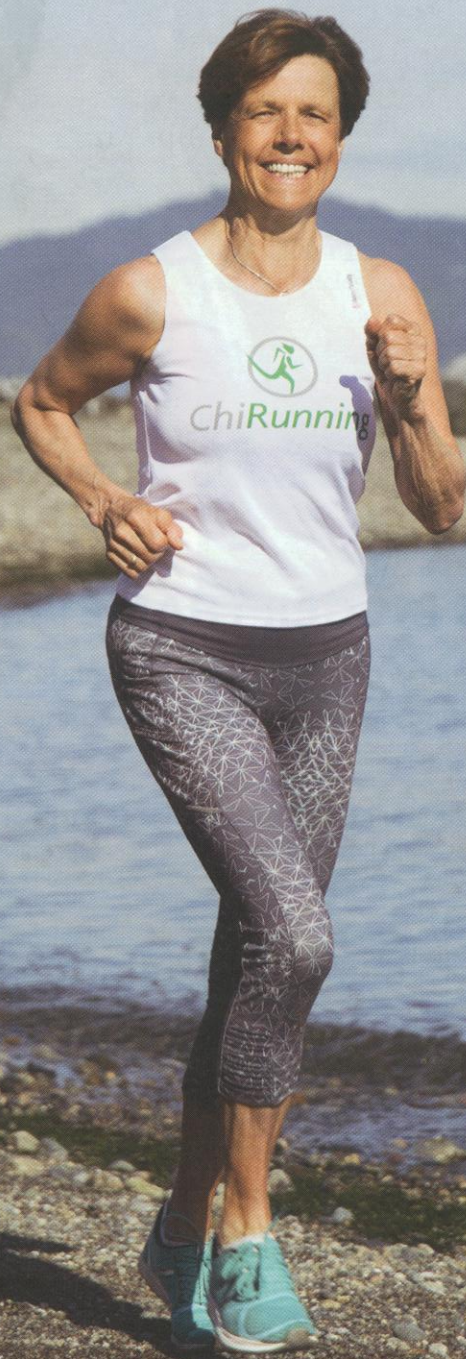


JUNE 2017

# Point Grey

An exclusive magazine for the residents  
of Point Grey and West Point Grey

*Living*



Best Version Media



*The Athletic Life of Angela James*

*Photo by Sarah Virag Photography*



## The Athletic Life of Angela James

By Richard Forzley

Master ChiRunning and walking instructor Angela James says that learning the technique is like riding a bike—it takes focus and practice.... once you incorporate it into your body, muscle memory kicks in and it becomes intuitive. “By using the principles of tai chi—alignment and relaxation—it enables people to run and walk using sound body mechanics that help prevent injury. Ultimately, you’ll suffer less hip, back, knee and lower limb pain and be able to run for years to come,” she says.

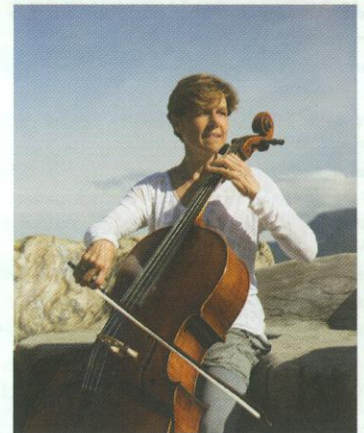
**“Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.”**

*Ancient Chinese Proverb*

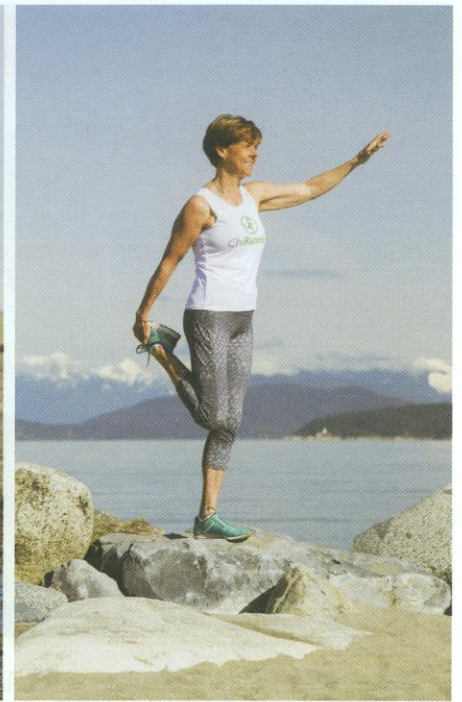
The basics of this relatively new approach to running are spelled out in the movement’s bible, *ChiRunning: A Revolutionary Approach to Effortless, Injury-Free Running*, by Danny and Katherine Dreyer. Inspired by tai chi, the Chinese martial art claims to generate the life energy (chi) flowing throughout your body. Because of the mindful nature of this practice, ChiRunning

aims to train the body to stay centered and calm, leading to efficient yet powerful movement.

The technique to ChiRunning stresses several core principles: focus your mind, sense your body, breathe to tap into Chi, relax your muscles, get aligned, create balance, and start slow. Runners are encouraged to focus on keeping the spine



straight with a slight forward lean and bent knees. Propulsion is gained by co-operating with the force of gravity, attained through the lean and landing midfoot directly under the body. Theoretically directing your attention to the form and technique of running, you’ll reduce stress on the body,



resulting in fewer injuries, improved speed and more relaxing and enjoyable runs. “Finding an easier way to run takes continual practice but over time you learn to relax and think about form. Ultimately your runs become more efficient and you end up having fewer injuries.

“Chi has been a major game changer in my life. When I first learned to apply the principles, it was strictly all about running to prevent being injured. With the passage of

time, it became clear that these sound principles, which are deeply rooted in the ancient practice of tai chi, can be applied to many other areas of life. ChiRunning and ChiWalking fundamentally changed my approach to so many aspects of life. I have applied these principles to other areas of my life, and they have taken me to another level.

“I love to run, bike and swim and have taken part in many local

running events and triathlons,” Angela says. “At this point, I’ve run 35 marathons and many half-marathons as well as 10K runs. In 2008, I did Iron Man Canada in Penticton. Now I combine my love of running with coaching others to run efficiently and to experience the joy of running rather than feeling beaten up afterwards.” Overall she is an avid athlete, playing tennis and squash at the Arbutus Club “...where we’ve been members since 1983.

if that’s not enough, Angela hikes the Grouse Grind on a regular basis and loves cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. At 61 years of age, this is no mean feat.

“We love living in Point Grey and have been here since 1983 except for a 10-year hiatus when I lived in the Cowichan Valley and used to commute to Vancouver on weekends. I met my current partner Joe Charron in 1998 in Cobble Hill where I was living at the time. He’s a furniture maker extraordinaire as well as a very talented songwriter/musician. We fell in love and have been together ever since. I have actually been in this area for 34 years. We originally moved here because of the proximity to the beach and other local amenities.

“For me, running gives me an overall sense of well being and aliveness -- it’s the most empowering activity I know. It’s freedom, it’s a feeling of energy, it’s time alone when creative ideas come to me. It’s great conversations and sharing on a deep level when running with friends. And, of course, it’s the endorphins!” And

*Continued on next page...*

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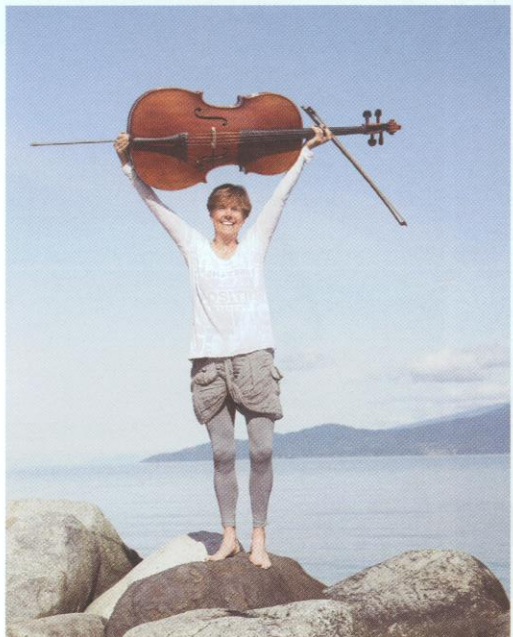
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“My favorite place to run is at Jericho and Spanish Banks. I swim almost every day at Jericho from June to October. The central location is perfect with access to all the great arts and entertainment we have in Vancouver. We follow the Jericho Folk Club and play there every year, and love the Jericho Arts Theatre, concerts at the Chan centre and lunch time concerts at UBC music school.”

Angela has three sons Ben (33), Tom (31) and Will (28) who all seem to have the family enthusiasm for tennis, squash, hockey and running. Ben, an Engineer with a degree from Queen’s, is married with two boys, James (5) and Luke (3) “I feel so fortunate to be a Granny. It’s become such

a big part of my life. My son Tom finished a degree in neuroscience at Dalhousie. He volunteered with Big Brothers and now runs his own business, Bonham Wills and Associates. Our youngest son worked at Tapestry for years while at school and still does part-time work there. He is trained as an Early Childhood educator.”

Angela claims two other great passions in life. “I started learning the cello when I was 14 and played in the school orchestra in England. Although I’m classically trained, I can now play with Joe on some of his original songs.

“Traveling is probably my other greatest passion ... I was a marathon coach for Team in Training

at the Leukemia and Lymphoma society for a decade between 2003 and 2013,” she says. “We traveled extensively to marathon destinations in North America and Europe, raising money for the cause. These days I usually plan my trips around an event or the opportunity to coach ChiRunning, most recently travelling to Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

“I am a huge believer in maintaining a sense of community in our neighborhood. So we take advantage of all the local stores and restaurants. I also encourage local initiatives such as this magazine because it’s important to get the word out there about who lives in the neighborhood and what’s going on locally.

Joe and I have always been very community minded and get together for neighborhood parties, often hosting concerts at our house for local musicians both in the Folk and classical music world.”

What are her last words of advice for all the runners and weekend athletes out there? “Running doesn’t have to be hard and it doesn’t have to hurt. I feel compelled to share what I’ve learned with other runners who will benefit in the same way. Whether you’re a seasoned runner in marathon training or you’re just getting started, ChiRunning will help you run with ease, energy and joy. And you don’t need to have taken tai chi classes for ChiRunning to work wonders for you.”

***Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at [LPLegare@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:LPLegare@bestversionmedia.com).***