



Yoga is important to me. It has rescued me when I've required saving. It has emboldened me when I have felt weak. In its most sublime moments, yoga transports me to a place adjacent to euphoria's nest...

My primary yoga home is Savannah Power Yoga (SPY), in the same Sandfly shopping center that hosts Cutters Point, my coffee shop. Kate Doran is a former computer industry executive turned entrepreneur. And she is a long-time yogi, a fact which shaped her business dreams. Kate is the founder and owner of SPY. Like those of many small businesspeople, her dreams have morphed into seeming nightmares over the span of the past 12 months.

Kate (and her team) are my teachers. Kate is a thoughtful and serious and determined person. Kate is also my friend. Her story is representative of millions of stories that are disturbingly consolidated by others – many of whom have never walked a step in her bare feet, or in the shoes of those of us who meet payrolls and pay vendor bills and miss sleep if we can't. It's a story of shock, sadness, adaption and redemption. It's a story of constancy and a story of change. This is Kate's story, written in her own words:

Five more breaths. When I ask this of my yoga students during a challenging yoga pose, it's for a purpose. I am asking them to cultivate the power to remain in and, ultimately, overcome discomfort when things get rough. I am asking them to distill a moment into its essence. I am asking them to set aside extraneous noise. I am asking them to...simply...breathe.

For many of us, the year we have endured since March of last is the toughest we have known. As a small business owner, I must ask myself to remain in the challenge every day, to endure the discomfort, to dismiss the doubts, to...breathe.

On March 1, 2020, we opened Savannah Power Yoga's second location on Wilmington Island, after a significant investment of money, effort and time. Sixteen days later, we were told to close our doors. In that moment, we faced a challenge that we had never imagined. Every day since has delivered more hurdles in our path. How have we gotten through it? One breath at a time.

On March 17 of last year, instead of donning green and heading into a reveling crowd, I sat down and began to research online yoga options. YouTube? Facebook Live? Zoom? Thankfully, SPY is part of a network of yoga studios, all facing the same crisis. We shared ideas and started redeveloping our businesses using fast-forming ideas. In the days since, our SPY community – now unlimited by the boundaries of our studios' walls – has shared more than 1,000 online yoga classes on Zoom.

When regulations were revised and we were permitted to reenter our physical spaces, we shifted again. We developed a hybrid offering: We teach a live class and simultaneously stream

it to yogis who prefer to stay at home. We installed a bi-polar (ironic?) ionization HVAC upgrade to scrub the air and make it safe for our student groups. We retrained our staff in the CDC protocols and re-engineered many of our standard operating procedures to make our classes safe.

Sometimes now, we are teaching only a couple of students in a studio designed to hold 60, but we might have 35 people joining us from their homes. Instead of bemoaning the limitations, we are focused on the good. We CAN keep offering classes, even if it's not the way we used to. We CAN keep connecting with our community, even it doesn't include hugs. Thanks to Zoom, we meet pets, children and partners, as they wander through the backgrounds of the boxes on our screens. We practice with yogis who have moved away from the area and can now rejoin us from their new, distant homes. We meet yogis in faraway places who discover us through friends and Facebook ads.

There are still days when I want to do nothing more than stay in bed and feel sorry for myself. Running a small business is never easy, and now it's harder than ever. Filing for PPP and EIDL loans (federal and state pandemic programs), and partial unemployment were not key components of my entrepreneurial dreams. But sharing the healing power of yoga is. And healing ourselves by remaining true to our purpose and principles is, too.

Creating a place for the consistent practice of yoga, in community, is our mission at SPY. We have learned that consistency and connection are still possible, and more important than ever. Our teachers need their work; it provides them a platform for service and purpose. Our students need their practice; it gets them out of their fears and doubts.

Our breath is real. Projecting the future is not; it's imagination and conjecture. Projection eventually leads to uncertainty and, often, dread. Existing actively in the present moment, staying strong when we want to run away: These are lessons yoga gifts us. Gentle poses teach us to nurture our bodies and give ourselves breaks. Conscious breathing teaches us to notice what is happening right now and see what is real: We are OK, we can do this. One breath at a time.

Connect with Kate and her team at savannahpoweryoga.com.

Scott A. Lauretti

To contact us with your ideas, responses, letters and more, email us at mail@theskinnie.com

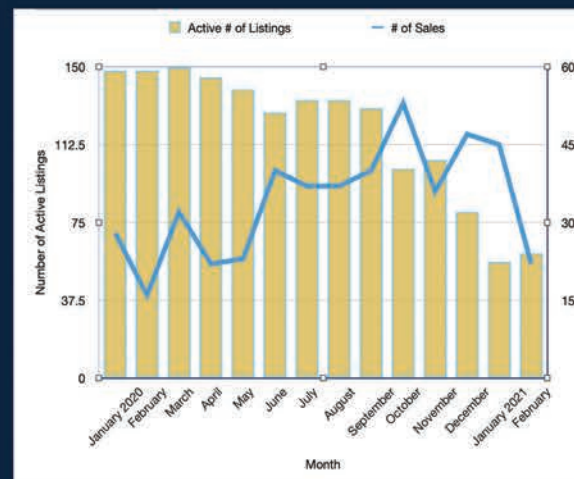
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All data compiled from the Savannah MLS.

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