

## Until the Guru Comes New Year 2006

By Juliet C. Verdi

It is the New Year 2006 and many people around the world are trying to put their New Year's resolutions into practice. The most popular resolution is to exercise more and to take better care their mental and physical health. In the world of Fitness, Health and Sports Clubs, Gyms and Spas, January is the busiest and most profitable month. After all the gorging, stuffing, drinking and celebrations have shown up on bathroom scales, the multitudes flock en masse to the nearest establishments offering a way to remove those excess gained pounds and improve their all around good health. So it is a no-brainer for many people to decide to take-up a mind-body regimen like Yoga. In this vain I think it is the perfect time to begin to explore the different types of Yoga Studios and schools in the Maryland area. There are many good teachers teaching in many places but for the timid and unsure who feel more secure in an established setting with a large enough group of people around them for either protection and/or camouflage, I decided to interview the/owners/Gurus of some of the most popular Yoga studios. "Unity Woods Yoga Center" is one of the largest Yoga Studios in the Metropolitan Area. John Shumacher the owner/originator of "Unity Woods" was kind enough to fit me into his busy schedule for phone interview. I heard quite allot about him from various students I had taught in various clubs and was curious to speak to him. He told me he originally started Yoga at thirty-five years of age while he was working as a musician. He had two loves Music and Yoga. He played the Drums, the Flute and Piano. When he was forty he decided to follow his greatest passion, Yoga. In the beginning Mr. Shumaker studied and practiced from books ("Light On Yoga" B.K.S. Iyengar) until 1981 when he met and studied with Mr. Iyengar. John now sixty years old with four grandchildren claims he is as flexible as ever but says his endurance is not quite as good as it used to be. (I've heard differently from some of his students).

I asked Mr. Shumaker what he feels places Unity Woods Yoga Center above other Studios and he said their teachers have at least one to two decades of teaching experience each. He said "because there is no set sequence to the classes, classes can be arranged towards the needs of the students. Unity Woods Yoga Classes give the Yoga student an opportunity to acquire the information and experience necessary to build a safe and effective practice."

"Unity Woods Yoga Centers" are in Bethesda, Woodley Park, Tenleytown, Arlington and St. Columbia.

Classes are either nine or twelve week sessions, sixteen dollars a class (\$144.00 for a nine class session and \$192.00 for a twelve class session) You you can pay a drop-in fee of \$20.00. If you are not sure if Yoga and/or Unity Woods are right for you Unity Woods offers a few free trial classes so check with their website [www.unitywoods.com](http://www.unitywoods.com).

On a closing note I asked if Unity Wood's classes played music in class and was told the students were encouraged to concentrate on their breathing and their Asanas (Posture). Since it is the New Year I am going to practice slight modification of the Dandasana (Staff Posture.) You can join me if you like. I am going to do this Asana in front of the fireplace while listening to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." "Dandasana" Sit on the floor with your legs stretched in front of you. Make sure you are sitting on your sit bones (if ecessary separate the cheeks of your buttocks with your hands). Keep your thighs, knees, ankles and feet together. Palms are on the floor, finger pointing forward. Lift your chest and straighten your arms and lock your elbows.

*This is where I make the modification. Instead of locking both elbows I lift my right hand and pick –up a glass of my favorite fermented organic grape drink, breathe,relax and contemplate Nervana.*

## Namiste