

mind • body • spirit

by Carmen Siering



Start the New Year Right! (It is the New Year, Right?)



Carmen with Debbie Hackman, instructor Diane Thayer, and Rob Shakespeare. Photo by Darryl Smith

For many people, the new year starts in January. Kids know better. They understand it starts in August when they head back to school. Those of us who live in college towns understand that, too. Because I spent most of my adult life as an academic, I've never stopped thinking of August as the start of the year. And though I no longer teach, August still carries with it a sense of possibility and new beginnings.

Five years ago, in August, I arrived in Bloomington. My husband, Greg, had secured a position with Indiana University. It was a job he wanted and a job I wanted for him, but it wasn't a package deal, meaning it was the first fall semester in memory when I wouldn't be starting school.

It was rough, and I won't sugarcoat it. I was depressed. But during my first week in town, I did three really smart things. First, I made a point of visiting our local shops, where I had the good fortune of meeting Mary Ann Gingles, owner of Yarns Unlimited, who convinced me I needed to take a knitting class. Second, I joined the Monroe County YMCA. And third, I picked up a copy of *Bloom*.

I don't knit much anymore, but in those darker days, the knowledge that I could drop

by the shop to knit and that there would be someone to chat with was a lifesaver. Human connection is vital to our well-being, and it's important that we take the time and make the effort to seek it out.

Staying physically active is equally important, and that, too, is easier to do with the help of community. It's more difficult to skip a workout when you know someone is counting on you to show up. I joined the Y to take yoga classes, but since then, I've added a lot of other activities, from swimming to weight lifting to running. It makes my day when I walk in the doors at the Y and see not just friendly faces but the faces of the friends I've gotten to know as we've encouraged one another to reach our fitness goals.

That first week in town, I also picked up a copy of *Bloom*, and I read it cover to cover, learning everything I could about Bloomington. Soon thereafter I became a contributor. Writing stories about the people and places that make up our community helped me become a part of it. This column is my latest contribution.

Here I'll focus on health and wellness in all its aspects, exploring what it means to be fit in mind, body, and spirit. Concurrently, I'm joining the full-time staff of *Bloom* as managing editor. It seems like perfect timing. For me, August is a wipe-the-slate-clean kind of month, a time for new beginnings.

It might seem a little early for some people, but here's to a happy new year. ✧

Carmen Siering, 53, is Bloom's new managing editor, beginning with the October/November issue. A wife, mother, and grandmother, she has a Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition and is a professional writer and editor.