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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

San Francisco VA Partners with Purusha Yoga to Offer Free Yoga Classes for Veterans

SAN FRANCISCO – April 19, 2016 – The San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) Strength and Wellness program for Veterans has teamed up with Purusha Yoga, 3729 Balboa Street in San Francisco, to create a new and innovative program benefitting Veterans.

Veterans enrolled in VA health care who receive a referral and medical clearance from their VA provider are participating in an 8-week yoga class focusing on yoga techniques and practices that alleviate stress and PTSD symptoms as well as improving strength, flexibility, balance, coordination, focus, and mental well-being.

“What sets this program apart is, it’s the first time our Veteran patients have had an opportunity to practice yoga in the community at a yoga studio as part of their clinical care,” says SFVAHCS Strength and Wellness coordinator Chris Geronimo. “We’ve taken a VA program to where our Veterans are, which is in their community.”

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“This program is yoga therapy,” says Joy Ravelli, owner and director of Purusha Yoga and founder of the Purusha Seva Project. “It’s using yoga practices as a therapeutic tool to alleviate obstacles and suffering from any variety of diseases, and to be used for lifestyle coaching to help people make healthy choices with their life.”

“Purusha is the Sanskrit term for the true self,” says Ravelli. “By definition, our name and our style of yoga accommodates for each person as an individual and seeks to teach each person in a way that suits them best. We use the classic 8-limb practices and philosophy of raja and hatha yoga to move the body, open the mind, balance the energy, inspire the soul, and spark the imagination.”

“As a teacher, I enjoy teaching anybody who benefits from the practices,” says Ravelli. “I feel like Veterans are a particular group of people who have certainly suffered some trauma, have given a lot of themselves in service to others, so I always find it particularly rewarding to give to people who have served others.”

Class is limited to 25 Veterans, and there is a waiting list. Most of the Veterans taking this beginner’s class have never practiced yoga before, and the ages of Veterans in the class range from 37 to 83. “There’s a handful of Veterans from each decade, and it’s a closely knit group that has displayed the most amazing amount of camaraderie, support, and empathy for each other that I’ve ever seen,” says Ravelli. “I’ve never worked with a group of soldiers. They didn’t know each other, yet they all melded and supported one another. Their energy is so connected to each other; they’re like a family. It’s beautiful.”

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Class space, time, and instruction are currently being donated by the Purusha Yoga studio and school. All class instructors are trained at the Purusha Yoga school, directed by Ravelli. The school is registered with the Yoga Alliance and is a member of the International Association of Yoga Therapists. The Purusha Seva Project is their non-profit arm. "By focusing on developing innovative and cost-saving programs to serve the local community, Yoga therapy can provide a complementary and cost-effective method of alternative and preventive health care," says Ravelli. "The Purusha Seva Project seeks to create communities of healthy, flourishing people."

The next free class for Veterans is slated to be offered in the fall. For more information about these classes, call Chris Geronimo at (415) 221-4810, ext. 2-3471. For more information about Purusha Yoga offerings, call (415) 668-9642 or visit www.purushayoga.org.

This program exemplifies SFVAHCS's continuing efforts to engage and partner with local community members as part of MyVA Access, a nationwide VA initiative to improve access to VA health care.

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