

StudiOm, Jackson, Mississippi

Owner: Nichole Baker

Nichole began by teaching yoga classes at gyms and out of her home. In 2005 she and her friend Barbara were teaching classes in an old house that was built in 1933 where she also styled hair. In 2009 she took over the lease and, in addition to yoga classes, she also rented rooms to other business. The old house was off a main street where there were no other businesses around and building up a clientele proved to be a challenge. Suddenly she lost her lease when the owners decided to sell the property. At this point Nichole had two options, retire after styling hair for 25 years and teaching yoga for 18 or move her business to a new location.

Nichole loved teaching Iyengar yoga and wanted to continue teaching and helping others as much as she had been helped by yoga which had improved weaknesses in her back due to her scoliosis and disc degeneration. She also wanted the new location to be around more businesses to cultivate more exposure.

Nichole opened StudiOm in the Fondren area of Jackson Mississippi in February 2011. The new location is in a strip mall that has been around since 1946 (the oldest shopping center in Jackson) and in a neighborhood that was changing and growing into a hip place to live and work.

The first three years she and her teachers only offered about eight classes while Nichole continued to style hair in a room she built to help support the yoga business. The yoga business began to take off and Nichole finally gave up styling hair because she realized that teaching was her real passion.

When Nichole first opened StudiOm there were other yoga studios in the area that offered different styles of yoga but StudiOm focused solely on Iyengar yoga. Nichole also mentored up and coming teachers if they were not certified to teach in the Iyengar yoga tradition. When three of the other yoga studios in the area closed, StudiOm invited them to come offer classes like Mat Pilates, Tai Chi, Belly Dancing, Handstand, Sutra Study, and Meditation, along with other styles of yoga. Owning a studio in a small town Nichole wanted to share her space with the

community and other teachers, and she discovered that this helped her business grow even faster.

StudiOm has hosted workshops with George Purvis, Dean Learner, the late Karin O'Bannon, Sri H.S. Arun and Nichole's mentor Randy Just. Additionally, Nichole has hosted events such as Buddhist Meditation, Chakra and Kundalini, fulfilling her wish to open up the studio for use to those in the area that do not get the opportunity to teach their craft.

Nichole has been teaching since 1993 and holds an Intermediated Junior III CIYT and International Yoga Therapy IAYT. She hopes to continue sharing Iyengar Yoga with the surrounding community for many years to come and to keep furthering her knowledge and certification. Nichole says that the transformation and growth she sees in her students is what keeps her motivated.