

**Source:** MileHighNews.com (The Golden Transcript)

## **‘Me and my body’**

*Class teaches tots how bodies work internally*

by Megan Quinn, January 24, 2008

Eliza Parker has a skeleton, and she isn't afraid to use it.

Parker dreamed up a unique idea to teach preschool-age kids anatomy by using her background in the Feldenkrais method, which aims to increase human function by increasing self-awareness through movement.

With her two-foot-tall skeleton Huey at her side, Parker will teach the six-week “Me and My Body” class at Golden Pilates starting Saturday, Feb. 2.

It may seem a little young for children to learn about bones and muscles, but Parker said the class is much more than just anatomy. A subject that would normally put high-schoolers to sleep has been redesigned and shaken up to get small children to understand not only that their bodies are filled with squishy, sturdy things like bones and muscles, but that their squishy, bony body is something to love and respect.

The class seeks to foster positive self image at a time when kids are most impressionable — and curious.

“It’s never too early to start. Three- and 4-year-olds have this fresh curiosity just bubbling out of them,” Parker said. “My desire is to create an environment that can foster healthy respect for themselves and their self-image.”

During the parent-child class, kids and their caregivers will explore body systems, such as bones, joints and systems like the immune and nervous system. The class uses hands-on activities like dancing, games and lots of models to teach kids what their body does for them.

And then there’s Huey, a visual tool that Parker said is indispensable even for adults who visit her for Feldenkrais classes. Sometimes even adults have misconceptions about how joints move or how bones nestle together, she said.

“Everybody loves to play with him,” Parker said, bending the skeleton’s knee.

Cheryl McEachran, one of the owners of Golden Pilates, where the class will be held, said she had never heard of a class like Parker’s before.

“The way she integrates information about the whole body is unique,” McEachran said. “You’re probably not going to find a class like this in the Denver metro area.”



Parker hopes “Me and My Body” will help young kids take ownership of their body and listen to what it has to say. The class also encourages kids to be able to communicate pain, discomfort or new feelings more freely and clearly.

“It’s about learning for themselves so that the body becomes something that they know about, not just something the doctor tells them about when they are sick,” she said. “It asks kids, ‘What is your experience?’”

Parker came up with the idea to teach the class while she was living in her home state of North Carolina. The class was born out of her love for anatomy and physiology and her admiration for preschoolers’ inherent curiosity. After doing a few sessions, she realized the implications the class had for teaching kids how to respect and accept their bodies as they are.

“You see the effects of attitudes learned early and the habits we develop,” she said.

Parents are instrumental in helping to guide their child’s self-image after the class is over.

The class is also a way for parents to learn how to better communicate with kids when they ask tough questions.

“It’s a way for parents to explore too, so when kids ask them questions, they have a way of exploring the answer together by saying, ‘Let’s get a book or let’s make a game out of it,’” Parker said.

McEachran thinks the class will leave a positive impression on children.

“Thinking back to when my son was a toddler, he was so curious about how things work, and it’s a wonderful time to introduce them to who they are,” she said.

*Golden Community Editor Megan Quinn can be reached at 303-279-5541 ext. 233.*

### **Feedback**

**February 23, 2008 | 07:39 AM**

What a wonderful idea! Self image and body is one of the biggest problems in our society today. It would be wonderful to have this in preschools and school as a part of the children's health class.

*Nancy Glassgow, Tempe, AZ*

**PT/Feldenkrais practitioner/Pilates Instructor**

**January 25, 2008 | 09:54 PM**

Thanks for this great work, we are doing a similar project in LA for a Charter School using Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement for 5th graders with the bending skeleton and they are loving it....

*Stacy Barrows, PT, GCFP, PMA PI, LA, CA*

**January 25, 2008 | 07:02 PM**

I think this is an incredible age to tap into the curiosity that children have and develop awareness that may direct them in the care of themselves or in their future direction of education.

*Cici Runge, Boulder, CO*

**January 25, 2008 | 06:36 AM**

It is refreshing to read of Eliza Parker's new teaching concept for 3 and 4 year olds. This method will ease children in to a less confusing image of the importance of self and how the self grows into a positive person. Thank you for reporting on this topic.

*Deanna Schwartz, Keysville, VA*