

Life & Style Two

TODAY: THE LOOK

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A place every woman can be a goddess

EVERY WOMAN WANTS a place where she can be authentically herself, mind, body and soul — nobody's mother, wife, employee or boss for an hour or two.

For many in Columbia, that place has become LuAnn Pierce's Grand Goddess Body Image Studio on Meeting Street in West Columbia.

The studio, open since last summer, offers classes, workshops, book groups, a gift shop and hangout space that hums and soothes with good energy.

"The mission is about giving women an opportunity to be whoever and whatever they want to be," said Pierce, who also is a social worker. "We offer services that promote your professional and personal life, help you realize dreams and ambitions and — as much as anything — create community."

Cara Williams of Columbia participated in a Grand Goddess art class as well as a Transitions group which addressed major life changes.



The Look

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"Transition means that you come to a point where something stops, have a period of confusion, and then go on to the next step of the transition — a new beginning," Williams said. "I was dealing with the death of my mother when I started the group, so it helped me come to a new light in seeing how I could manage my life without her, go on, and be grateful for the time I had with her."

Grand Goddess women also explore the lighter side of life, including what to wear. Pierce, who has struggled with weight and body-image problems in the past, has a succinct definition of "style" — "something every person should be able to enjoy whatever given day, mood or experience they're involved in at that time."

She designed the Grand



LISA V. HOPPER, LION'S HEAD STUDIO

LuAnn Pierce

Goddess as a place where women can not only be who they are but accept themselves that way, too.

"Accepting yourself" gets lots of lip service, but Pierce has practical ways of seeing it through. She stays away from the media — "I don't watch the news or read magazines with ads that say you need to be a certain person or look a certain way to be acceptable, because you don't ... If you know that Vogue magazine is going to make you unhappy about your thighs, don't read Vogue

magazine!" she said.

Pierce also has found power in surrounding herself with positive people.

"As much as anything, it's a matter of being vigilant about what you're willing to accept from other people regarding how and what they say to you about what you're eating, what you're wearing, how you look," she said. "If you have to give up who you are authentically around your doctor, your spouse, your mother, you've lost yourself. What purpose is that serving?"

That said, Pierce encourages women to do what they need to do to be healthy and take care of themselves.

"I don't let anyone tell me how I'm supposed to look," she said, "but I do things every day to make sure my body works well — can breathe, stays flexible, has stamina — regardless of what size it is."

Check out The Grand Goddess at www.thegrandgoddess.com or give Pierce a call at (803) 926-0340.