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Radiant heat enhances comfort at cancer treatment retreat

ORCAS ISLAND, WASH. — When Dee Hein was 28, her mother died just six weeks after being diagnosed with cancer. During those six weeks, Hein and her brother were their mother's full-time caregivers, doing all they could to make her final days a little more comfortable.

They were difficult times, filled with stress, treatments, long trips to the hospital and very little rest. As a result of her experience, Hein used an inheritance from her mother to give others what she and her family desperately wanted at that time — a place in nature to heal and connect.

Hein bought a four-bedroom house on Orcas Island, 20 miles off the coast of northwest Washington, and transformed it into the place of her dreams. The setting is far away from the turmoil and drama of cancer treatments, the poking and prodding, harried appointments and interrupted home life.

The house is situated on 25 acres of flowering gardens, ponds, a flowing stream crossed by an arched bridge, and trails winding through the woods with sheltered sitting areas. Hein calls it Sadh Desha (sounds like "Sod-Daa-sha"), a Sanskrit term meaning "a place to reclaim that which is divine in us, that which intends us to heal nature, heal ourselves, serve, give and rejoice."

Now, seven years after her mother's death, Hein is preparing Sadh Desha for its third season as a free retreat for those with cancer and their families and friends.

As a yoga instructor, Hein knows the many benefits of finding a quiet place for rest and meditation. Yoga lessons softly punctuate the experience for guests of the retreat.

Experts believe the ancient practice of yoga can delay or reduce the progression of disease. It's also been

reported that yoga helps alleviate side effects of some treatment drugs.

Yoga also can be helpful in creating a healthy immune system by reducing anxiety and helping manage stress. It is a form of exercise that can be adapted to one's level of energy and stamina. Yoga also offers something positive for patients to do to help counteract feelings of depression, helplessness and despair.

Hein financed the remodeling of a garage on the property, turning it into a yoga studio complete with an extensive radiant heat system manufactured by Watts Radiant of Springfield, Mo.

Hein chose John Miller, a new construction and remodeling contractor who lives on the island, to do the job. One of her first questions had to do with bringing warmth into a building that previously had no heat.

"She wanted an option to forced air," says Miller. "Considering the building's planned use as a yoga studio, radiant heat was the perfect match."

Hein adds, "Where better than to put the heat into the floor, especially considering that it's the surface we spend all of our time on when we're in the yoga studio. A cold floor can be quite uncomfortable and distracting, especially for patients who are sensitive to this." (Between chemotherapy treatments, it's common for patients to struggle with poor blood circulation.)

Electric radiant was chosen over hydronic heat because of the expense. The building didn't have a boiler or other source for hot water.

"We selected the Suntouch electric mat system because of its reputation and ease of installation," explains Miller. "The radiant system was promptly designed and the heat load was accurately assessed by the man-



Cancer patients derive great benefit from yoga, which has been shown to relieve much of the discomfort caused by chemotherapy drugs. Yoga is best practiced on a warm floor, which the retreat provides thanks to a Suntouch electric mat system manufactured by Watts Radiant.

ufacturer."

The job called for 560 square feet of radiant heat covered by an engineered beechwood floor manufactured in Switzerland.

Installation of the 220-volt system — and the cement that covered it — was a three-day job for Miller and one assistant. "Not bad for first-time installers," says Miller. "Much of the time was spent mixing and applying a thin protective coat of cement over the wire mat."

The cement helps to spread and retain the heat, and gives the wood

flooring a solid surface on which to rest.

"We had some questions along the way, and even a glitch or two, but we found that the technical support professionals were easily accessible and very helpful," Miller adds.

Watts Radiant engineer Tony Ledford, who designed the Suntouch system for the yoga studio, says that a total of four equally sized mats were used to assure balanced heat.

"The system provides up to 40 Btuh of heat [drawing 12 watts] per square foot," Ledford explains. "There are



Because the garage converted into an exercise room had no boilers or other hot-water source, Miller chose electric radiant heat. A total of 560 square feet of Suntouch radiant mat provides as much as 40 Btuh/sq. ft. to the floor. The 220-volt system is controlled by seven-day a.m./p.m. programmable thermostats.

also two seven-day AM/PM programmable thermostats, each of which has one 24- by 60-inch mat and one 24- by 80-inch mat. Each mat is hard-wired to a T-state. The system takes just 30 minutes to heat up.”

After experiencing the comfort of the system, Hein comments, “The radiant heat is so well-suited to yoga. People have commented about how cozy they feel. It’s especially important for yoga to be practiced in a com-

fortable setting.”

Sadh Desha is available to cancer patients and their loved ones free of charge on a limited basis (up to five weeks). To finance the retreats for cancer patients, Dee rents Sadh Desha separately from the cancer retreats. Included in the price for individual, family or group retreats are three 90-minute yoga classes, use of a large, fully stocked kitchen, a spa, and access to the entire 25-acre

property. Massage, acupuncture, therapeutic touch and additional group or individual yoga classes are also available.

Sadh Desha is 10 miles from the 6,000-acre Moran State Park. Visitors to Orcas Island can enjoy deep, virgin forests, beaches, mountain trails, lakes, kayaking and whale watching.

A recent visitor to Sadh Desha comments on the experience: “When I walk under the cedar-shake roof,

through the wood gate and onto the garden path, I feel a letting go, like nothing bad can happen here. I like to sit on the edge of the small dock extending into one of Dee’s ponds, dip my feet in the water — and sometimes even my whole body — or just sit in the wood chairs on the deck of the house and watch the beauty of nothing happening. Here, we all heal.”

For more information on the retreat, log onto www.sadhdesha.com.



Installing the Suntouch mat was a snap. Much of the three days’ installation was spent mixing and pouring the floor’s thin layer of cement. The cement provided thermal mass and a stable floor to support the Swiss-made engineered wood surface. Contractor John Miller had never installed an electric radiant floor, but with tech help from Watts, had no problems. “Not bad for first-time installers,” Miller says.