

Deaths: 4  
Weather: 6  
Stars over the Coast: 7

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Photos by MICHAEL DUMAS/Press-Register

River Rock Yoga studio Director Moira Anderson leads the Yoga for Non-Violence event at the Ocean Springs Community Center on Saturday. The event raised money and awareness for the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence.

# Yoga mala

## Studio holds event for women's center

By MICHAEL DUMAS  
Staff Reporter

OCEAN SPRINGS — Surrounded by the painted murals of master naturalist Walter Anderson, more than two dozen individuals focused their minds and bodies Saturday to raise money and awareness for the victims of domestic violence.

Known as Yoga for Non-Violence, the event was sponsored and facilitated by the River Rock Yoga studio in Ocean Springs to benefit the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence, which helps hundreds of women and children each year.

Perched on mats and spread out on the polished wood floors of the Ocean Springs Community Center, participants did a series of yoga exercises known as sun salutations, moving in approximate unity to the directions of River Rock Director Moira Anderson, who called the event a "yoga mala."

Anderson described a sun salutation as an ancient practice and "a dynamic series of postures where you're moving from forward bends to back bends."

"They're designed to strengthen and stretch and increase flexibility in the entire body," she said. "Not just working on the muscular body but on all the systems of the body, like the nervous, circulatory and respiratory systems."

A mala, she explained, is a prayer bead used in Eastern traditions.

"And you say a prayer for each bead, like a rosary," Anderson said. "What we're doing is a yoga mala, where we did 108 sun salutations strung together with this intention for nonviolence."

"It's like doing a prayer for your body."

Not surprisingly, the community center took on the feel of a temple during the two-hour event, with music, stories, prayer readings and even poetry filling the air just as flowing poses and structured breathing moved the bodies of those present.

A similar event was held at the same time Saturday at the Mississippi Center for the Arts in Jackson.

Stacey Myers, a therapist at the Women's Center who is working to set up a shelter in Pascagoula, participated in all 108 of the sun salutations.

"It's a physical thing that has a relaxing impact," Myers said. "It's a moving meditation."

She said that such exercises are employed at the Women's Center for that very reason, and that events such as the yoga mala were a perfect fit to help spread awareness.

"It brings awareness back to the community about the impact of domestic violence and the things we can do as a community to address that impact," Myers said. "You can't do what we do without the community involvement."

By the 108th sun salutation, those involved moved in silence, cooling down through motions made without sound, and the result was the ultimate metaphor for the nonviolence the center — and those participating — were working toward.

With a bright smile, and an eye toward a rewarding lunch at a healthy restaurant nearby, Anderson summed the day up.

"It's illuminating and connected to our inner light and brightness."

For more information, visit [www.gcwcf.org](http://www.gcwcf.org) or [www.riverrockyoga.com](http://www.riverrockyoga.com).



More than two dozen people did a series of yoga poses called Sun Salutations.



MICHAEL DUMAS/Press-Register

More than two dozen people participate in the Yoga for Non-Violence event at the Ocean Springs Community Center on Saturday. The event, put on by the River Rock Yoga studio in Ocean Springs, raised money and awareness for the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Non-Violence.