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The Jewish Star

Yoga in the park

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A way to achieve serenity in the bustling village of Cedarhurst



Kahn demonstrates a yoga position.

By Malka Eisenberg

Cedarhurst Park is usually a green oasis in the noise and rush of a weekday morning. One September morning, further tranquility was being promoted at a free yoga class led by Andrew Kahn on a grassy space by the park's gazebo.

Andrew Kahn is a certified professional yoga instructor and a licensed massage therapist.

"I wrote a letter to the mayor and board of Cedarhurst and they responded positively for my offer of free yoga in the park," said Kahn, owner of Peaceful Presence yoga and massage studio in Cedarhurst. "It's a beautiful park and yoga is wonderful in the fresh air and nature."

Fliers were posted and distributed, and the classes — which ran Tuesday mornings from July 15 through Sept. 23 — were advertised through announcements at the weekly summer concert series also held in the park.

"It was the first time I did it," said Kahn. "It was the same as the concert series schedule, but it was extended longer."

As American and POW/MIA flags waved in the breeze, the crashing of nearby construction, the whirring of a leaf blower, a garbage truck being loaded and a jet screeching across the deep blue sky did not disturb Kahn's composure as he led three women and two toddlers through varied poses in the quest for inner peace and greater flexibility. Breathing, he said, as he demonstrated a victory pose followed by a camel posture, is the "key to powerful yoga practice. It is our life; it begins with the first breath and ends with the last breath."

While guiding the class into the downward facing dog posture, he explained that the source of the Hebrew word "Neshoma" is both breath and soul. Kahn talked the class through the positions while discussing kindness and inner peace. One of the toddlers sat down, removed her shoes and socks and assumed the dog posture. "We have to focus on the enemy within," he said.

Kahn has been practicing yoga since 1981 and teaching since 1986. He grew up in Fairlawn, NJ and graduated from Ramapo College with a BA in psychology. After entering a clinical psychology PhD program at Fordham University, he later decided to follow a different path, moving to Massachusetts to study yoga and holistic health for four years at the Kripalu Center in Lenox. After training and becoming certified, as well as teaching at Kripalu, Kahn served as the Holistic Health Director of the DeSisto School in

Massachusetts and as an athletic supervisor at the JCC in the Palisades, NJ. He also studied massage therapy at the Florida School of Massage in Gainesville.

Kahn currently teaches close to 50 students at his studio in Cedarhurst where he is sensitive to the needs of the Orthodox community, offering separate men's and women's classes, with male and female instructors and massage therapists. "I teach kosher yoga," he emphasized, noting that while some yoga instructors inject elements of Hinduism, he does not. Kahn has been in the community for about three years now and opened his studio last November (www.peacefulpresence.com or 516-371-3715).

“Things are very hectic for a lot of people,” he observed. “They need a place to go to slow down, breathe, stretch. My last name is Kahn — I am a Cohen. Aaron was a peacemaker, he tried to create peace and harmony and foster good relations. I try in my own way to follow in his footsteps. I try to help create bridges to help cause not only Jewish unity and cooperation but peaceful influence on the general community.”