

Be a butterfly at Learning2Fly

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NEWS EDITOR

For **Sumya Anani**, a four-time world champion boxer, trainer, and now owner of an aerial studio, everyone's a butterfly.

In fact, the butterfly is the logo of her latest venture: Learning2Fly, the first aerial fitness, circus arts and yoga center in the Kansas City area.

The center is housed in the white geodesic dome building at 4711 Lamar Ave., Mission, near Interstate 35.

"It is all about the process of transformation, from cocoon to beautiful butterfly," Anani said. "It's all about the process of transformation and changing your mind and recognizing there's nothing you can't do once you eliminate the limits from your thoughts."

Anani, who opened Learning2Fly a year ago, said she was first introduced to the concept while visiting a friend in Colorado in 2006.

"She was taking a class in silks and so I joined her," Anani said. "There was nothing like that in Kansas City, so I went back to Colorado the next year and did some more classes."

"I came back to Kansas City and started traveling a lot, studying and learning. This is something the whole family can do."

When you think of Learning2Fly, think of the circus trapeze, think of Cirque du Soleil, and think of yoga classes in the air. There also are Hula-Hoop dance classes, nutrition classes, and week-long summer camps for youngsters.

Anani leases the first three floors of the five-floor dome. The first floor is the aerial studio, 21 feet high with several rig points that hold silk drapes, lyras

(hoops or rings), ropes, hammocks, and trapeze bars. The second level is the bathroom area and the third level is the yoga studio.

"There's going to be an area where I eventually will have a kitchen where we can have nutrition classes and teach people how to eat," she said. "Right now, our nutritional teacher brings food to the dome and teaches classes."

"This (dome) also is a community center where there are lots of different kinds of activities. We have group rates and specials and rent the dome out for bachelorette parties, birthday parties, ladies luncheons; we rent it out for all kinds of things."

Anani, also a yoga instructor, teaches her butterflies yoga positions while they are in the air. But there are two rules everyone must follow.

"Rule No. 1 is you may not use the word 'can't' except in the sense of there's nothing I can't do," she said. "You won't believe how many times people within an hour say they can't do this, they can't do that. You may not be able to do it today, but if you practice, you'll get it."

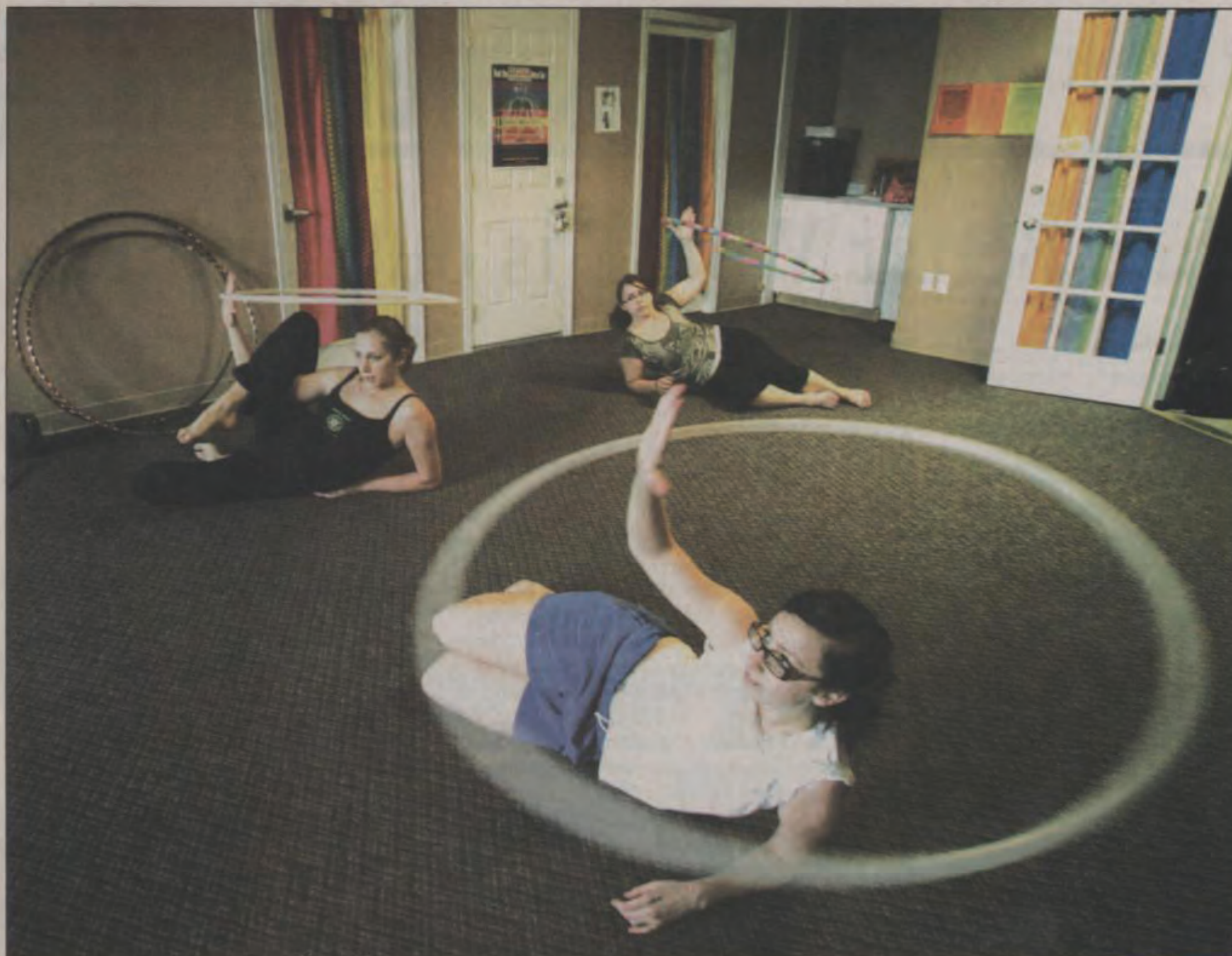
"Rule No. 2 is there is no negative self talk like 'I'm not strong enough to do this.' How do you build the strength but through practice?"

"Think about how many self-defeating, self-limiting thoughts we have about ourselves throughout just a day."

"I want people to know that this space is about encouraging people to discover their potential."

There are more women than men taking part, she said. Most are between the ages of 35 and 55.

But there are classes with



LINDA FRIEDEL/SUN PHOTOS

WEEKLY RITUAL: Ashley Nicole, St. Joseph, Mo., front, Andrea Kolkmeier, Kansas City, Mo., left, and Helen Nickerson, Grandview, Mo., work out weekly in a Hula-Hoop dance class at Learning2Fly Aerial Fitness Training, Circus Arts & Yoga, 4711 Lamar, Mission. Classmates say hooping is fun and meditative and burns calories.

students from 7 to 77 years of age.

"My best student is a 65-year-old male," she said.

Fees are per session or per month. Go to www.iam-learning2fly.com for a full schedule and cost information.

The week-long summer camps include teaching youth the seven habits of health.

"Those are nutrition, exercise, personal growth and education, family, community environment, spirituality, and global activism," Anani said. "They watch movies about nutrition, climb and play on the aerial stuff, take nature hikes in the woods, and watch videos about the environment."

"There is a community garden in front of the dome



HOLD THAT POSE: Kathy Stringer, Overland Park, front, in red silk hammock, holds a pose along with other students during an aerial yoga class at Learning2Fly. Aerial yoga develops core strength, flexibility and spatial awareness.

where they will work in the garden and they get to take home tomatoes; they learn

how to grow food and where it comes from.

"It's a very holistic camp,

not just a fitness gym."

Anani, in her spare time, also helps train her 20-year-old son **Mathew** in boxing.

But her main focus is Learning2Fly.

"I want people to know that this is not a space for just athletes, only people who can do pull-ups or people who are really strong," she said.

"Most of the people who come in are not able to do one pull-up, but after a couple of times, I show them different modifications that help them build their strength and within two or three classes they are climbing a silk."

"The response has been great. It's fun, it's empowering, it's a combination of yoga, dance, acrobatics, pilates and gymnastics."