

Discover convenient, welcoming yoga study in Mankato

by Rachael Hanel

Students enrolled in Sun Moon Weekend Intensives Yoga Study start as a name and a face, but by the end of the weekend they become much more than that.

Mona Cenicerros, owner of Sun Moon Yoga in Mankato, developed the intensives with the goal of teaching others how to create a yoga community. By the end of the first night, bonds begin to form.

“Everyone starts their journey to teaching, or a deeper practice for different reasons,” Cenicerros says. “Creating a community that incorporates diversity and individuality takes time. New teachers need community for growth and support and you can’t get this in a weekend certification. That’s what’s so special about completing the 200-hour Weekend Intensives at Sun Moon.”

During the first night of a recent weekend intensive, Mona invited the group to leave the studio and follow her outdoors. The couple of dozen eager students donned sweaters and coats, mittens and hats to protect them from the late October chill. They wrapped blankets around their shoulders for makeshift shawls, all the while laughing and chatting with each other. Like baby geese following a mother, they lined up behind Mona as she walked out the door.

The animated group filed down the sidewalk, through an alley, and

crossed a street into a park planted in the middle of downtown Mankato. There, they spread out blankets and sat cross-legged on the dewy grass. The stars twinkled above them – constellations of Orion, the Big Dipper, Cassiopeia.

The evening’s starlight activities were among many group trust-building techniques Mona uses and teaches in the program.

“Yoga teachers need to learn how to create a community within their classes or studios to be successful,” she says.

For this reason, Sun Moon’s Yoga Study draws a wide range of

participants—many already yoga teachers who come to participate in a yoga learning community. Sometimes participation is sitting on a blanket in damp grass, in your yoga clothes and sharing thoughts and ideas—a small pet peeve, a news story that captures attention, or hopes and dreams for the upcoming year.

Participants also learned two or three group-building activities they might use to create a community in their own classes.

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Mona Cenicerros accepting a basket from yoga study students.

Weekend Intensives are open to everyone, whether they plan to teach yoga or not.



learn more about yoga practice.

Convenience

Each weekend intensive consists of Friday night, Saturday and Sunday sessions over the course of eight weekends: four in the spring and four in the fall. Participants may start either season and complete both spring and fall for 200 hours. Students study all aspects of yoga—they share ideas with each other,

Who Participates

This fall, participants formed a diverse group in terms of levels, ages and gender. Some of the students are teachers, others have no desire to teach. Some teach yoga in one location, others travel to several small communities. Some have studied Ashtanga, others practice Iyengar. Some have small children, others are “empty nesters.” Some are elementary/secondary teachers who incorporate yoga into their school days.

The Weekend Intensives draw people from all over the upper Midwest—the Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska.

Like many first-time students, Ana Killingstad was concerned she might among the most inexperienced among the teachers there. However, she found her fears quickly evaporated.

“I felt the usual insecurities about going into an unknown situation. Once there, I felt fine and thought it was a friendly environment open to people of all levels,” she says.

Bryan Gerber, a dance student



Making friends—building community and laughter.

in Mankato, also had similar initial insecurities.

“I was nervous because I didn’t know all the poses’ names, or what they meant. I also didn’t know how everyone else in the group would be, and whether I could measure up. Now, I know yoga is ‘your own yoga’ and that other people aren’t supposed to be involved in the equation,” he says.

The Weekend Intensives are open to everyone, yoga teachers and students who want to deepen their practice.

Gary Scheman, a dedicated student of Mona’s from Mankato, says he joined the intensive just to

attend sessions focusing on poses and breath work, and also read and discuss articles. The students laugh at Mona’s insistence that they highlight the articles and take thorough notes, but they know that preparation will result in lively discussions.

Christina Mroz, a student from Wisconsin, enjoyed the short, yet intensive, learning period.

“Some yoga study programs are spanned over the course of a year, committing yourself to several weekends a month. For me, that is way too big of a time commitment. My schedule and family life would not function well with me needing to be gone several weekends a month.

Sun Moon Yoga Study was appealing to me because it was a total of eight weekends,” Mroz says.

The program is ideal for commuters living in Iowa, Wisconsin, the Twin Cities, or any other Midwestern area. Students can attend weekend yoga study without disrupting jobs and families, as some trainings that last a month can do.

Since participants can begin in either spring or fall, each group has new and returning students. This allows students to form connections with each other. Mona invites guest instructors from a variety of yoga paths to share their knowledge at Sun Moon, adding another layer of connection.

“When people leave our Yoga Study they will have connected with the greater yoga community, having met other beginning teachers from all over, and some studio owners, at Sun Moon,” Mona notes. Because of this Sun Moon has become an ideal environment for Twin Cities studios to promote their upcoming workshops, trainings and events.

Mona and the Studio

Sun Moon Yoga is easy to find. Mankato, city of 50,000, is home to several colleges, but free of traffic or big city stresses. Mankato’s location on the Minnesota River makes the town scenically beautiful, especially during Weekend Intensives Yoga Study months.

The yoga studio offers an inviting atmosphere. The facilities are on par with, and sometimes even more beautiful than, many of the top studios in the country. Sun Moon is located in 3,000 square feet of space in a unique Art Deco period building in downtown Mankato. Sun Moon incorporates two teaching studios, a large reception area and massage therapy.

Mona opened Sun Moon nine years ago to create a sacred space for her dedicated students who had been taking classes from her throughout the area for more than a decade. Mona’s dedication to supporting other yoga teachers has resulted in Sun Moon being a resource for yoga teachers from all over. Past Yoga Study participants return frequently for workshops and special events.

Sun Moon Yoga is part of Mankato’s vibrant downtown scene. It’s located across from an independent coffeeshop and down the street from a locally owned bookstore. Participants in the weekend intensives can choose from variety of restaurants in the downtown area and can find plenty of green space and walking trails for quiet contemplation. Participants can stay at one of many hotels in Mankato, a hub in south-central Minnesota.

Another lodging option: Melanie Williams, yoga teacher and Reiki Master, opens her home and vegetarian kitchen for Yoga Study students for \$35 a night. Melanie teaches several workshops and

classes in the Weekend Intensives, so participants get to know her well. In addition, camping also is available at Minneopa State Park and other spots.

Listening and Advice

During the weekends, Mona’s knowledge and willingness to listen and advise becomes apparent to her students. Her credentials include teaching anatomy and physiology at massage schools and working as an adjunct faculty in the Health Science and Human Performance departments at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Mona stresses the knowledge that yoga teachers need doesn’t come solely from trainings, but from their yoga practice and life experiences. “Only when we have used yoga to improve ourselves are we ready to teach others,” she says.

“Learning together in a community gives us access to other’s views and life experiences. The participants learn from me, each other and from their own inner seeking,” Mona explains.

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Partner yoga with Yoga Study participants.

Sun Moon Yoga Studios
635 South Front Street
Mankato, MN 56001

sun moonyoga

*weekend intensives
yoga study*

New teachers need to learn how to build their classes, and Mona believes that learning the techniques that will help them do this is an important part of training to be a yoga teacher.

“Knowing all the Sanskrit names and being able to do a lot of hard poses is only a part of it. If you don’t know how to connect to people and to connect people to each other in trust and comfort, there’s only so much marketing you can do to build

your classes,” she says.

Gerber highly recommends the weekend intensives to anyone interested in learning about yoga, whether they are going to teach or not.

“There is something so innate and wonderful about learning about your body and mind together that teaches a calmness and understanding that I think everyone in the whole world could use a little bit of,” he says.

Hanel is a freelance writer, mass communications teacher and yoga student.

For more information or to download an application, visit www.sunmoonyogastudios.com or contact Mona Ceniceros, phone: (507) 387-6600 or email: sunmoon@hickorytech.net

