



the power of inspired generosity

Rex and Scarlet Jarrell are on a mission to transform their community—and the world.

by
Stephen Cope

It was a crystal-blue July morning on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and I'd been out for an early morning walk in the woods. As I wandered back to my temporary digs—in the stunning, light-filled second-floor apartment of the Vineyard's most elegant yoga studio—I passed a chalkboard announcing the morning yoga teaching schedule: "Vanessa: 7 am; Bonnie: 9 am." By the time I got back to the studio, it was nearly 7:00, and dozens of yogis had materialized out of the island mist, arriving in open Jeeps and on bicycles, drifting through the studio doors in colorful yoga togs, carrying mats and cups of tea.

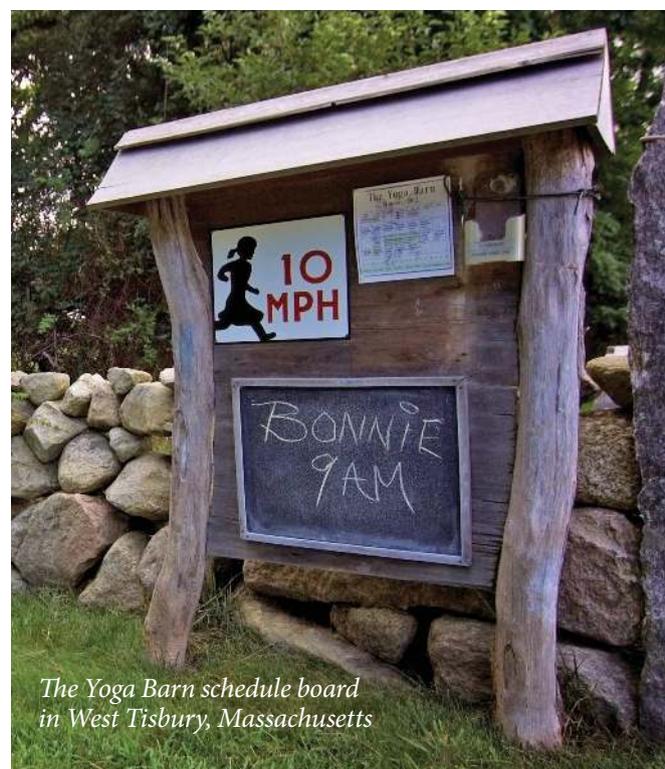
This idyllic summer scene took place at the Yoga Barn, in West Tisbury, Massachusetts, home and studio of Rex and Scarlet Jarrell. Scarlet is a certified Kripalu Yoga teacher, and Rex, her husband, is a Kripalu-trained bodyworker.

The Yoga Barn is not your average yoga studio. Anyone can see that upon first glance. It is astonishingly beautiful and elegant. But beneath its elegant surface lies something even more powerful: a clear mission to bring the gifts of yoga to bear on the challenges of a complex and diverse community. Already in its young life (it is currently in its fourth year) the Yoga Barn has hosted many of the world's leading yoga and meditation teachers—and has become an important center for community conversations. The Yoga Barn aims to serve as the hub of a yoga-inspired transformation of our society.

Rex and Scarlet have been friends of mine for years, and I've watched in delighted awe as their mission has come into focus and as they have begun to effectively operationalize it. This summer I spent two wonderful days with them in their island paradise. During our time together, we talked about yoga, about their mission, about their philanthropy—and

about an exciting collaboration between the Yoga Barn and Kripalu's Institute for Extraordinary Living (IEL). We pondered all of these issues over delicious meals, or sprawled out on the beach under a big blue beach umbrella while the couple's adorable daughters, 4-year-old Gwendolyn and 14-year-old Maisie, romped nearby with their new golden retriever puppy.

Rex and Scarlet's story is a fascinating one. Scarlet was born into a family of major American philanthropists. Her family, which is part of the family that founded the brand Johnson & Johnson in 1886, is well known for its pursuit of enlightened philanthropy. Even as a girl, Scarlet and her five brothers and sisters learned the importance of philanthropy—and the responsibilities that come with wealth. All of the siblings have been involved with the Cape Branch



The Yoga Barn schedule board in West Tisbury, Massachusetts

Foundation, a family foundation focused primarily on education and environmental protection. Generosity is very much part of the family ethos.

Not surprisingly, then, Scarlet and Rex have been inspired to think very carefully about their own philanthropy. Over the past several years, they've brought tremendous focus to refining their mission. They ponder the questions: What is our unique dharma (or sacred duty) in the world? How can our resources be leveraged for the best possible social outcome? These are extremely thoughtful, reflective, and determined folk. And I am thrilled that their mission has now crystallized so decidedly around yoga.

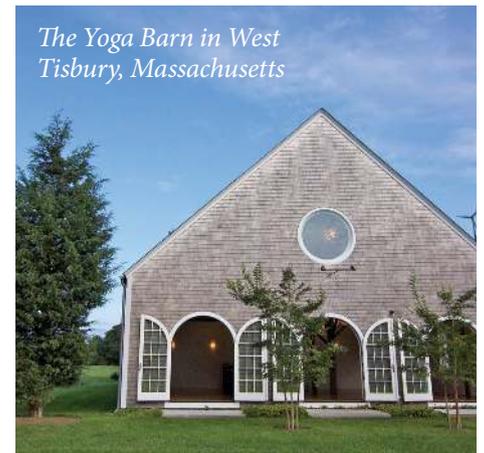
And why is the mission of this accomplished couple focused particularly around yoga? Well, it's not an exaggeration to say that yoga—and Kripalu—changed Rex and Scarlet's lives. Yoga is central to their relationship story. Scarlet met Rex on her fifth or sixth visit to Kripalu. Rex was in bodywork training; Scarlet was beginning her training as a Kripalu Yoga teacher. They fell in love in the bracing environs of Kripalu and were married a year and a half later.

So, yoga was central to their bond from the beginning. Through their exposure to training at Kripalu, they came to see the

power of yoga (and here I mean capital "Y" yoga, the full eight-limbed path) to transform individuals and society, and they began to consider planting their flag squarely in this territory. From the earliest days of their relationship, they felt the power of joining together around a mission much larger than self or even family. They sensed a mission that could transform their community—and the world.

Scarlet remembers the first stirrings of her vision. "I wanted to build a place that would be the most beautiful place in which I've ever done yoga," she says. Rex had considered the same thing: As part of his bodywork training, he'd drawn a sketch that included a "seaside healing center with flowing water and beauty all around." Together—even before they were married—they sought a property on which to bring this dream to fruition. They took stewardship of their Vineyard property the same month they were married, in 2006.

Now, just six years later, it's clear to all of us that—astonishingly—their "mission number one" is well on its way to being accomplished. They have created a beautiful sacred space, and one that is thoroughly integrated with the environment. They have built, at the Yoga Barn, a thriving yoga com-



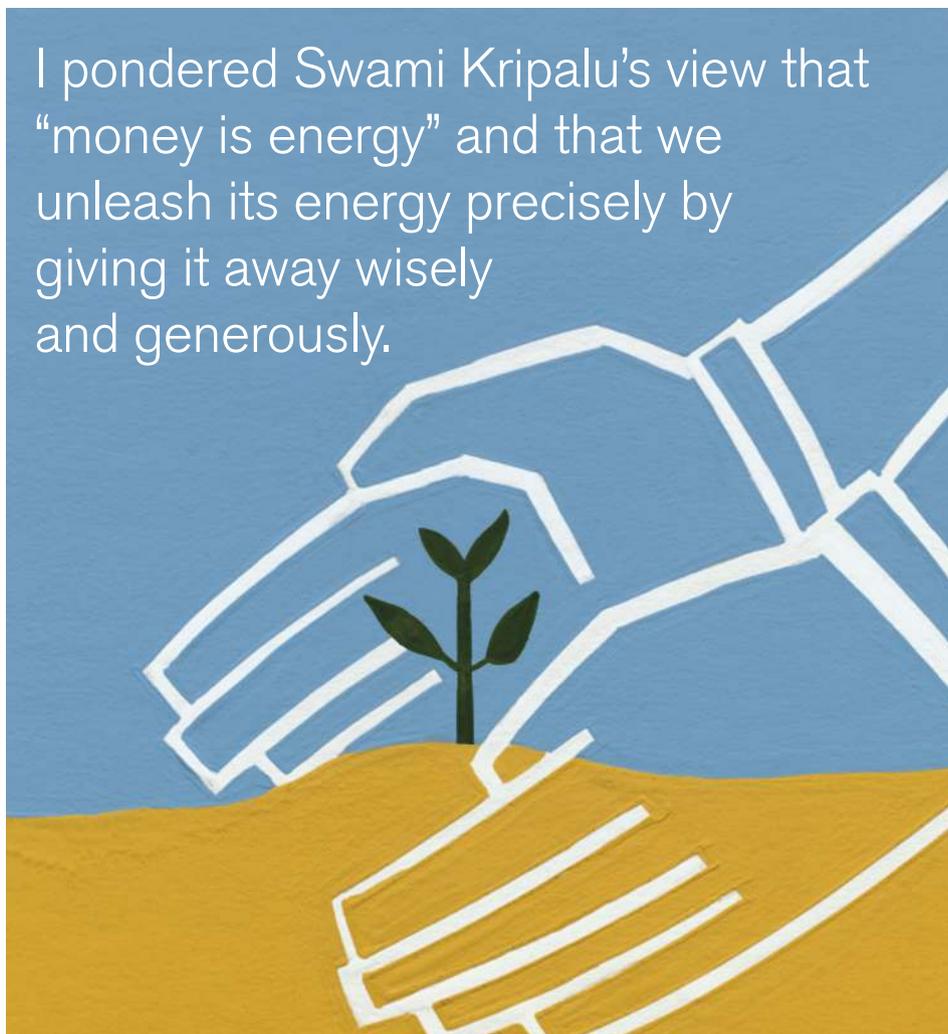
The Yoga Barn in West Tisbury, Massachusetts

munity: a community of teachers, a community of practitioners, a place for community dialogue. They have already had a real impact on the island.

It's impressive to me how quickly Rex and Scarlet have accomplished this first phase of their vision. But it's important to understand how fully this mission has been supported by their entire extended families. It's fascinating to watch the power of a family that really believes in dharma and knows how to operationalize it. Indeed, everything Rex and Scarlet do seems to be powerfully supported by their accomplished families. Scarlet's father, Jim Johnson, practiced yoga fairly intensively as a young man—long before it was really mainstream. He knows firsthand its transforming possibilities. But beyond that, Jim and Gretchen (Scarlet's mother) have encouraged their children to pay close attention to their *calling*, their mission, their passion. Jim and Gretchen probably don't have the word "dharma" on the tips of their tongues, but this is in effect what they have been encouraging Scarlet and Rex to pursue. Rex's parents were likewise supportive. When Rex was a little boy growing up on the Vineyard, his mom was one of the first students of legendary yoga teacher Bonnie Menton. And Rex's father took him and his sisters to his first yoga class when Rex was only about 13.

Over lunch on our second day together, Rex, Scarlet, and I pondered what we might call "phase two" of their mission. As we spoke, I could feel them digging into the question: How do we leverage the success of the Yoga Barn? How can we have the biggest possible impact on individuals and society? They'd recently worked with a consultant who'd challenged them to write down their *theory of change*. The challenge was to help them get clear about their real passion, how best to operationalize it, and how to bring their own investment style into alignment

I pondered Swami Kripalu's view that "money is energy" and that we unleash its energy precisely by giving it away wisely and generously.



with their values and yoga practice. They've paid close attention to how other philanthropists have managed these kinds of questions, and have been particularly inspired by Warren Buffet and Bill Gates.

For several years now, Rex and Scarlet have been generous supporters of the IEL's work. As a result of their involvement, they have now begun to see the broad outlines of the next phase of their mission: They have become committed to the IEL's Yoga in the Schools program. It seems to them (and to us at the IEL) that making a serious impact on kids is the most leveraged way to invest in yoga, and to exert its influence deeply into society.

Scarlet told me that she understood that a great percentage of adult mental-health disorders begin in adolescence. She feels particularly compelled by the challenges of this age group—and sees clearly how important healthy adolescent development is to the development of adult mental health.

Then Scarlet said something to me that sent shivers of excitement up my spine: "Our mission is to bring yoga into every school in the Northeast—within our lifetime."

Brilliant! I thought. Big goals—and big *specific* goals—are incredibly compelling.

Rex expanded on this topic: "We see that at the very heart of yoga practice is the possibility of truly *integrated learning*. We strongly believe that the whole self must be engaged in the education process: body, mind, and spirit."

He continued, "I can't help wondering what would it have been like for us—for me—if I had started yoga earlier, had learned this way of integration as a young kid. I would have been much more whole as a student."

Scarlet picked up the thread: "Our vision is really a more compassionate and creative society. Rex and I can see that a real commitment to transforming schools could help accomplish this in a most effective way."

It is impressive to me that this young couple is thinking so long-term—that they are actively concerned with what kind of world they are leaving their kids. They have already made the first moves in this new phase of their mission. With the help of the IEL, they've initiated and helped to fund a Yoga in the Schools program and study on Martha's Vineyard—which has had a very successful first year. They are also thinking ahead by examining questions such as how to train yoga teachers to teach most effectively in schools.

Most excitingly for us at the IEL, Scarlet and Rex—as a result of their clarity about "phase two" of their mission—have offered vital and robust financial support to the IEL's schools mission. The Cape Branch Foundation, with Scarlet and Rex's support, has made a grant of \$225,000 to the IEL. This is in addition to their earlier substantial gifts—including a \$30,000 grant from Cape Branch. We hope that Rex and Scarlet's commitment to this program will inspire other donors to step forward as well.

Rex and Scarlet have made it clear that they will continue to support and collaborate with the IEL as we move toward our own goal of implementing a truly longitudinal study of the effects of yoga on kids. They support our efforts to move the Yoga in the Schools curriculum into earlier grade levels, and to study the effects of yoga practice over the trajectory of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.

In our final conversation of the visit, it became clear to me how similar our thinking is. First of all, I can see that Rex and Scarlet are very much *thinking globally, but acting locally*. They are very rooted in their island home, and are committed to making an impact there—but in such a way that that impact can be leveraged into our society at large. And secondly, they understand *the power of collaboration*, and see it as a way of building and enjoying community.

My two days with Rex and Scarlet and their delightful family were fun, exciting, and inspiring. As I relaxed on the deck of the ferry from Vineyard Haven back to the mainland, I looked back fondly on Martha's Vineyard as it receded into the distance. I thought about Rex and Scarlet's generosity. And I pondered Swami Kripalu's view that "money is energy" and that we unleash its energy precisely by *giving it away wisely and generously*. I felt how privileged I am to be able to live in this "field of generosity" that Swami Kripalu inspired—and how much I love having a beautiful mission to give my life to. But more than anything, on this trip back to the mainland, I felt the joy of having wonderful, generous, inspired friends with whom to share this field. ■

Stephen Cope, MSW, is Director of the *Kripalu Institute for Extraordinary Living*. A psychotherapist and senior Kripalu Yoga teacher, he is author of *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*; *The Wisdom of Yoga: A Seeker's Guide to Extraordinary Living*; and *The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling*.

Changing the world, one classroom at a time

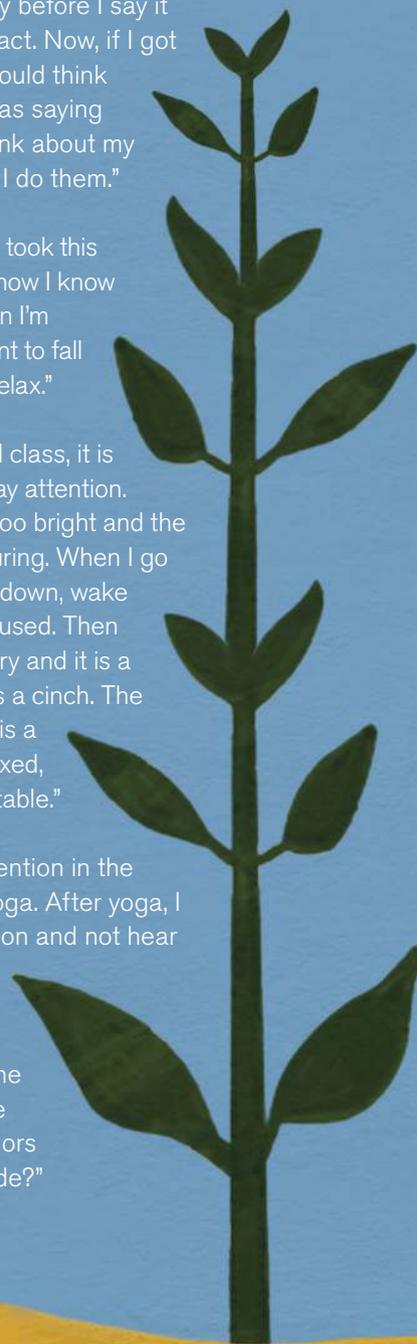
What students in the IEL's Yoga in the Schools program say about yoga

"Yoga helps me calm down, it helps me to step back and breathe and think about what I'm about to say before I say it and not overreact. Now, if I got into a fight, I would think about what I was saying and I would think about my actions before I do them."

"I'm really glad I took this class because now I know what to do when I'm stressed, or want to fall asleep, or just relax."

"In my A-period class, it is a struggle to pay attention. The lights are too bright and the teacher is lecturing. When I go to yoga, I calm down, wake up, and get focused. Then I go to Geometry and it is a cinch. French is a cinch. The rest of the day is a cinch. I am relaxed, focused, and stable."

"I don't pay attention in the class before yoga. After yoga, I can pay attention and not hear everyone else. I can focus better. Do you realize this is the first time I have made high honors since third grade?"



To learn more about the IEL's Yoga in the Schools program, please contact Edi Pasalis at 413-448-3276.