



COURTESY OF COMMUNITY YOGA

Amy Schneider of Community Yoga works with students to do an asana, or body position, called reverse warrior. Founders Amy Schneider and Suzi Rassmussen say "yoga is so much more than a practice on your mat."

Yoga center stretches to include good will

Fundraising efforts key to its mission to be part of community

In December 2004, when Community Yoga first began, the name was well chosen.

Yes, you can take yoga classes in the space in Cornelius at 20823 N. Main St., Suite 117. But most important, the teachers and students have established and celebrate a sense of community.

Community Yoga's "goal is to produce an environment where all are welcome and where they can come for the 'stretch' and leave with much more."

Founders Amy Schneider and Suzi Rassmussen want to make a difference, believing that "yoga is so much more than a practice on your mat." During the first week they opened, they took "love donations," as Schneider called them, raising \$1,000 for Our Towns Habitat for Humanity.

Community Yoga has offered scholarships and encouraged students to dedicate money to scholarships. It has given free yoga lessons to the people at Ada Jenkins Center, Solomon

House in Huntersville, Habitat and other fundraising organizations. It held a "love month" for the Davidson College campus and gave free yoga classes to students, faculty and staff. It even participated in a Habitat build.



Lisa Daidone

Its most recent goals are to raise money for both Shephards Fold, an outreach organization bringing music to teens and young adults with special needs, and the Free Clinic of Our Towns at the Ada Jenkins Center, a medical clinic for people with no medical insurance who live in northern Mecklenburg County or southern Iredell County.

Amy's mother-in-law recently needed the assistance of the clinic. It's "a wonderful outreach program helping our community," Schneider said. When Schneider contacted Kay Newsom, the clinic manager, Schneider told Kay, "I'm not promising you much money." Kay's response was that "anything is helpful," and Community Yoga was "so thoughtful for doing this."

Schneider had an idea for a unique fundraiser. She tele-

phoned her friend, David Bryan, the keyboard player for rock band Bon Jovi. Through David, Schneider was able to purchase two tickets for today's show at the Greensboro Coliseum.

But Schneider got more than two tickets to a concert featuring Bon Jovi and Daughtry, from "American Idol" last season. David was also able to get backstage passes. By selling these tickets and passes, Schneider wanted to raise as much money as she possibly could and donate it all - minus her costs for the tickets - to the Free Clinic of Our Towns.

Now that Schneider had something special to use to raise money, she had to figure out what to do next. "Since I have never done anything like this, I spoke to as many people as possible to figure out the avenue to take," Schneider said.

She tried eBay, but to use its services she had to sign up for too much and also had to pay eBay a percentage of the money she made. Schneider tried calling a local radio station, which was really nice but couldn't help.

Schneider said, "I talked to everyone I know, asking people, 'What do you think?'" to get ideas to raise money. While she was still trying to come up with a strategy, Amy's phone rang. The

woman offered Schneider \$1,000. In less than 24 hours, Schneider had sold her tickets and passes for \$1,000 and made lots of money for the Free Clinic of Our Towns.

Although it's also dedicated to fundraising, Community Yoga's primary purpose is to promote the peace and calm of yoga. Schneider explained, "We believe in yoga. People should do yoga, wherever."

If a new student is interested in a class and Community Yoga doesn't have that kind of class or something available at that time, the instructors will suggest classes at the Y or other centers that offer it. Schneider said the purpose is not to compete with each other but "to breathe and enjoy."

For more information on Community Yoga, see communityyoga.com, e-mail Schneider at cyyoga@gmail.com, or call 704-491-4749 or 704-579-0935.

To help out or donate to the Free Clinic of Our Towns, call Kay Newsom at 704-896-0471 ext. 116, or e-mail her at kay.newsom@adajenkins.org. The clinic is always in need of volunteers, especially physicians and nurses.

Lisa Daidone lives in Cornelius. Have an item for her? Write: ldaidone@charlotteobserver.com