

OF SOUND MIND & BODY

'Inner Being' Brings Benefits of Yoga to Diverse Populations



Karen D is on a mission to make yoga 'available, affordable, and accessible' to everyone.

by Stephanie Conte

Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, Peekskill's **Karen D.** (founder and CEO of **Inner Being LLC** and organizer of the April 2022 **Awareness to Wellness Festival at Esther Street Park**), moved to the United States when she was 15 years old. She has studied dentistry for 27 years, building her career from a chairside assistant to dental assistant school owner in **Cortlandt Manor**. While dental consulting provides Karen with a rewarding career, she found she needed something else to awaken her spirit.

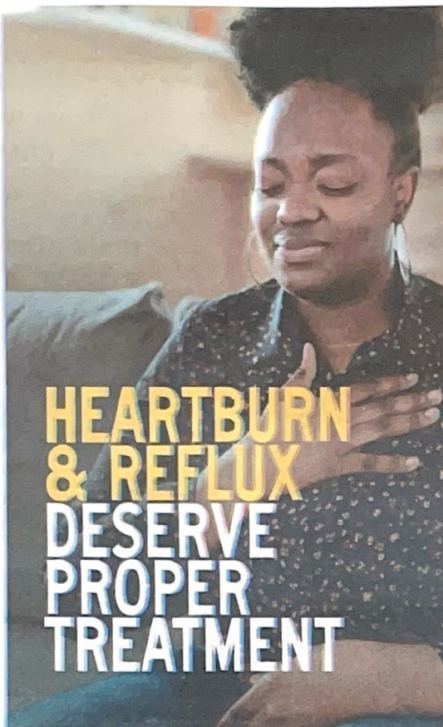
In 2015, at 40 years old, Karen turned to yoga. She says the practice quickly became "a source of relief and release, spiritually and mentally." The mind and body exercise helped her overcome fear and "face herself" at a time when she was feeling overwhelmed. Because yoga had such a lasting and noticeable effect on her own spirit, Karen felt she needed to share it

with her community — if you want to make a change, "home is where you start," she says.

In November 2017, Karen started her journey to become a yoga instructor, which she proclaims to be the next-to-hardest thing she has ever done physically, second only to volunteering with the **Mohegan Volunteer Fire Association**. Four years ago this month, Karen completed Vinyasa training to be a yoga instructor RYT 200 (a certification signifying 200 hours in training to become a Registered Yoga Teacher).

While yoga was making her "a better listener and a better mother," Karen also noticed a change in her children when they joined her in the practice. They were calmer, more present, and had better control. Seeing those results as something others could benefit from, she sought a way to make yoga "available, affordable, and accessible" to everyone.

For her first post-graduation



That's why our reflux center offers a full range of specialized care and guided support, right in Westchester. With a collaborative team of experts focused on meeting your unique needs, we're raising health to get rid of heartburn and reflux for good.

Book an appointment:
[Northwell.edu/RefluxExperts](https://www.northwell.edu/RefluxExperts)
or (833) X-REFLUX



class, Karen opened her Peekskill home to friends, neighbors, and families. Her basement became a yoga studio, and she offered the local community a free class — "just show up and do yoga with me," she says.

That first free class turned into a passion-driven movement that has swept the community, especially younger generations. With the support of her sons (**Jordan** and **Joshua**) and partner (**Annette Kirlew**), Karen opened her business, **Inner Being**.

Karen and her team of yogis have affiliations that include **Peekskill City School District** and **Shrub Oak International School**. Inner Being instructors work with students to be more spiritually open, "giving them tools to release anxiety, fear, anger, and sadness," Karen says. "This is something all schools can make available to their students."

The studio also services the **Drum Hill Senior Living Com-**

munity, hosting weekly Friday workshops that include 20 minutes of journaling and 30 minutes of yoga instruction.

Karen is providing internship and community service opportunities for high-school students looking to learn the craft. Inner Being sponsors two students with tuition, books, and supplies to become RYT 200 instructors, in part to help Karen increase her staff of teachers who can work with Inner Being's diverse clientele. To request more information about community service opportunities, contact Karen@InnerBeing.Yoga.

Karen's goal is to make yoga accessible to everyone, which often means free classes — or close to it. She works to get her message across to movers and shakers in the community, including Peekskill Mayor **Vivian McKenzie** and Peekskill City School District's **Ellen Gerace, LCSW**.

Karen has secured a spot at the **Peekskill Riverfront Green Park**

for the fourth summer in a row for yoga instruction during July and August. For Inner Being's paid classes, the first class is always free, and each subsequent class is \$10.

Inner Being offers free chair yoga on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at **United Methodist Church of Peekskill**. To reserve a spot, contact AnnetteKirlew@gmail.com.

A bench at the Peekskill riverfront dedicated to Inner Being reminds the community to "slow down, pause, and reset so you can restart," one of Karen's signature mantras. A plaque describes the bench as "A place to be easy."

With all the opportunities and appreciation she has received from the local community, affordable yoga instruction is Karen's way of paying it forward. "I was a caterpillar before yoga," she says, "but I finally feel like a butterfly."

> *InnerBeing.Yoga*

Stephanie Conte is a resident of Peekskill.