

Nia instructor hosts gathering

Special to the Democrat 4:52 p.m. EST November 9, 2015



(Photo: Travis Sutton)

On Sunday October 25, 2015 Nia Technique Green Belt Instructor Valerie Sanchez hosted a Holistic Networking Gathering in a private and peaceful location in Tallahassee, FL. With a holistic twist the event was designed to celebrate: community, women, nature, food, business collaborations and of course Nia! At this event they celebrated 11 months of Nia Dance in Tallahassee and though Nia is relatively new to this area, the practice has been celebrating over 32 years of body, mind and soul fitness in over 51 countries worldwide since 1983.

Referred to as the first of its kind “fusion fitness,” Nia combines nine movement forms that draw from the principles of Martial Arts, Dance Arts and Healing Arts. In any given Nia class students are encouraged to celebrate their body, have fun, and break a sweat while doing it in a safe and non-judgmental group setting. It’s no wonder Nia has been described as an empowering, energizing and community building class. Some practitioners call it “fitness out of the box,” others call it their “fitness oasis.”

“As an instructor I see the magic Nia brings into a community- be it in a corporate or studio setting the group is always bound to have a sensational time; and although achieving this is definitely a group effort, individually each person brings something unique to help create the magic! That’s why for the past 11 months I’ve made it a point to get to know my students personally off the dance floor.



Nia community being led into the first activity of the Gathering. Moving and waking up the body with purpose. (Photo: Travis Sutton)

Their stories and careers paths are so impressive and intriguing I knew I had to create an opportunity for them to learn more about each other out of the studio setting. So I went to work and started researching networking events in Tallahassee and quickly realized none were offering what I had in mind so I decided- “if you can’t find it, then create it” and that’s how the idea for the gathering was born. On the contrary to most Happy Hour Networking events around town, this gathering was hosted in a holistic and natural environment.

I wanted to substitute evening with morning, small talk with personal reflection and lounge tables with yoga mats under oak trees. After four years of living in Hawai’i and two years of roaming and traveling around the world I’d been invited to and participated in many gatherings of this nature. To name a few, my event was inspired by gatherings I’d attended in Hawai’i, Australia, Bali and even Japan. Like most of those events I’d been a part of, I envisioned

beautiful women from all walks of life coming together and enjoying the simple things: friendship, nature, movement, great fall weather and yummy food. I also wanted an opportunity to personally thank those who support Nia Dance because creating awareness for this practice in Tallahassee, FL. has been far from an easy task, but it's been one of the most rewarding journeys in my professional as well as my personal life," said host Valerie Sanchez.

With "purpose" being the reoccurring theme at this gathering, professional woman from all over Tallahassee *purposely* brought their talents and their networking hustle to the event in hopes of creating new opportunities. To name a few: representatives from the Alzheimer's Project, Literacy Volunteers of Leon County, The Tallahassee Ballet, Publication *Conexión Florida*, the Founder of Magical Child, Arepas by Samantha's Gift, Nia Florida- Tallahassee, Gainesville & Longboat Key/Sarasota, Queen of Hearts Fitness, Nella Media Group (a Hawai'i based premier media company) and Backpackers Box (the event's main sponsor) went to work figuring out ways to collaborate in future projects.

"When I was laying out the event I knew I wanted to work with a caterer who could a) be an official sponsor b) deliver exceptional customer service and c) could provide great food and also have the hustler blood in them. Luckily Backpackers Box was that and more. As a new food truck in Tallahassee, FL. whose mission is to feed the hungry explorer through food and global knowledge, working with them was a no-brainer. After all I've been a backpacker myself and I know good food makes for happy souls. I was extremely pleased with our collaboration because not only did they make delicious on site international street food but they also gave us a presentation and educational tips on how to eat it along with their inspiration for our tailored menu. So if you are not doing it already, follow the Backpacker at www.backpackersbox.com (<http://www.backpackersbox.com/>) for daily locations and for more information on how they can cater your next event," stated Sanchez.

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