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Faces Of Kansas City: Sumya Anani 6-24-2010

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In this week's Faces of Kansas City, anchor Brad Stephens introduces viewers to a local woman who is an example of how opposites truly do attract.

It doesn't take long for most people to figure out Sumya Anani is at peace with herself. In fact, she might be one of the most peaceful persons that most people will ever meet.

The Shawnee, Kan., native has a calming, yet inspirational effect on her yoga students who are stretching their limits to improve their minds, bodies and spirits.

"It's the most important thing in our lives, our health," she said. "You can have all the money in the world, but if you don't have health, who cares? I think people are really starting to understand that health is the foundation."

Inside a dome just off Interstate 35 in Mission, Kan., Anani is helping to bring balance into people's lives through her yoga instruction, nutrition classes, kids summer camps, even the high-flying acrobatic practice of aerial silks.

The Sumya Anani most people remember lives a life that blends serenity and athletic grace.

Anani was coaxed into boxing in the mid-1990s by a friend and became an overnight sensation in a sport she knew little about.

"I had no money," she said. "No car. I was living at home with my mom and my son. The fight paid \$400 and I was like, 'OK, I could use the cash.'"

Anani took the sport of boxing by storm, knocking out opponents with her relentless bruising style. Within a few years, she had risen to the top of her profession, claiming four world championship boxing titles.

Inside the ring, she was a bull. Outside the ring — just as she is today — a picture of serenity.

"People when they ask me, 'How can you justify both? They seem so opposite,'" she said. "Boxing taught me to defend myself from physical opponents. Yoga teaches me to defend myself from the opponent up here. This is our worst enemy."

A former Golden Gloves champion, Barry Becker, convinced Anani to get into the ring. He was he's dismayed that she is now out of it.

"If she ever comes out of retirement, she'll set the world on fire," he said.

Anani hasn't had a professional fight in years. Becker blames politics and the lack of a big-time promoter.

"If she took a fight with a world champion, she'd beat every one of them," he said.

And he might be right. But for now, Anani said she is at peace with herself.

"Now I'm not in the ring anymore, but I still want to beat the health out of you," she said. "I want to bring health into homes. Help people get stronger physically, mentally and spiritually."

When asked if she'd ever get back into the ring, Anani said she has contacted HBO and will come out of retirement if they ever televise a women's boxing match.

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