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## COMMUNITY NEWS



Judith Eugene and Sohail Ahmad.

## New program offers yoga for disabled adults

James Henke

The Loving Hands Group, a life-enrichment business based in Cleveland Heights, and Anytime Fitness, a University Heights fitness club, have teamed up to offer yoga classes for disabled adults. The yoga classes, which are free, began in August, and are held every Friday, from noon to 1 p.m.

"I call this 'gentle yoga,'" said Judith Eugene, who runs both the Loving Hands Group and Loving Hands Yoga and Reiki, based at her house on Hampshire Road in Cleveland Heights. "We usually have about 10 people attend these classes, and members of Anytime Fitness can also attend."

"The purpose is to get disabled people to exercise and to get them to participate in the community," said Sohail Ahmad, who has owned University Heights's Anytime Fitness

for the past four years. "We keep the groups small and Judith connects with every person."

The program came about, in part, as a result of the work being done by the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities. "There was a federal mandate to get disabled people more involved in the community," said Eugene. "We are developing a series of community-integration programs, and I thought it would be great to offer a yoga program."

Attendees have ranged in age from people in their 20s to people in their late 50s. Eugene said that participants should be at least "a little mobile." She is able to adapt the class for nearly all conditions. "Many have mental disabilities," she said. "And some have autism. But pretty much all of the people are able to participate and we encourage them to do their best."

The Board of Developmental Disabilities has eight adult activity centers around the county, and many of the participants in this new program come from those centers.

"Our main goal is to help disabled people be more healthy, make them feel empowered, and focus on their abilities, rather than their disabilities," said Eugene. "We want them to participate in the general community as much as possible."

Anyone interested in participating in the program should contact Eugene at 216-408-5578 or [www.lovinghandsgroup.com](http://www.lovinghandsgroup.com).

*James Henke, a Cleveland Heights resident, was a writer and editor at Rolling Stone magazine for 15 years. He is also the author of several books, including biographies of Jim Morrison, John Lennon and Bob Marley.*