

LOCAL NEWS

The Exhale Studio, movement and wellness studio, opens in Amherst



The Exhale Studio opened on Sept. 12. It's located at 570 N. Leavitt Road in Amherst. (Kavla Gleason — The Morning Journal)



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A newly opened movement and wellness studio in Amherst is encouraging people to listen to their bodies and redefine what it means to practice yoga.

[The Exhale Studio](#) opened its doors earlier this month with a focus on what owner Adriana Leone describes as nourishing movement and socialization.

The studio was inspired by Leone's experience of yoga therapy training, which led to her recognizing a gap in the local yoga community. As she completed her training, she began to see the healing potential yoga has to offer, separate from the physically demanding aspect some people associate with it.

"I wanted to create a space for adults to feel good in their body and nourish their bodies," Leone said. "Our culture, we're a hustle culture, and it's all about go, go, go, but we need rest."

Leone said the studio is built on the foundation of movement, rest and community.



The studio provides both individual and group-based wellness practices. They offer several membership options for prospective students. (Kayla Gleason -- The Morning Journal)

Movement is central to the studio's practice, but Leone said rest is treated with equal importance. Each class ends with a 10-minute period of rest and reflection, where participants are encouraged to let their bodies and minds come together.

The Exhale Studio is designed to be accessible to people of any age and with different abilities, especially those who may be intimidated by traditional yoga practices.

"Yoga looks different in every single body," Leone said.

The studio places a special emphasis on individual movement, rather than competition or comparison among members. Instructors use invitational language and tell participants to listen to their bodies above anything else.

Leone said one of her main principles in wellness is to "go toward the pain, but not into the pain." She said she encourages her students to challenge themselves, while also avoiding movements that may cause injury.

The offered classes are also intentionally kept small. Classes fit up to eight students, which Leone said creates a more intimate, trauma-informed space. The smaller setting is intended to help students become familiar with those around them and feel comfortable in the environment.

“If somebody wants to come to the class and sit in a corner and cry, we will hold space for that,” she said. “That is OK and it’s healthy.”

The studio has a variety of movement classes, including strength and stability training. Leone said the goal is not centered on weight loss or appearance, but rather on maintaining strength and mobility.

“Every class we offer, there’s a health reason for it, and it’s not because I want to be skinny,” she said. “It’s because I want to be healthy.”

Leone is specifically trained in yoga therapy, which offers an individualized approach as compared to a traditional yoga class. She works one-on-one with clients to explore the physical and mental components of their lives to tailor a practice specific to their needs.

“My heart, really, is yoga therapy,” she said.

Yoga therapy will be an integral part of the studio long-term, but the studio still offers group classes in addition to individual sessions. Leone also places an emphasis on encouraging community outside of the classes.

The Exhale Studio will be hosting a Peace Pumpkins and Paint Your Own Pottery event on Oct. 2 at Main Street Amherst in an attempt to connect people with each other. The event is open to everyone, not just members of the studio.

Drop-in classes are offered for \$24, along with monthly, yearly and introductory two-week memberships for varying prices. About 15 slots remain available for the founders membership, which includes seven classes a week, one free guest each month and 20% off workshops for \$119 per month.

The Exhale Studio was created by Leone to create a more inclusive space for yoga and wellness. Her hope is to inspire people who may not see themselves represented in traditional yoga environments.

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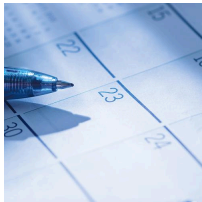
“I’m trying to create a space for people that don’t have a space,” she said. “For people that don’t, that are intimidated or feel uncomfortable because they don’t think they can do it, well, they can do it here safely and with no judgments.”

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