

Finding Balance at Deep Creek Lake

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Owner/Director, Jennifer Christophel, in an advanced Pilates exercise, hanging splits on the trapeze table.
Inset: Kendra Reynolds on the trapeze table performing hanging pull-ups.



Jennifer and some of her staff, from left: Rickie Rubenstein, Tamy Dugan, Jennifer and Kendra Reynolds.

Deep Creek Lake is all about fun and relaxation. For the past four years, The Balanced Body Studio and Wellness Center has offered an array of classes, services and merchandise to enhance each client's physical fitness and ability to enjoy life at the Lake – and beyond. It's a perfect fit.

"Opening a wellness center has always been a dream of mine," says owner Jennifer Christophel, whose infectious energy, ready smile and trim physique embody good health. Her eight years of experience teaching Pilates, fitness and dance classes, combined with her considerable business savvy and dedication to her clients, have proved to be a winning combination. There's something for everyone at the studio: classes in Pilates, yoga, kickboxing, ballroom dancing, special programs such as tumbling and cheerleading for children, and post-rehabilitation therapy services. After class, patrons can quench their thirst with a drink from a Smoothie bar, relax with a massage, experience the benefits of foot ionization or purchase workout clothing and accessories. Several items feature the Balanced Body Studio's logo.

Jennifer's primary focus is Pilates, a system of no-impact exercises designed to strengthen the body's core muscles and improve its overall functioning. Based on what founder Joseph Pilates called Contrology, this exercise regimen emphasizes four primary principles — concentration, precision, control and proper breathing — for optimal results. Jennifer teaches Pilates exercises that incorporate the full spectrum of Pilates

apparatus, ranging from the complex Reformers and Cadillac/Towers to accessories like balls, bands and circles to the simple Pilates floor mat. The goal is the same, no matter what equipment is used: to achieve strength, flexibility and endurance for a balanced, aligned and energized body.

"I am committed to helping others do the things they like to do, but better," Jennifer says. To achieve that goal, Jennifer has earned national certification as a Fitness Therapist through the International Sports Science Association and as a Professional Pilates Instructor through the Pilates Method Alliance, an organization developed by several protégés of Joseph Pilates to ensure the highest standards of Pilates instruction

through a rigorous, nationally recognized certification process. In addition to certification in several well respected methods of teaching Pilates, including the Stott method and Core Dynamics Pilates, she is trained to teach the Vaganova Method of classical ballet and by Dance Vision International to teach several styles of American and Latin ballroom dancing. To update and refine her skills as a teacher and therapist, Jennifer regularly attends workshops and programs.

Jennifer's extensive training has enabled her to develop personalized fitness programs incorporating strength training, nutrition counseling, flexibility training and cardiovascular conditioning that are designed to encourage the success of



Jennifer teaching a Group Pilates Reformer class.

each client. She begins with a complimentary wellness evaluation that includes questionnaires about each client's lifestyle, health issues and fitness goals, and includes a weight, body fat and postural analysis.

Clients rave about Jennifer's work. Mark Craig came to improve his golf swing through the Studio's Pilates for GOLF™ classes. Besides a better golf handicap, he found relief from chronic pain that had plagued him for more than 20 years. "To say I'm a big believer is the understatement of the century," he says. "[Jennifer] changed my life completely. I have seen transformation in others as well." Retiree Judy Finkel says, "Pilates is the only exercise I've ever stuck with. [Jennifer] is so good, so well trained, really at the top of her game." And Caroline Blizzard, a local naturalist and photographer, took up Pilates to improve her mobility. "I'm now fully functioning, thanks to Pilates," she says.

Like many Pilates instructors, Jennifer began as a dancer. After moving here from New York, she studied ballet at the Morgantown Dance Studio, where she became interested in Pilates to improve her functional strength and flexibility. The studio supported Jennifer's training in the Stott Pilates method, which she soon began teaching at Frostburg State University, Garrett Community College, Somerset, and her home studio near Springs, Pa. After acquiring her first Reformer machine, she began training with a protégée of Eve Gentry, one of the few remaining "elders" trained directly by Joseph Pilates. "So I have a direct lineage in my training," Jennifer says. Gentry focused primarily on rehabilitation, an influence that has dominated Jennifer's approach to teaching Pilates. "It's kind of a niche for me," she says. Her Pilates for GOLF™, a program developed by a coach for Tiger Woods, has proved to be especially popular.

Jennifer's journey to Deep Creek Lake began when one of her students, area realtor Debra Savage, suggested that she open a studio and offered assistance. She also enlisted the skills of her husband Dan, a cabinet maker, to establish her first studio in 2004 at Market Square. "Nobody at Deep Creek Lake knew of Pilates until I opened the first studio," she recalls. "But despite some skeptics and no advertising, business grew through word of mouth."



Mark Craig being coached while practicing pelvic pull-ups on the Pilates Wunda Chair.

A year later, she moved to more spacious quarters in the Dry Dock Plaza. Dan again lent his talents to setting up the new space with ample shelving for merchandise, a business counter, a wooden "sprung" floor for the primary class space, a room filled with a wide range of custom-built Pilates equipment, and the Smoothie Bar she set up with the help of Brenda McDonnell of Trader's Coffee Shoppe. Jennifer proudly displays her food license on the wall behind the bar's counter, where patrons can choose from a variety of liquid refreshments. Dan also crafted ingenious hand-like holders of wood that cradle large, inflatable exercise balls to save precious studio space.

The studio now houses a variety of activities and related merchandise for sale. Services include massage, body wrapping, foot detoxification, metabolic testing and body fat analysis. For children aged three and up, Jennifer offers Kindermusik, ballet, ballroom dancing, tap, cheerleading and tumbling classes. Besides Pilates, older patrons have a choice of classes in yoga, tai chi, kickboxing, body sculpting, FUSION Fitness (pilates and yoga mix), SwingFit (swing dancing for singles), ZUMBA (aerobic dance moves to Latin music) and a wide range of American and Latin ballroom dancing styles.

Jennifer is excited about the success of her business. "I've learned that if you take one step at a time and stay focused, you can do anything you want," she says. Her life serves as an example of the Balanced Body Studio's mission: to develop and nurture a balance of body, mind and soul for a fulfilling lifestyle.