

# Namaste:

## Lisa Black Avolio '88



*Lisa Black Avolio '88 demonstrates a deep-lunge yoga pose.*

Being part of the Lakeside community is a tradition in Lisa Black Avolio's family—her uncles, cousins, and sister all attended the school. Lisa's father, David Black '50, spent many years at Lakeside as a student, teacher, and as director of admissions.

Ironically (or as Lisa says in hindsight, "fortunately"), it was a sports injury she sustained at Lakeside that eventually led

to her vocation as the owner, director, and senior master Baptiste instructor at her two Seattle-area yoga studios.

Lisa has been a strong athlete since she was a child. At Lakeside, she participated in tennis, track, and cross country. "I've always been a runner. Sports have always been very important to me." She also excelled in the performing and visual arts, so it was a natural progression for her to pursue an undergraduate degree in art history and



*All in the family: David Black '50 (l.), Lisa Black Avolio's father, was a student, teacher, and director of admissions at Lakeside from 1966-1984.*



(L. to r.) Lisa Black Avolio with classmates Quinn Elliott and Julie West Prentice at their graduation in 1988

painting at Colby College after graduating from Lakeside in 1988.

While she was working in the National Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian, Lisa began to consider how she could use her education and skills to help people. She decided to attend graduate school at the University of Virginia, where she earned her master's degree in education for instructional technology. This led her to a career in corporate training, but she soon began to feel that something was missing from her life. The world of computer technology lacked the human connection she needed.

In 1996, Lisa explored yoga as a means to help relieve her job stress and recover from her earlier sports injury. "Yoga brought everything together—physical, spiritual, mental, emotional practice—all in one." Yoga also helped Lisa to tap into a sense of connectivity—she came to realize that there was "something greater" than what she was experiencing in her life. She decided to quit her job, sell everything, and embark upon a life journey on a six-month trip around India and Nepal.

At the time, Lisa didn't know where her journey would ultimately lead, but felt she might eventually return to Seattle and advance her corporate training career. "Little did I know... you can't go to India without having your life changed." Lisa extended her stay so that she could participate in a month-long teacher-training course and become certified as a Sivananda yoga instructor. During a ten-day medita-

tion course in Nepal, she had a vision of opening her studio. "That was when it began—even before I was a teacher. I literally pictured the place I would build, what it would be like. I pictured opening the space to support people, and now, it has happened."

In 2000, Lisa moved back to Seattle, and spent the next three years developing her yoga teaching skills. When the time was right, she opened her first studio in Ballard—SHAKTI Vinyasa (now SHAKTI West). Lisa includes the Sanskrit word, *Shakti*, in her company name because she wants the name to be inspiring. "To me, Shakti means your power, your strength, your creative potential. And it's those aspects that were really important to me in creating the business." The word Vinyasa refers to a flowing form of yoga as opposed to a more static form. "It's more of a meditative dance in which one movement flows into the next."

Lisa has put her heart and soul into her business, from hiring and training teachers and managers to creating the space for her first studio. She built it from scratch, transforming what used to be a retail store into the beautiful space it is today. "In India, your senses are stimulated by sights, sounds, taste, touch. Everything is beautiful, sensory, and colorful. When you walk in here, my hope is that while the colors are vibrant and exciting, there is also a calming quality to the atmosphere."

*At Lakeside Lisa was surrounded by motivated people who wanted to make things happen and instructors who helped give her the confidence to do whatever she wanted to do.*

Because Lisa feels so strongly that yoga is about connection and community, her instructors begin each class with introductions. "The Sanskrit word [for this] is *Sanga*—a community of people with a similar intention. The feeling is that you go from the 'I' to the 'we,' a belief awakened in me when I was traveling in Rajasthan."

While Lisa worked to create her studio, she had little time for anything else. "Finally when it opened, I said to myself, 'You know, I'm ready to meet my life partner.'"



Lisa Black Avolio '88: from instructional-technology instructor to devotee of Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga

And the first day it opened, Peter [Avolio] walked in and we've been together ever since." Lisa and Peter are now partners in their personal and professional lives. Peter is co-owner/director of SHAKTI Vinyasa Yoga East in Bellevue, where he teaches daily classes and workshops.

Both of Lisa's studios provide yoga classes in two unique styles: Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga, founded by Baron Baptiste, one of the best-known yoga teachers in the United States, and SHAKTI Vinyasa Yoga, created by Lisa in 2003. Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga is the first style of yoga that truly resonated with Lisa. "It's not just about doing the posture. It's about doing the postures that help you change your body, your mind, your outlook on life." Lisa was so taken with this style that she completed



*Lisa Black Avolio '88 in a reverse-warrior  
yoga pose*

all of Baron's teacher trainings and began assisting and teaching with him nationally and internationally. "It's a pleasure to be able to work with a master teacher of his caliber. That experience really helped propel me forward to where I am today." SHAKTI West and SHAKTI East are the only Baptiste-affiliate studios on the West coast.

Lisa attributes much of her success to the practice of yoga. "It brings you to your authenticity and truth. It brings you to whatever is holding you back: You've got to face it, and then move through it." She also feels that her years at Lakeside have played a role in her many achievements by helping her to tap her creativity through painting, drama, and music classes. As she says, "That's Shakti." Lisa also appreciates that at Lakeside, she was surrounded by motivated people who wanted to make things happen and instructors who helped give her the confidence to do whatever she wanted to do. Her parents, who have always believed in her, also have been a strong influence. Rather than trying to steer her into a particular direction in life, they gave her wings to fly.

Lisa is a passionate and enthusiastic teacher who creates a supportive, challenging, and light-hearted environment. She encourages everyone from the Lakeside community to take a class at one of her studios, *especially* those who don't think yoga is for them. "The style we teach is accessible for everyone. It's fun, inspiring, and powerful." ■