



Co-owners and instructors Ashlee Richardson, left, and Wendy Andersen ... As a Stott Pilates certified studio, the center has continually grown since its opening in 2009.

## Pilates Center of Omaha expands to offer wider variety of fitness classes

by Megan E. Holt

Pilates Center of Omaha co-owners and instructors Wendy Andersen and Ashlee Richardson are working to build their Stott Pilates-certified studio in Omaha by offering various classes to meet demand.

The studio, located on 11303 Wright Circle, offers private, semi-private, group reformer, and group mat classes taught by seven Stott-certified instructors.

Stott Pilates is a contemporary approach to the original Pilates exercise method founded by Joseph Pilates in the early 20th century. Stott Pilates co-founders Moira and Lindsay Merrithew, along with several physical therapists, sports medicine, and fitness professionals, refined the modern principles of exercise science and spinal rehabilitation to form new safe and effective Pilates methods, according to the Stott Pilates website — [www.stottpilates.com](http://www.stottpilates.com).

According to the Pilates Center of Omaha website, [www.pilatescenterofomaha.com](http://www.pilatescenterofomaha.com), Stott Pilates differs from other Pilates techniques in that exercises are designed to restore natural curves of the spine and rebalance joint muscles, placing more emphasis on scapular stabilization.

"Pilates is an exercise method that focuses on core strength, stability, and proper functioning and movement of the body," Andersen said. "We [instructors] are watching for correct posture and make sure joints are in the proper places."

Pilates can increase muscular tone and endurance, combine strength with flexibility, help develop balance and coordination, improve posture and alignment, boost core strength and stability, relieve stress and back pain, and prevent injury, Richardson said.

"People are finally realizing the benefits of Pilates," Richardson said. "I think the medical field, like physical therapy, is also seeing the benefits, so it's gaining more popularity."

Since opening its doors in February 2009, Pilates Center of Omaha has seen a 60 percent increase in visits to the studio, Andersen said.

Because of this, the studio will expand this month into the bay next door.

"I don't think either of us expected to be expanding the business," Andersen said. "We've been busy putting together a class schedule and working with instructors. We're going to try and incorporate more wellness aspects into it with monthly seminars on various topics."

Once expansion is complete, the co-owners will offer yoga, TRX (total body resistance exercise), massage therapy, Barre Pilates, kettle bell, and other fitness classes to more than 100 clients.

"Through the recession, business stayed constant," Richardson said. "Fitness is one thing people hang on to because they want to take care of themselves, and the expense is small compared to other things."

By focusing on additional fitness classes and promoting wellness, Andersen said they will be better able to assist their clients' needs.

"We get to have a huge impact of peoples' lives," Andersen said. "Our clients turn into family. It's very rewarding for us to take someone who's hurting or has horrible posture and get them upright."

Andersen, who owns Victory Pilates in Lincoln, earned a Masters degree in exercise science from University of Nebraska at Omaha. A former collegiate athlete and coach, Andersen has been a professional educator for more than 10 years. She is a fully certified Stott Pilates instructor and instructor trainer in mat, reformer, Cadillac, chair, barrels, injury and specials populations as well as Stott Pilates group training.

Richardson, a graduate from Wayne State College with a Bachelors degree in exercise science, taught in a number of studios and gyms before teaming up with Andersen. Also a fully certified Stott Pilates instructor and instructor trainer, she has experience in yoga and health fitness.

"Pilates is the type of exercise that made sense to me because it keeps people safe," Richardson said. "It's a great complement to other forms of exercise."