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# CAPITAL LIVING

# Pole-sters

Capitol Hill women burn stress, stay in shape with 'exoterobics'

By Kris Kitto

Cara Carroll was searching online for a spin class when she came upon a fitness option a bit more ... exotic.

Carroll, a former lobbyist and congressional staffer who now does labor relations for the Service Employees International Union, was looking to get in shape for her June wedding, and something about The P Spot studio's "exoterobics" program intrigued her. She read the testimonials on the studio's website and decided to sign up for a class.

"It was fun but really painful," she says of her first time at the studio. "And I thought I was going to die and not make it through the 45-minute class."

The P Spot may be making a few more female congressional staffers lives' miserable, as it relocates this week to a bigger space on Capitol Hill and attempts to lure in the wonkish crowd with discounts and recess specials for the women of Congress. The exercise program is nothing to be ashamed of, Carroll, owner Michaela Brown and other clients insist. Its strip, pole, chairwork and floorwork classes are "really just ... fitness class[es] with different equipment and in higher heels," Carroll says.

Brown's new studio opens Friday at 518 10th St. NE, the latest success in her quest to help women find "fun, creative ways to work out." Though her exercise of choice may seem racy, "I approach pole-dancing strictly from a physical-fitness point of view," Brown says, and she has already attracted women who work in Congress, the White House, executive agencies and other high-profile places to the business she originally started in the basement of a Northeast Washington rowhouse.

Brown has an athletic background. She played field hockey at Georgetown University and earned several fitness certifications as a personal trainer at Washington Sports Clubs before starting her own training business. When the striptease-aerobics exercise fad emerged several years ago, she bought a few of the videos to try it out.

She found nature of the routines liberating, which she liked, but wanted to increase their physical challenge. Exoterobics was born.

"Fitness-wise, this is not any different from any other intense fitness program," Brown says. "The difference is this is easier on the eyes."

For client Kristin Oland, the program is also easier on the body. The international logistics specialist at the Energy Department decided to give pole fitness a try after having done mixed martial arts for several years.

"[I] decided I needed a change of pace and do something sexy and feminine instead of getting the crap beaten out of me," she says.



COURTESY OF THE P-SPOT

Michaela Brown teaches "exoterobics" to a group of women.

Oland says she had no qualms about going to her first exoterobics class, but she did get some strange reactions from her family.

"My parents certainly looked at me cross-eyed at first," she says. "But I started sending them videos of what I was doing, and they said they couldn't believe they have a daughter who can hang from a pole by a single toe."

**"IT'S REALLY ABOUT A WAY TO MAKE FITNESS FUN AND KIND OF INTERESTING AND SOMETHING THAT'S APPEALING TO YOU."**

Cara Carroll The P-Spot client

"People have this stigma of these pole dances being done by women in G-strings, but it's gymnastics, essentially," says Oland, who is currently working on perfecting a handspring mount into the "jackknife" position. Oland, who has been doing pole fitness for two years, has become so advanced that she plans to enter the U.S. Pole Dancing East Coast Regional Championships in 2011.

Oland, who works on nuclear nonproliferation issues, has told her colleagues that she does pole-dancing for fitness, and they think nothing of it, she says.

"I think I'm the highlight of people's days — I wear my six-inch heels into the office," she jokes. "To me ... it's about knowing who you are and bringing your free spirit into the office."

Brown says she does encounter working women who worry about what pole-dancing fitness would do to their professional image, but she assures them that, at her females-only gym, "the focus is not on being a pole dancer; the focus is on being fit and healthy women."

She says she already has a good number of congressional and White House staffers among her approximately 4,200 clients, but she's looking to tap into that sector even more in her new location.

"It's about unleashing something in you — especially if you work on the Hill or in the White House, you have to pretty much keep it together all the time. This is the one opportunity a day to just be yourself," she says. "A lot of times the first things to go when you're in a job like that are your exercise and nutrition. And those are your saving graces ... People like that need this the most."

As for Carroll, she estimates she's lost between 15 and 20 pounds since starting to work out at The P Spot. She has been able to work a few 45-minute classes into her weekly schedule and says she has met women of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, professions and fitness levels there.

"It's really about a way to make fitness fun and kind of interesting and something that's appealing to you," she says.

**ABOUT THE P SPOT:**

The P Spot is having a relocation party Friday at 6 p.m. at 518 10th St. NE.

Website: [www.bringitupsexy.com](http://www.bringitupsexy.com)

Brown says she will offer a year-round 20 percent discount to congressional staffers, and she also plans to run specials during congressional recesses.

