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Kyria Sabin,

owner and director of Body Works Pilates, also runs a Pilates instructor training program with five campuses in the U.S. as well as seven abroad. Photo by Kris Hanning. **See story, page 12** >>>

A Flexible Business Plan

WHAT STARTED IN 1993 AS A SMALL, private Pilates practice for Kyria Sabin has grown into an international organization. Sabin is the owner and director of Body Works Pilates, as well as the director of Fletcher Pilates, International. “I have dedicated most of my life to my family and this business,” she says. “It’s been almost 20 years of passion and focus.”

Her day starts at 6 a.m. with Pilates mat practice, followed by getting her two children — Clara “the gymnast” (10) and Alexander “the artist” (8) — ready for school. Then it’s off to teach Pilates in her Oro Valley studio, lunchtime meetings, teaching Pilates at her central Tucson studio, afternoon meetings, and then time at home with her husband Terry Pollock and the children. “I’m constantly reminded to treasure the moments with Clara and Xander — and of how special this time with them is,” she reflects.

Sabin first took Pilates classes in 1989 while living in New York and started in earnest in Los Angeles in 1991. “I was looking for a workout that was continuously challenging and effective, and Pilates was the answer. I not only felt energized at the end of each session, but I was amazed by how quickly I saw results. I felt stronger, more flexible, and I loved the way I looked!” Sabin’s master teacher was Ron Fletcher, who had studied with Joseph and Clara Pilates. It was Fletcher who encouraged her to become a teacher.

“In the past, Pilates was taught by people who had apprenticed under experienced teachers. Now, you can take quickie ‘certification’ courses. In 1999, I initiated the first state-licensed comprehensive Pilates teacher training program in the state of Arizona. Each teacher at Body Works Pilates has completed our 750-hour teacher training program and many of them have five to ten years of professional teaching experience.

“This program is the only one to be fully endorsed by Pilates Master Ron Fletcher and became the headquarters for his international school in 2003. We now run our Comprehensive Program, and our Licensing Courses, on five campuses in the United States, as well as in Canada, Colombia, Australia, Singapore, London, Tokyo and Madrid.” By the way, Fletcher is still alive and well, and his 90th birthday will be celebrated at the first annual International Fletcher Pilates conference in Tucson this month.

Pilates is not just core work, stresses Sabin. “Pilates is a full-body workout. In a one-hour Pilates session, you will address overall strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, and physical and mental endurance.

“Pilates also is one of the best forms of injury prevention there is,” she explains. “Pilates teaches you to move with more power and control from your center, preventing injuries in the extremities. You learn how to move with more symmetry, better posture and greater ease. This helps everything, from basic everyday movements to high-level sports conditioning.”

Today, Body Works Pilates consists of a central 3,600-square-foot studio at River and Campbell, an Oro Valley studio at First Avenue and Tangerine, and a satellite studio on the east side of town. “We have eleven fully qualified and certified Pilates teachers at the central studio and five at the Oro Valley location,” Sabin says.



Kyria Sabin, owner/director of Body Works Pilates. Photo by Kris Hanning.

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The central location also has Tai Chi and yoga instructors, massage therapists, a shiatsu practitioner and a reflexologist. Although there are similarities between yoga and Pilates, “The intent of Pilates is to build a strong, agile body, while yoga can be a more spiritual practice,” she notes.

There are a number of ways to take Pilates classes, ranging from private instruction to the signature Body Works COREtets (classes of four people) to group classes (generally 10 to 20 people). “There are six to eight pieces of equipment in a studio, and you can do hundreds of exercises — and work your entire body — on each piece. This keeps the work really interesting because there are different levels and variations.”

When Sabin first started teaching, the classes were 90 percent women and 10 percent men; now they are 75 percent women and 25 percent men. “Once men get into it, they become very loyal clients,” she relates. “Pilates is physical and a very intelligent way of moving the body; men like the discipline and the logic of it.”

The Oro Valley studio was developed as a template for future studios. “We will only grow as we have additional well-qualified teachers available and trained,” Sabin says. “We hope to open two more locations in Arizona and eventually open studios out-of-state. But I want to make sure we can replicate the model with quality.” — *Wendy Sweet*