Claire’s to-do list:

-Contact Ken to see if he owns the studio, and if he’s object to having his classes advertised

**Sara’s comments on final draft:**

**Nice! It works well. See my comments below regarding lede/nut graf questions.**

**Also, would really like something added about his international yoga trips.**

**NOTE FOR EDITORS: There is a short sidebar on scientific evidence of yoga’s health benefits at the bottom.**

**Reporter byline**: Claire Landsbaum

**Reporter contact info**: Phone: (281) 814-2284, cdlvg9@mail.missouri.edu, clandsbaum@yahoo.com

**Assigned word count: 500-600 vs. ACW**: 777 not bad; thanks for being concise!

**Single word that sums up this story (use a noun):** Contentment OR Oneness

**Print Hed & Dek (give at least 3):**

**PrintHed1:** Living La Vida Yoga ha ha

**Dek1:** Businessman-turned-yoga-teacher describes his complex spiritual journey

**PrintHed2:** Say Om

**Dek2:** How one man’s spiritual journey began and ended with yoga

**PrintHed3:** The Wonders of Oneness

**Dek3:** How one man’s spiritual journey ended with yoga

**Web Hed & Dek (give 1)**:

**WebHed:** The Spirituality of Yoga

**Dek:** Businessman-turned-yoga-teacher Ken McRae describes his spiritual journey

**Story Links:** (at least 3 that could be embedded into story on website)

Ken McRae website -<http://www.globalyogajourneys.com/aboutUs.html>

Kripalu Center website -<http://www.kripalu.org>

alleyCat website -[http://www.alleycatyoga.com](http://www.alleycatyoga.com/)

Global Yoga Journeys - <http://www.globalyogajourneys.com>

Pew forum “No Religion” report -<http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>

William Claassen website -<http://www.williamclaassen.com>

**Suggested Tweet**: Local yoga teacher Ken McRae has led an interesting life. Here’s how he went from Toronto computer consultant to Columbia yoga instructor.

**Suggested Facebook post**: Yoga is more than your average exercise regime. For some in Columbia, it’s a way to connect spiritually with the surrounding world. Local yoga instructor Ken McRae was called to yoga late in life, and dropped everything to answer that call. Now a teacher at alleyCat Yoga in Columbia, McRae describes how his spiritual journey began and ended with yoga.

**Suggested Web Excerpt**: Yoga is more than your average exercise regime. For some in Columbia, it’s a way to connect spiritually with the surrounding world. Local yoga instructor Ken McRae was called to yoga late in life, and dropped everything to answer that call. Now a teacher at alleyCat Yoga in Columbia, McRae describes how his spiritual journey began and ended with yoga.

**Best version of lede**:

Ken McRae’s voice spreads until it fills the room: level, soothing. Yogic.

“Notice how the body is taking the breath in, how the body is releasing the breath back into the room,” he says. “And that is of course the first anchor, drawing the attention present into this moment.”

Seated on a plush, plum-colored cushion on his living room floor, McRae faces a wooden altar topped with bronze figures of Ganesha, a Hindu god, a small, lit tea candle and a bowl for incense. His legs are crossed, his eyes closed, the lids smooth and untroubled. He is in the moment.

I see you developed a new lede. It’s nice. This is at his house, right, not the studio? Was he giving you a demonstration? This does work, but we could still also just open with the bookshop story. Another issue is that we don’t establish him as the founder of a local yoga studio or even a Columbia resident until much later, although the story headline may take care of that. Consider adding something earlier in the story to indicate local significance.

**Body of the story**:

This is a bit abrupt; work on a transition here.

Ken McRae was a teenager browsing a bookshop in Montreal when a red cover caught his eye: *Why Buddhism Works*. He picked up the book and flipped through it, sparking a lifelong interest in Eastern religions.

Years later, as a successful businessman in Toronto, the memory of the book stirred in McRae’s mind. He was materially successful: a wealthy computer consultant with a half-million dollar house, a family, a dog and opera tickets. Despite this, he knew something was missing.

Then he discovered yoga. He took his first class shortly before Christmas of 1988, with a free pass that he’d kept in his sock drawer for three years.

“My way of experiencing my life started to change,” he says, “almost as if my eyes were opened, almost like Dorothy going from a black and white world to a colored world.”

McRae was drawn to the feelings of contentment and wholeness that accompanied yoga. He enrolled in a 750-hour yoga teacher training program in Toronto and eventually quit his job, sold his house, opera tickets and dog and moved with his wife at the time (now-ex-wife), Kathleen Knipp, to the [Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health](http://www.kripalu.org) in Lenox, Mass.

He trained there as a monk for five years before embarking on a spiritual tour through India, Bali and Italy.

Now McRae teaches at [alleyCat Yoga](http://www.alleycatyoga.com) in Columbia, which he founded in 2006 and moved to its current location in October of 2011. He also runs [Global Yoga Journeys](http://www.globalyogajourneys.com), a company that arranges international yoga and meditation retreats. Does he just “teach” there or does he own it? I think he just teaches there, but I’ll double check...

Today’s alleyCat studio, swathed in purples and deep greens, is high-ceilinged and airy, with front-facing windows that let in two large rectangles of natural light. Here McRae can relax, breathe deeply and take life as it comes.

“This feeling deep inside that I get is so much more than any material or accomplishment could ever provide for me,” McRae says. “And once you’ve tasted that, why would you not want more of that? When it’s far beyond anything in the material world?”

An ancient Eastern tradition that involves postures of the body, meditation and a sense of ‘oneness,’ yoga is much more than an exercise program, and its message appeals to many.

McRae is one among increasing [numbers of Americans](http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx) who view yoga as spiritual. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, one-fifth of the U.S. public is religiously unaffiliated. Of those, roughly three-in-ten, or about 28 percent, say they believe in yoga as a spiritual practice.

These days yoga is on the rise. According to the [National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm), more than 13 million Americans practiced yoga in 2006.

Whether for spirituality or fitness, yoga is making headlines. Yogic practices are being [taught in public schools](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/us/school-yoga-class-draws-religious-protest-from-christians.html?_r=2&), and even [incorporated into Christian and Jewish worship services](http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/05/local/la-me-beliefs-yoga5-2010apr05).

“It’s just a very different approach to body, in my opinion, to soul, to mind,” says [William Claassen](http://www.williamclaassen.com), a student at alleyCat. “It’s all about connecting those things together, as opposed to isolating them.”

A regular in McRae’s classes, Claassen has studied yoga across the country and says that McRae is the finest yoga teacher he’s ever worked with.

Emilie Sabath, another of McRae’s students, uses yoga to enhance her filmmaking. Practicing yoga makes her more “grounded” and “receptive to the world,” and McRae, who provides a “safe and inviting space” for his students, is a key part of that, she says.

When he first came to the Kripalu center McRae was a different person, says Gary Halperin, who studied with him there for 2 1/2 years. “He was kind of serious (and) introspective, a little bit closed off,” he says. McRae blossomed with yoga training, becoming more outgoing and comfortable in his environment, Halperin says.

Yoga appeals to McRae because it allows him to be himself, without fear or restriction. “I would not want to be the person I was 20 years ago,” he says. “I’m much more peaceful, calm, centered, appreciating life just the way it is.”

McRae shares his spiritual message with *practicing* students, but doesn’t go out of his way to invite new students to class. They come on their own, spurred by friends, family or a google search.

(but never invites new students to his class; they have to come on their own.)

“I don’t want to ruin their life!” he laughs, “or change their life and introduce them to something that’s so much more.”

His students follow their own path to yoga, just as he did years before.

**Sidebar or Info Box if needed**:

\*\*\*(Not sure if he’ll want these advertised)\*\*\* Why? Because he doesn’t invite new students? It appears his class times are on alleyCat’s website, as well. No, it doesn’t have anything to do with not inviting new students... I’ll ask him about it to make sure!

Ken McRae’s alleyCat Yoga Classes

When: Thursday, 5:30-6:45 p.m.; Friday, 4:30-5:45 p.m.; Saturday, 10:30-11:45 a.m.

Where: 23 South 4th Street

Cost: $13-16

Call: 864-4132

Online: [alleycatyoga.com](http://www.alleycatyoga.com/index.html)

**Sidebar: The health effects/benefits of yoga**

**Assigned word count: 200-300 vs. AWC:** 311

**Story Links:**

NCAAM study - <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm>

“Stress reduction correlates with structural changes in the amygdala” - <http://scan.oxfordjournals.org/content/5/1/11.short>

Dr. Sara Lazar - <http://www.tedxcambridge.com/thrive/sara-lazar/>

Erika Patterson - <http://studenthealth.missouri.edu/needtoknow/meethestaff/patterson.html>

Mahayana yoga - <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/schools1.htm>

CPMC study - <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12665179>

**Print Hed & Dek (give at least 3):**

**PrintHed1:** Stress less

**Dek1:** Yoga and meditation cause changes in the brain

**PrintHed2:** Meditate for a better life

**Dek2:** Meditation and yoga have heavy health benefits

**PrintHed3:**

**Dek3:**

**Web Hed & Dek (give 1)**:

**WebHed:**

**Dek:**

**Two versions of a lede:**

1.) Close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath, noticing as it enters and leaves your body. Empty your mind. Concentrate on the present moment.

You’ve just changed the shape of your brain.

I like this lede, but it’s too similar to your main story lede.

2.)

**Body:**

Clear your mind. It’s good for you.

The practice of yoga includes many elements: poses, meditation, breathing, lifestyle choices. Scientific studies show these practices have powerful effects on the way both mind and body work. [Yoga is being used increasingly in the healthcare field](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm) to treat stress and physical conditions like lower back pain but, [studies show, can even affect brain structure](http://scan.oxfordjournals.org/content/5/1/11.short).

[Dr. Sara Lazar](http://www.tedxcambridge.com/thrive/sara-lazar/), Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has done numerous studies that chronicle the biology behind meditation. She became interested in the subject after attending yoga classes, which had a “really huge impact” on her… in a good way.

Lazar used a brain scanner to produce images of subjects’ brain activity while they meditated, and while they went through an “emotional challenge.”

Her results show the science behind yoga’s popularity.

“The amygdala becomes less reactive after a length of time meditating, and it also becomes smaller,” she says. The change in the amygdala correlated with changes in stress.”

Research shows that the amygdala is important for processing emotional reactions. “There’s a real biological reason why they’re feeling less stress,” Lazar says.

She also found that the hippocampus, a brain structure important for learning and memory, was larger in those who meditated, which indicates an increase in attention span. A subject’s capacity for empathy and compassion also increased after meditation.

[Dr. Erika Patterson](http://studenthealth.missouri.edu/needtoknow/meethestaff/patterson.html), a psychologist who specializes in stress reduction and a student at alleyCat Yoga, has seen these changes occur. She incorporates techniques of Asana and [Mahayana](http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/schools1.htm) yoga and meditation in her work with patients.

“I’ve witnessed as a professional in people’s healing process that it can be highly effective,” she says.

Close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath, noticing as it enters and leaves your body. Empty your mind. Concentrate on the present moment.

You’ve just changed the shape of your brain.

**Sources**: Make sure you include their Facebook pages, Twitter handles, websites etc. in addition to phone and email. Include when, where and how you interviewed the person. (By phone, email, in person; at the office, home, etc.)

**1.) Ken McRae** - in-person interviews, 2/25, 3/20, 3/21, 4/5, 4/9

Instructor, AlleyCat Yoga (internationally licensed)

Director, Global Yoga Journeys

Phone: 441-0848

Email: athayoga@yahoo.com

Online:<http://www.globalyogajourneys.com/aboutUs.html>,<http://www.columbiatribune.com/arts_life/pulse/finding-the-perfect-yoga-class-can-help-mind-body/article_24088846-fba7-5345-ac45-baff90de497a.html>

**2.) William Claassen** - phone interview, 3/19

Yoga student, local author

Phone: 449-8764

Email: william\_claassen@yahoo.com

Online:<http://www.williamclaassen.com/index.html>

**3.) Emilie Sabath** - phone interview, 3/25

Yoga student, visiting filmmaker

Phone: 213-359-5809

Email: Emilie.sabath@gmail.com

**4.) Erika Patterson** - phone interview, 4/5 - Used in sidebar

Yoga student, Therapist

Phone: 356-5536

Email: drpatterson70@gmail.com

Online:<http://studenthealth.missouri.edu/needtoknow/meethestaff/patterson.html>

**5.) Dr. Sara Lazar** - phone interview, 4/5 - Used in sidebar

Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School

Scientist at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center's Mind/Body Medical Institute

Assistant in Psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital

Phone: 617-724-7108

Email: lazar@nmr.mgh.harvard.edu

Online:<http://www.pbs.org/saf/1310/hotline/hlazar.htm>,<http://www.tedxcambridge.com/thrive/sara-lazar/>,<http://nmr.mgh.harvard.edu/~lazar/>

**6.) Gary Halperin** - phone interview, 4/10

Knew Ken in Toronto, as a businessman, and later, as a yogi

Phone: 941-952-0960

Email: garyhalperin@yahoo.com

**7.) Althea Harris** - phone interview, 3/19 - Not quoted in the story

Yoga student, meditation instructor

Phone: 314-680-9785

Email: amharris6@gmail.com

**8.) Kathleen Knipp** - emailed, 4/9 - Never contacted her, but talked to Ken about their relationship

Ken says: “probably the best thing to do is send her an email and wait.”

Ken’s ex-wife

Email: kkbluebird@yahoo.com

**9.) Gunilla Murphy** - 4/5: attempting to contact; left a voicemail yesterday afternoon

Participant in Global Yoga Journeys retreats (one of Jen Rowe’s friend-of-a-friends), local dentist

Phone: (573) 474-8566

**Documents as Sources**: (links or copies of data, reports, records; must include statistical support for your story)

**1.) A survey by the Pew Forum:**<http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx> - The number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation is on the rise; some of these believe in the spirituality of yoga as a religious experience. “Roughly three-in-ten religiously unaffiliated adults say they believe in spiritual energy in physical objects and in yoga as a spiritual practice.”

**2.) A study by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine about the health benefits of yoga:**<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm>

Overall, yoga is shown to be beneficial for health.

**Media Support**: (news articles on your general topic)

Community discussion of yoga as a spiritual practice in the *Huffington Post*:<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/13/is-yoga-a-spiritual-pract_n_1632532.html>

“Yoga Class Draws a Religious Protest,” *New York Times*:<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/us/school-yoga-class-draws-religious-protest-from-christians.html?_r=0>

“Bending yoga to fit their worship needs,” *Los Angeles Times*:<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/05/local/la-me-beliefs-yoga5-2010apr05>

“Hindu Group Stirs Debate Over Yoga’s Soul,” *New York Times:*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/28/nyregion/28yoga.html?pagewanted=all>