

UpFront

NOTABLE | NOT TO BE MISSED



**Kyria Sabin
Waugaman,**

owner of Body Works Pilates
Studio, is celebrating her 25th
year of helping Tucsonans.
Photo by Tom Spitz.



Kyria Sabin Waugaman also chairs the National Certification Commission for Pilates Teachers. Photo by Tom Spitz.

Dedicated To The Core

KYRIA SABIN WAUGAMAN'S VISIT TO TUCSON A FEW DECADES AGO WAS TO BE TEMPORARY — three or four months at most. She already had made plans to attend law school on the east coast and initiate a practice focused on the arts. But her passion project became a calling, then an international phenomenon, the world-renowned fitness- and life-enhancing philosophy — Fletcher Pilates. This year marks the 25th anniversary of her Body Works Pilates Studio, dedicated to enhancing lives through Pilates.

She grew up in the central mountains of Mexico, where her mother started the first bilingual school outside of Mexico City. She later attended Madeira, a school just outside of Washington, D.C., where she worked for the late Sen. Lloyd Bentsen. As a Duke University graduate, Kyria worked in galleries, museums and for corporate art collections in New York and Los Angeles. While at her post as director of an LA contemporary art gallery, she walked into the unassuming West Hollywood Pilates studio started by Ron Fletcher — who had been mentored by Joseph Pilates, creator of the practice — and run by his protégés. Having studied ballet as a child and competed in tennis and soccer through high school, she was no stranger to refined movement. She became a regular at the studio, and after two years of practice,

attended a workshop given by Fletcher himself. She recalls a feeling of terror as the well-known taskmaster called her into his office to tell her he thought she would be an excellent teacher. He became her mentor and sent her to study with his protégés.

Kyria had immersed herself in Pilates practice and training when Karma Kientzler, fitness director at Canyon Ranch, invited her to Tucson to help develop the spa's Pilates program. She says, "I fell in love with Tucson from the start. Friends from the coast didn't understand why I would want to get off the track of being in a major city, and do what nobody else was doing at the time. I didn't question it — it was the first time in my life where I didn't have everything planned and mapped out. It felt like I was following my calling."

Kyria taught part-time at Canyon Ranch and also in a studio on the second floor of her Ventana Canyon apartment — the original location of Body Works Studio, established in October 1993. Without advertising, she was soon working with nine clients per day, some of whom drove from as far as Phoenix. Body Works Pilates later moved to Campbell Avenue, then to its current home in St. Philip's Plaza. Of this chic, natural light-infused space, she says, "This is my dream space." To meet the demands of her increasing client base, Body Works Pilates Oro Valley

on First Avenue and Tangerine Road opened in 2010.

"Tucson has been a wonderful place to grow my business and build my dreams. It has been a welcoming community and, from a business standpoint, it's been much easier than in New York to do what I've done. It's not just the work we've done in the studio, but the work we've done outside of it that is so important to me." She developed a Pilates program for the University of Arizona School of Dance, (for which she also serves as adjunct faculty), and implemented the first Pilates program at an Arizona school system in the Amphi district. She also has taught pro-bono sessions for Haven Center for Women, the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona, and breast cancer survivors.

Kyria's reach extends far beyond the Old Pueblo. She convinced Fletcher to allow her to document his methodology and create a reproducible and certifiable teacher training program. The two worked together for nearly a decade developing it. Fletcher examined every detail, establishing his legacy. The Fletcher Pilates School was unofficially established in 1999, and in 2003 became Arizona's first licensed Pilates school. There are now five branches across the United States, and the program is licensed in Europe, Asia, Canada and South America. Master Teacher Ron Fletcher passed away in 2011, but his legacy lives on. Aspiring Fletcher Pilates teachers from around the world train at Body Works Pilates studio in Tucson. At the time of this interview, students from Kentucky, Korea and Spain were in-house.

Kyria continues to update the Fletcher Program of Study curriculum and evaluate program participants. She also presents at symposia around the world and chairs the National Certification Commission for Pilates Teachers. Astonishingly, with all that she does, she remains hands-on, regularly sharing her extensive knowledge and guiding students at Body Works Pilates Studio. — *Kimberly Schmitz*