

Detox, Yoga & Dance for Africa

BY KATHRYN WILSON | MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2010 2:00 PM ET

On Sunday, Donna Karan's Urban Zen Foundation taught several New Yorkers how to take care of themselves while aiding Africans at the same time.

Dr. Frank Andolino became the executive director of Kageno (pronounced KA-GAY-NO) in a roundabout way. He always volunteered at various nonprofits from the Covenant House to the Special Olympics. After he founded his orthodontics practice in the early 90s, he became involved in Health Volunteers Overseas by participating in an orthodontics program in Vietnam.

"There's relative poverty and then there's absolute poverty," he realized. "I got to do what I was trained to do."

From then on, Andolino became a regular volunteer on these global missions, teaching dental hygiene to locals, going as far as Nepal through the organization Himalayan Healthcare. It wasn't until a friend told him about a youth-focused program in Tanzania that lacked a dental component. Andolino filled this need and afterward, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. On his way to the summit, he met a group of Peace Corps volunteers that would change his world and ours.

Rob Place told Andolino about a Kenyan community where 43 percent of the population was ravaged by HIV/AIDS. Shocked by the statistic, Andolino sent money strapped to the insides of books (so it wouldn't get stolen) to Kilungu Beach in Western Kenya, and every time he did, he would receive photographs illustrating what his donations became. Eventually Andolino became so involved that he asked Place what he would do at the end of his Peace Corps stint. Place shrugged his shoulders and said possibly go back to college and get his MBA. But Andolino had a better idea. He used his patient connections (Andolino caters to Manhattan's elite) and Place's grassroots experience to form Kageno, meaning "a place of hope."

"I've found that most people would like to do something but don't have an outlet," Andolino said. "Part of our model is to have volunteers go to work. We're not a charity. We give them a hand, not a handout."

On Sunday, Andolino did just that. He brought Africa to Manhattan's West Village and gave people an outlet to give back. Teaming up with Donna Karan (a member of Tonic's Board of Creators), Kageno sponsored a Day of Wellness in the fashion designer's Urban Zen space. For \$125 each, more than 100 men and women gathered to hear lectures by Dr. Alejandro Junger and Dr. Robert Thurman as well as participate in a yoga session led by Jordan Mailah. Each headline was brought together by Andolino.

At 10 a.m., the Day of Wellness began with an introduction by Urban Zen's Executive Director Joanne Heyman and Andolino. The pair introduced Junger, who took the floor and spoke of detoxification. Junger immigrated from Uruguay to practice medicine in the states. He served his internship at New York University medical center followed by a fellowship at Lenox Hill Hospital.

"I was eating very differently in New York than I did in Uruguay," Junger said. "I don't know if you've been to a hospital cafeteria lately, but it seems like they're trying to kill people to improve business!"



Junger soon was battling depression, irritable bowel syndrome and allergies and took seven prescriptions daily. He quit his practice and moved to an Indian monastery, adding that he "almost killed [his] poor Jewish mother." It was here where he saw doctors practicing a different kind of medicine, treating the body as a whole instead of having a pill for every ill. One year later, Junger returned to Palm Springs, Fla. where he practiced cardiology and saw patients for seven minutes at a time. Again, he grew tired of the rat race, but it wasn't until a friend showed up on his doorstep "glowing like a pregnant woman" that he began to change the way he practiced medicine.

The friend — a highly stressed movie producer from L.A. — had spent a week detoxing at We Care Spa. Junger wasted no time and booked himself a week at the retreat. After seven days, his IBS, allergies and depression were gone. Junger started practicing functional medicine, which combines Western and Eastern philosophies. He opened a practice similar to We Care's and soon, his guest bedroom had a six-month waiting list. Junger found he was on to something good.

Today, Junger is the author and founder of the Clean Program, a detoxification process that requires a liquid breakfast and dinner but unlike other programs, allows for an actual lunch. Junger explains that the reason for this difference is because liquid diets work when people are in spas but more energy is needed for people in the workforce.

"A lot of people call detoxes quackery or hokey pokey, but judging by their results, they don't have better answers either," Junger defended.

At the end of Junger's lecture, one elderly man raised his hand to ask a question. It was his father who flew all the way from Uruguay to hear his son speak. Junger humored his father but admitted that his query warranted another lecture entirely, so Urban Zen volunteers ushered participants downstairs for a yoga session led by Mailah, who also brought his mother along.

Surrounded by 20-foot images of Africans living in Kageno-sponsored



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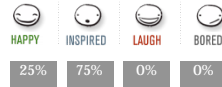
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villages, everyone took to mats and relaxed. Mallah, who specializes to transforming communities through the power of yoga, offered an icebreaker.

"I know it's odd to say hello to strangers in New York, but I want you to look at the person next to you and welcome them with a Namaste," Mallah challenged.

From then on, the group coalesced and after yoga, enjoyed a healthy lunch catered by Candle Cafe. The only bad news was that Thurman came down with the flu and couldn't attend at the last minute. Undeterred, Urban Zen's Rachel Goldstein brought in Eddie Stern of Ashtanga Yoga New York and the kirtan band Gaura Vania, and the day ended in a raucous song and dance celebration.

"It was kinda surreal," Andolino said. "While we were cleaning up, they were chanting." A day of wellness from beginning to end.



Photos by Kathryn Wilson.

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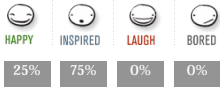
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kathryn Wilson is Tonic's Associate Editor.

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