

## A Yoga Studio for the Super-Stressed

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*By Jessica Brady*

*Roll Call Staff*

Kimberly Wilson and Tim Mooney don't look like the typical Washington power couple. While some ambitious duos host Georgetown dinner parties and exchange professional contacts, Wilson and Mooney fled the ladder-climbing scene to open a yoga studio that draws an eclectic crowd ranging from earthy yogis to Hill staffers.

Trading in business suits for environmentally friendly yoga clothes, the two have carved out a niche, Tranquil Space Yoga, that seems distant from the city bustle outside their 17th Street Northwest doors. Wilson, a onetime trademark paralegal for the law firm Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, now wears hot pink highlights in her hair. She began the business in her apartment, where she once led a small pack of students in classes after her workday at the law office.

As a former office warrior, Wilson is well-acquainted with the professional types who come to her studio toting briefcases.

"We have some who come into the studio with their BlackBerrys," Wilson said. "But this is a place where people come to release themselves." Students do turn off the devices for the class, she said.

As for her boyfriend, Tim Mooney is a little more wired. A "political junkie" who gets his own BlackBerry fix by continually checking for e-mails and breaking political news, Mooney barely even stretched his quads before meeting Wilson in 2004 and still only practices yoga casually. But the New York native has made Tranquil Space the headquarters of his legal career as the studio's chief operating officer and general counsel. Mooney previously worked as the senior counsel at the Alliance for Justice and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, and transitioning with the smooth grace of a yogi, enjoys his new status as a power yoga lawyer.

"There's quite a difference working at a yoga studio and filing legal briefs on rogue Members of Congress," said Mooney, who still banters about politics with Tranquil Space students. "I was actually surprised at how smooth the transition went."

Mooney has also helped expand the studio's nonprofit, Tranquil Space Foundation, into an organization that partners with community groups and D.C. schools to mentor high school girls. The groups says it "expands opportunities for girls and women to develop their inner voice through yoga, creativity, and leadership activities." The Tranquil Space Foundation's annual fundraising gala has raised more than \$8,000. The organization issues micro-grants to outside groups and is considering opening chapters in other cities.

"Kimberly had wanted to incorporate a philanthropic element in the business for a long time, and it just so happened she was dating someone who specialized in nonprofit law," Mooney explained, looking comfortable sitting on one of the studio's pillow-filled benches.

Wilson began teaching yoga nearly 10 years ago while she was working as a trademark paralegal at Finnegan Henderson. The Oklahoma native gathered a mix of students, from co-workers to newcomers, at her U Street apartment for classes each week. Drafting dry legal documents from a cubicle by day, Wilson led yoga classes at night, decorating her apartment with inspiring quotes and candles to create a small and tranquil space for the 9-to-5 crowd that evolved into Tranquil Space. Classes grew and she moved the business into a location on P Street

Northwest in 2003 until relocating to the much larger space on 17th Street.

Today, the studio combines an earthy yoga feel with a Washington pizzazz, very much like its paralegal-turned-yogi founder. A boutique at Tranquil Space sells men's and women's yoga clothes and jewelry designed by Wilson. Clever touches such as a pre-Election Day yoga class dubbed "Parties, platforms and polls: yoga for the people," entice students, who include large-firm lawyers and Capitol Hill staffers.

With her background as a paralegal, Wilson said she relates to the studio's clients who stretch their schedules as much as their limbs. Tranquil Space's calendar accommodates a lunchtime crowd with classes at noon and late-hour professionals who can squeeze in only an 8 p.m. session. The studio hosts specialty classes and retreats on the weekends, including two-day jaunts to Yogaville — an ashram in the Blue Ridge Mountains — for meditation and yoga.

"Oh, it's a shock to the city folk I take down there," Wilson jokes of the nature getaways, where cell phones barely get service and caffeine is in limited supply.

Tranquil Space also has locations in Bethesda, Md., and Arlington, Va., but its home base is on 17th Street. The location houses three studios, a full-service spa and a ground-level boutique and tea bar with Wi-Fi access. Tranquil Space has about 1,200 clients at its three locations and employs 25 teachers.

In the Zen setting that Wilson and Mooney have created, clients can type away on their laptops before class while sitting on long benches covered in soft pillows, the scent of aromatherapy oils permeating the air.

In a way, the scene all seems very Washington. And that's exactly what Wilson and Mooney are going for.

"I've always loved that a place like this exists in D.C.," Mooney said. "This is such a stressed out, go-go town, [and] people that come for their yoga fix, they completely change when they walk through the doors."