

community

Beth Shaw with Taj, one of the three rescue dogs she adopted.



Animal Lover

YogaFit's Beth Shaw lives her karma yoga.

BEFORE BETH SHAW ever stepped onto a yoga mat, she knew her life's work would be speaking for animals, who don't have a voice.

"I remember telling my boyfriend in high school that, when I had a lot of money, I wanted to have spay-and-neuter vans and go around and care for the animals," says Shaw, the founder of YogaFit. And now, almost 24 years later, she says, "I feel like I'm stepping into my dharma [life path] now." Shaw has turned her business

CALENDAR

AUGUST FOUNDATIONS OF SVAROOPA YOGA August 1–6. Mount Madonna, California. Deepen your understanding of anatomy and ancient yoga philosophy with Rama Berch, the founder of Svaroopa Yoga. This workshop will also emphasize spinal openers. mountmadonna.org

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF YOGA AND AYURVEDA August 12–17. São Paulo, Brazil. This inaugural conference will be part of the annual Yoga for Peace event. Workshop topics include yoga therapy, Ayurvedic medicine and science, the Bhagavad Gita, Vedic astrology, and more. David Frawley is among the congress presenters. yogapelapaz.org

YOGA FESTIVAL TORONTO August 22–24. Toronto, Canada. International and local yoga teachers lead this urban spiritual retreat that features asana, meditation, and workshops on bhakti and karma yoga, yoga philosophy, yoga business ethics, and more. Festival tuition includes carbon offsets. yogafestivaltoronto.org

ANNUAL LABOR DAY RETREAT August 29–September 1. Santa Barbara, California. Spend the holiday weekend with Tracey Rich and Ganga White at the White Lotus Foundation as they lead a coastal retreat of twice-daily yoga, pranayama, meditation, and discussion. whitelotus.org

acumen—YogaFit has certified 70,000 fitness professionals who teach yoga worldwide—into a vehicle for promoting animal rights. In her hometown of Los Angeles, she was instrumental in passing a new law that requires the spaying and neutering of pets, which helps prevent the killing of millions of unwanted animals. She backs a similar California bill.

And the success of YogaFit enables Shaw to put her money where her values are. In 2007 she donated \$95,000 to animal causes, including Karma Rescue, which rescues big dogs; People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals; and local animal shelters, where she also volunteers her time. In addition to these contributions, Shaw sometimes uses the opportunity to raise funds for animal groups when she guest-teaches classes.

- Last year she joined the National Leadership Council of the Humane Society of the United States. “Beth is really the Humane Society’s ambassador to the people in this country who are deeply involved in yoga,” says the organization’s

president and CEO, Wayne Pacelle. “She promotes these ideals of compassion and action for animals and constantly works to raise awareness among yogis, who may have an inclination toward animal protection but not have the information. She closes that gap.”

Shaw has recruited volunteers to help out at the Linda Blair Worldheart Foundation animal sanctuary, and she pays her staff to work at spay-and-neuter clinics on the weekends. YogaFit also sponsors billboards and advertising throughout Los Angeles to promote an awareness of animal-rights abuses and in support of pet adoption.

But animals aren’t the only beneficiaries of Shaw’s compassion. She requires all YogaFit trainees to provide yoga classes for underserved populations.

“It’s all *abimsa*,” Shaw says about her commitment to inspire her students and teachers to help others. “The most important yoga you can do is karma yoga. Business without a greater purpose is useless.” HEATHER BOERNER