

Yoga Flirt currently offers two courses a week, one on Mondays from 7:15 to 8:45 p.m. and another on Saturdays from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Sessions last for six-weeks and are priced at \$108. An Intro to Yoga Flirt class is being offered on Saturday, Jan. 17, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. and is priced at \$35. The classes are open to all women over the age of 18 of any shape, size or background. The only requirement to take the class is an open mind, Weiss said.

"I am so excited to bring something new and fresh here," she said. "We just teach something so very different here; I would say you have got to try it at least once before you can make up your mind about it."

For more information on Yoga Flirt, visit [www.yogaflirt.com](http://www.yogaflirt.com). For more information on the yoga courses offered by Yoga in the Vines, visit [www.yoga.inthevines.com](http://www.yoga.inthevines.com) or call 835-1725. Yoga in the Vines is located in Atascadero at 7075 Morro Road, off Highway 41.



Submitted Photo

Kermit King Elementary School fourth-grader Gabrielle Medina serves as a volunteer bell ringer for the Salvation Army. This holiday season, in addition to serving as a bell ringer, Medina sold homemade baked goods to raise money to buy toys that she donated to the Salvation Army's toy drive.

## Paso girl lends a helping hand for the holidays

Julia Bluff  
STAFF WRITER

**F**or Paso Robles resident Gabrielle Medina, all it took was a little bit of ingenuity and compassion to brighten the holidays for dozens of children around the North Coast.

A fourth-grader at Kermit King Elementary School, Medina pioneered a project aimed at providing local at-need children with toys to unwrap under the tree at Christmas. In between a busy schedule of academics and All-Star soccer practice, the 9-year-old took over her grandmother's kitchen for two evenings, baking delicious, homemade cookies and brownies to sell around her neighborhood in an effort to raise money for the Salvation Army's toy drive.

"I love to bake and I felt bad for kids that can't have presents and I felt good that I am fortunate enough to have them," she said of what inspired the idea.

From start to finish, every aspect of the holiday project was solely Medina's creation, from brainstorming to baking to selling. She even fashioned a festive carrying case in which to showcase her brightly wrapped, homemade holiday goodies to neighbors. At just \$1 for a package of two cookies and \$2 per sugar-topped brownie, the decadent pastries were priced to sell — and sell they did. After knocking door-to-door around her neighborhood on two separate days, Medina had amassed a sum of around \$100 with which to buy toys.

"It was just really heartwarming to know that she is very compassionate towards other children and wanted to do something for somebody else," said Cindy, Medina's mother, who was pleased to see her daughter take such a proactive role in spreading the holiday joy. "It was really nice that she was thinking of other people."

True to her independent spirit, Medina personally picked out each toy that she donated, buying as many items as she could with the money that she raised. On Dec. 15, Medina dropped off those toys to the Salvation Army office in Paso Robles.

The majority of those toys were gifted to at-need children in the area, but a few of the softest stuffed animals were set aside by officials at the Salvation Army for the Paso

Robles Police Department, to be kept in the back of squad cars and given to young children during distressing situations, such as fires. The gift was much appreciated by Beth Quaintance Salvation Army SLO County Service Extension Representative.

"Children like Gabrielle are rare and she is personally a delight when you meet her," she wrote in an e-mail.

Hoping to do more for the organization, Medina also signed up as a volunteer for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign. While her parents looked on, Medina rang the bell for two hours in an effort to bring in more money for the Salvation Army. Despite foregoing two hours of a holiday party she was set to attend, the bell-ringing experience was a rewarding one, Medina said.

"I was actually better off ringing the bell than I was being at the party," she said.

Medina's parents noted that it is just part of their daughter's personality to want to give back, but that didn't lessen the pride they felt at their her willingness to be of service to the community.

"It made me feel really good," said her father, Daniel. "She is willing to think of kids that don't have as much and willing to give; it makes me feel real proud of her. She is going to be a great, great person in society."

It seems through the experience, Medina also learned a valuable lesson — that giving is often its own reward.

"I learned that if you are more fortunate than others that you should give and not be selfish and that you should be more giving and be more generous because there are people who can't even have things," she said.

Both Medina's parents and Quaintance hope that the fourth-grader might inspire other children her age get involved, do something selfless and help others that might be less fortunate.

"I think that when you give back, it is just such a good feeling and until you experience it, until you do it yourself — that is when you get that feeling," Cindy said. "It is such a good feeling to know there are all these kids that got these gifts and their lives are a little bit better that day."

Medina is already planning on ways to improve her baking project in order to help even more children during the 2009 holiday season.

## Lions Club presents sportsmanship awards

Tuesday's *Paso Robles Press* featured a photo, pictured at right, and information about the Lions Club fall sportsmanship awards. We inadvertently published the list of 2007 fall winners, which was incorrect. Below is the list of 2008 winners by sport.

Fall 2008 Lions Club Sportsmanship Award winners: Lauren Redburg, varsity girls volleyball; Jennifer Hernandez, JV girls volleyball; Katie Knupper, freshman girls volleyball; Evan Norton, varsity boys water polo; Forest Erwin, JV boys water polo; Kim Bergin, girls golf; Jose Lopez, varsity football; Hunter Gay, JV football; Carson Gorman, freshman football; Maddison Coons, varsity girls tennis; Katie Farley, JV girls tennis; Loryn Bedell, varsity girls cross country; Cameron Kerr, varsity boys cross country; Zander Souza, JV cross country.



Submitted Photo

Student athletes from Paso Robles High School received special honor from the Paso Robles Lions Club for their sportsmanship.