

Lifestyles

Yoga a complete lifestyle, not a pastime, says business owner who teaches classes at store

By **FANNIE SUNSHINE**
The Champion

For Wendy Sammut, yoga isn't about taking a few classes each week — it's a complete lifestyle.

The owner of Inner Sanctum on Martin Street said she discovered the world of yoga and meditation several years ago.

"I was a young mom and I was feeling exhausted all the time. I read a little bit about yoga and fell into a yoga studio, not knowing what to expect. I remember thinking, 'What am I doing here? Everyone is more flexible than me.' But at the end of the class I felt so relaxed."

Although meditation doesn't play a direct role when practicing yoga, the two are connected, she continued.

"Yoga is physical and meditation is the quieting of the mind. You have to learn to quiet your body down (to meditate) otherwise your mind will be jumping all over the place. It's extremely hard to learn."

To relax, Ms Sammut lies on the floor and concentrates on her breathing, while relaxing the muscles in her face and body.

"I meditate 20 to 40 minutes daily. I close the door, turn off the phone and go into the silence."

Currently, she teaches 12 yoga classes a week in the studio at the rear of her store. Each class is an hour-and-a-half long.

"Anybody at any level can come. I also hold two meditation classes a week with a different instructor."

Ms Sammut credits yoga for her complete change in lifestyle.

"Yoga is a part of you. You learn to increase strength and flexi-

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WENDY SAMMUT

bility over time and practice. It's managed to keep me sane. If I'm in a stressful situation, I sit back, breathe and relax. I like who I am now, where my life is. I find I'm much more relaxed in my day to day life. My energy is good, I have respect for my body. Yoga has changed my life for the better."

She said she does find a lot of people have misconceptions about what yoga is really about.

"People assume they can't sit still because it would drive them crazy, they aren't that flexible and they have no time. Everyone can learn to take time out and relax for a few minutes a day."

If you're new to the practice of yoga, she recommended attending a class instead of buying a how-to book.

"There's a lot of different styles and a lot of different teaching approaches out there. Take one class before you commit and shop around. Learning from a book or video can be hard for beginners because usually the people in the books or videos have practiced yoga for years and the positions come naturally to them. The books are wonderful, but if you don't know what you're doing you can hurt yourself."

Ms Sammut said she believes she's in the best shape of her life thanks to the practice of yoga.

"I hike a bit but I don't do anything but yoga as far as exercise goes. I don't know where I'd be without it."

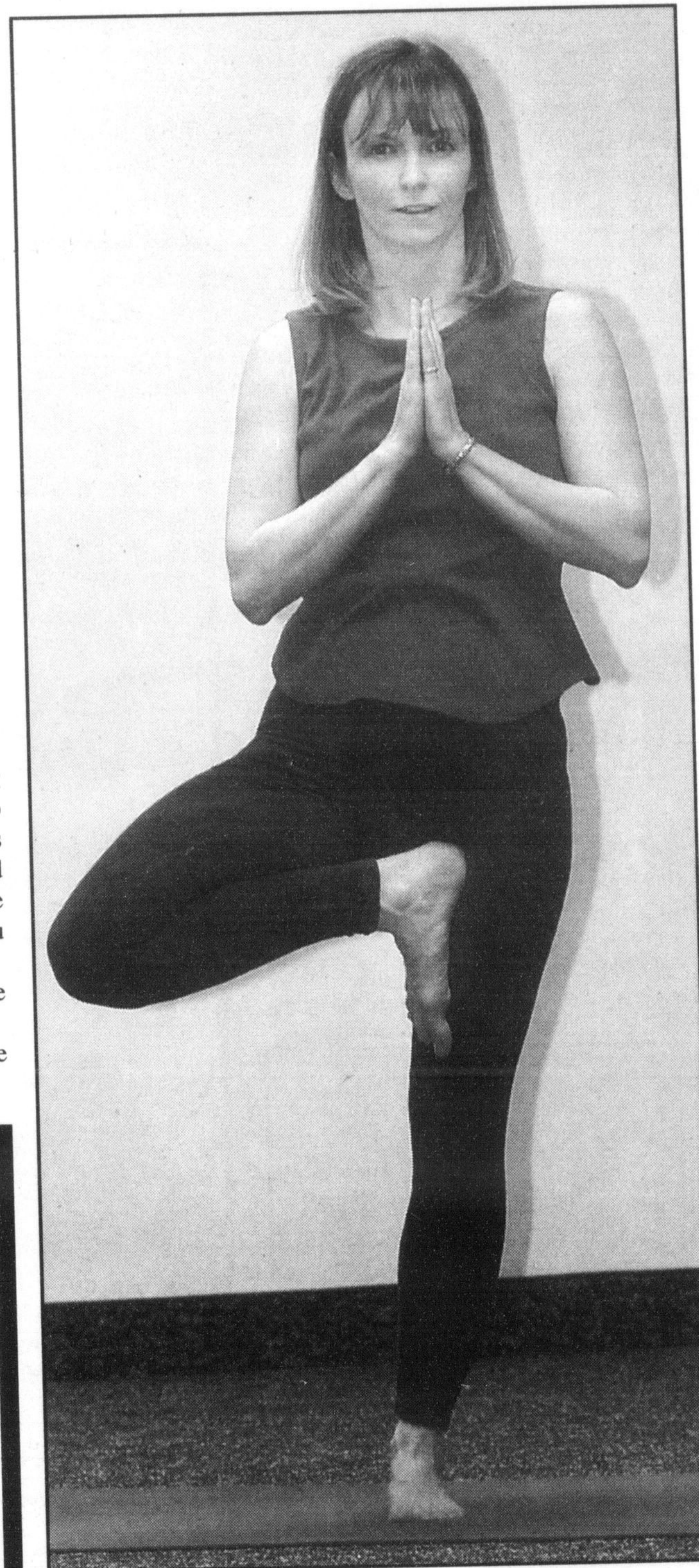


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Local yoga instructor Wendy Sammut shows a position.

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To the Residents of Milton,

After 15 years as a pharmacist at Shoppers Drug Mart, Milton Mall, I will be leaving April 26, 2002 to take a position closer to home so I can spend more time with my family.

I have made many friendships among the staff and customers over the years, and these won't soon be forgotten.

In case I don't get to see you before I leave, farewell and take care.

Sandra Pesce