

BUSINESS

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## Charlotte's Hilliard Studio Method is growing again

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Women participate in an exercise class at Hilliard Studio Method Wednesday, July 23, 2014. **TODD SUMLIN** - [tsumlin@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:tsumlin@charlotteobserver.com)

The mother-daughter duo that started a fitness craze in Myers Park is expanding again – though not exactly in the conventional sense.

Before Christmas, [Hilliard Studio Method](#) will launch a new website that will allow users to live-stream classes. Liz Hilliard, who created the Pilates-like workout [in 2008](#), describes the digital growth as a first step in reaching new clients who haven't taken classes at the studio's two brick-and-mortar locations.

Hilliard, now 62, started Hilliard Studio Method to help her daughter-turned business partner, Clary, get ready for her wedding almost a decade ago. Hilliard describes the workout as a core-focused, low-impact Pilates-like regimen that incorporates weights and resistance training. It works for people of all ages, Hilliard added.

“That energy (in a live class) is strong, so to be able to put that out virtually, that people can be involved in our studio even if they’re living in Nebraska or something, is a very cool concept,” Hilliard said.

The upscale studio’s virtual growth comes right as Liz Hilliard gets ready to launch her book, “Be Powerful: Find Your Strength at Any Age,” a mantra that’s inscribed in part at Hilliard’s flagship location at 516 Fenton Place in Myers Park. It also comes months after the Hilliards opened their second location in Davidson this past summer.

Hilliard Studio Method has created almost a cult-like following among its clientele – mostly women, many of them working professionals – since its inception. Liz and Clary also already offer about 25 workout classes on DVDs. A single class is \$27, according to Hilliard’s website, and access to live-streamed classes will depend on the level of membership users purchase.

For Liz Hilliard, the digital expansion marks a pivotal change for Hilliard Studio Method. There are few workout regimens currently offered via live stream – the two Hilliard has studied include Peloton cycling and Ballet Beautiful.

So the leap into the digital world, Hilliard said, is “scary in the best way possible.”

“To me, if it’s something scary, then I probably need to do it,” Hilliard said. “This workout takes you outside your comfort zone. Whenever you’re outside your comfort zone, you’re going to make things happen. You’re not working within your own limitations.”

The Hilliards were just in New York for a mini book tour, and to drum up interest among locals for their routine. The interest in their workouts was so strong that the Hilliards decided they will make another trip up Jan. 21, when they will rent a Tribeca studio to host two to three classes to introduce more New Yorkers to their workout routine.

They’re not opening a new studio in New York just yet, but Liz Hilliard said it is an idea they are considering, given their growth trajectory.

“We love Davidson, that was a logical step to open a studio there. But instead of just going to little small towns, we’re thinking New York City would be a great spot because we already have people inviting us up,” Hilliard said.