



PHOTOS/KRISTINA SERAFINI

SUSAN BOWEN, center, teaches her BarreAmped method of exercise earlier this month to trainer Mary Felix, left, and Judy Napoleone, owner of The Studio in Nickelodeon Mall in Sewickley.

## RAISING THE 'BARRE'

### New mind-body workout created by Bowen offered in Sewickley

BY JOANNE BARRON  
STAFF WRITER

One instructor calls it the best abdominal workout she ever has had.

Anita Comesi, a trainer at The Studio in Nickelodeon Mall in Sewickley, said she loves it because it is a full-body workout with no impact on her joints.

"It's also a total mind-and-body workout," she said.

"It" is the BarreAmped method of exercise.

#### SPOTLIGHT

Although officials at The Studio said they will introduce the first class in the Pittsburgh area with an introductory session at 9:15 a.m. Monday, Suzanne Bowen created the method 40 years ago and travels the country certifying other instructors to teach it.

Bowen, a fitness specialist from Tennessee, has produced fitness DVDs and appeared on "Good Morning America," "The Today Show" and "Martha Stewart"

to promote exercise methods.

Information about her BarreAmped method has been published in many fitness magazines, as well.

The Studio instructors recently were certified by Bowen during a 25-hour, intensive training session.

BarreAmped has been taught in New York, Chicago, California and New Jersey for many years.

"It has just swept those cities. There are waiting list for the classes," said Judy Napoleone, owner of The Studio.

"My sister tried going to a 5:30 a.m. class in Chicago. When she got there, there were 35 people in the class, and she had to go home. They have 12 classes there a day, and you can't get in."

Because instructors are certified and The Studio is licensed, no other facility within 30 miles can teach BarreAmped, said officials at The Studio.

The program combines the mindfulness of yoga and the physical strength of the body using isometric holds and small controlled movements with use of the barre to



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SUSAN BOWEN teaches proper form.

# BarreAmped method classes combine yoga, isometric moves

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achieve optimal positioning, Napoleone said.

It's interval training and orthopedic stretching of the back to "engage the core."

Napoleone said the classes increase metabolism, burn fat and lengthen tight muscles.

"It's dance-inspired by how you control the body, but it's not a dance class. A lot of people were worried about that," she said.

Some of the exercises are similar to yoga, such as "the pigeon" stretch on the floor. With every exercise, there also is a stretch.

The last seven to eight minutes of the class are dedicated to relaxation and mindfulness.

The BarreAmped method quickly exhausts muscle groups, Napoleone said.

Small hand-held weights are used along with straps for stretching and small balls to engage the deeper muscles.

"Posture is important and way you are aligned is important. There is no injury to the joints. It's taught with more upbeat music than yoga, so it can be aerobic, but there is no jumping."

The precision of Pilates comes in as participants learn control and body alignments.

The barre is at a specific height, and the class is done in sequence with every portion timed, including the warmup, thigh work, abdominals and arms.

"It's amazing how fast the class goes. You are so focused on the control, the breathing and the precision of the exercises, you forget about everything else except the exercise for that hour," Napoleone said.

"When you leave, you feel like you've really worked all your muscles from head to toe, but



SUSAN BOWEN, above left, shows Judy Napoleone, owner of The Studio in Sewickley, correct form for the BarreAmped method. At left, a silhouetted Bowen demonstrates a pose.

PHOTOS/KRISTINA SERANINI

you get a feeling of invigoration, and you can't wait to do it again. That's what everyone says. You feel like your muscles are fatigued, but your mind is at rest, and you are ready to start your day."

Another trainer, Joanna Littlefield, said she loves the cross training of the method — the combination of yoga, Pilates and orthopedic stretching.

She said she is developing more strength in areas where she hadn't worked in the past from the new method.

Trainer Mary Felix said she loves that participants at any level of exercises can do the class.

Napoleone agreed. "You can be flexible, nonflexible, in shape, out of shape or an athlete. You don't have to be coordinated."

Later on, she said, there will be different levels of classes, and she hopes to offer an advanced class. But, for now, it is for every level.

"Every exercise, depending on your flexibility and strength can be modified because no two bodies are the same," she said.

One of the exercises the instructors learned involved holding onto the barre while their backs were flat against the wall and lifting their legs for abdominal strength.

"There's a definite need for

this in our city. There's lots of yoga and Pilates and fitness. People need the challenge to do something different and get a combination in one class," Napoleone said.

"Some clients came in to try it, and they said, 'I'm in love.'" Napoleone said she decided the try the class in some other cities she was visiting after her clients who moved to the area from California and New Jersey told her how much they loved it.

They kept asking when she was going to get the barre method.

"I tried the classes, and I thought, 'It really is all they said it is.'"

Introductory BarreAmped classes will be held at 9:15 a.m. Monday and Wednesday and at 10:15 a.m. Sept. 30.

Starting Oct. 3, BarreAmped classes will be offered at 8:05 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Mondays, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays, 9:15 a.m. and 7 p.m. Wednesdays, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. and 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; 10:05 a.m. Fridays; and 8:15 a.m. on Saturdays.

The cost of the classes ranges from five classes for \$85 to \$300 for 20 classes.

The Studio has room for 16 people in each class, and participants can call 412-741-1901 or e-mail judynapoleone@gmail.com for more information.