

# There's something in the way they move at Ember

## *Heatherly, Hutt promote similar vision for fitness*

By David Laprad

Heather Heatherly and Kelly Hutt didn't set out to start a fitness revolution in Chattanooga's Southside – but when the opportunity came, they ran with it.

Heatherly, 42, is a Nashville native with a lifelong background in ballet and yoga. "Movement has always been at the core of my being," she says. "As I got older, I realized yoga alone wasn't enough. I needed strength work to stay healthy."

That insight sparked a shift in Heatherly's approach to conditioning, evolving her practice into one that embraces functional fitness and longevity. Rather than focusing on flexibility or endurance alone, she began to think about how movement could serve her for the long haul – and how she could teach others to move well and sustainably across all stages of life.

Hutt, 29, brings a different yet complementary perspective. Originally from Delaware ("near Philly," she adds in a clipped, blue-collar accent), she studied musical theater in Boston, lived in Los Angeles, and built a career in both entertainment and fitness.

A medical emergency two years ago changed her course. "I went into cardiac arrest and was diagnosed with three heart conditions," she says. "I moved here for a slower pace."

Heatherly and Hutt met in 2024 while teaching at the same studio – the future home of Ember Movement Studio.

"We were both in a transition period," Heatherly recalls. "We started sharing ideas and realized we had similar visions."

Their friendship quickly evolved into a business plan when the previous occupant vacated the space. Heatherly is the intuitive planner; Hutt brings analytical rigor. "I love spreadsheets," Hutt laughs. "Heather doesn't. She even bought me a spreadsheet mug for my birthday."

In January, they launched Ember Movement Studio, a boutique fitness space with a holistic approach to wellness. The studio's class offerings are built around innovation and accessibility, and crafted with the intent of meeting people where they are and helping them grow.

Among their signature formats is HIIP (High Intensity Interval Programming), which uses weights, benches and joint-friendly Woodway treadmills for effective, low-impact interval training. Unlike classes that mix all body parts in one session, Ember follows a weekly body split. Monday is chest, Tuesday targets the lower body, Thursday focuses on back and biceps, and Friday closes out the week with glutes and core – a class she playfully dubs "ass and abs."

Heatherly takes the HIIP concept a step further with HIIP Flow, a hybrid

Photograph provided  
A client at Ember Movement Studio practices pole fitness, one of the studio's aerial offerings that blends strength, coordination and creativity.





class that combines traditional yoga with strength intervals. "We flow through yoga for eight to 10 minutes, then shift into high-intensity work," she explains. "It's about combining range of motion with strength. You're training mobility while getting a solid workout."

The studio also offers circuit training classes that skip the treadmills, traditional yoga sessions for centering and flexibility, and Lift, a strength training format tailored to functional movement and muscle development.

One of Ember's most distinct features is its aerial and pole fitness programming. Introduced by Hutt, classes include hammock, where clients use large loops of fabric suspended from the ceiling; lyra, which involves acrobatics on a steel aerial hoop; and pole, a format Hutt experienced in Los Angeles and now teaches in Chattanooga.

"We want people to feel like they can try things they thought were out of reach," she says. "You don't have to be a Cirque du Soleil performer. You just have to be willing to try."

While these offerings might seem unconventional in a traditional



Photograph provided

**Ember Movement Studio co-owner Kelly Hutt draws from her background in musical theater, personal training and aerial arts to create dynamic, inclusive classes.**

gym setting, they reflect the studio's broader mission: helping people build confidence, strength and creativity

through movement. The instructors guide participants through progressions, ensuring safety while encouraging

exploration.

"It's not about how you look doing it," Hutt says. "It's about what you learn and how you grow."

The atmosphere at Ember is deliberately inclusive and non-intimidating. Classes are capped at manageable sizes, allowing instructors to offer individual support. "We try to make it immediately apparent when you come in that this is a space where you're greeted, where you're seen," says Hutt.

To support this ethos, the studio includes more than just movement-based programming. Ember offers massage therapy through two licensed practitioners, and clients also have access to energy healing sessions. Rose, who works at the front desk, provides energy work to clients interested in integrating physical and spiritual wellness.

This holistic approach is about giving people a menu of wellness options, says Hutt. "If you just want to come in and lift weights, that's amazing. And if you want to pair that with massage or meditation, that's available, too. We want to help people explore what works best for them."

Heatherly and Hutt are also working to make movement accessible to

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families. With her 11-year-old son in mind, Heatherly is developing two new offerings: Family Circus, an aerial arts class where parents and children can train together, and Family Circuit, a strength-based class scheduled to align with school breaks.

"We want to help parents stay active without having to sacrifice time with their kids," she says.

Inclusivity also means offering modifications and options in every class. Whether it's adjusting the weight, altering the treadmill speed, or trying a different variation of a pose or movement, Ember instructors create space for each client's needs.

"We're never going to bark commands," Heatherly says. "We might say, 'Grab a lighter weight to start,' or 'Find your 50% on the treadmill.' But everyone's 50% is different."

That philosophy has helped many clients see major transformation. One member has lost over 70 pounds and now takes classes using heavier weights. "She's become incredibly strong and dedicated," Heatherly says. "It's been amazing to witness."

The co-owners have also seen the ripple effect Ember has beyond the studio walls. Clients frequently share how having a consistent and supportive space for movement has improved other parts of their lives.

"People tell us, 'I'm a better mom, a better boss, a better partner because I come here. I have more energy and clarity,'" says Heatherly. "It's not just about fitness. It's about how movement affects your whole life."

That holistic view also extends to how they treat themselves. Heatherly has learned to transition from the intense demands of professional ballet and high-level yoga into a more balanced practice that prioritizes sustainability.



Photograph provided

**Heather Heatherly, co-owner of Ember Movement Studio, combines her background in ballet and yoga with strength training to help clients build mobility, stability and overall fitness.**

"There's a high level of burnout in this industry," she says. "You see yoga instructors and trainers go hard, and then they're out. I want to help others – and myself – stay in this for the long haul."

Hutt brings empathy to her coaching. "A few years ago, I was in treatment for bulimia," she says. "When I opened up to my clients, I thought I'd lose them. But instead, they trusted me more. They told me their own stories. It made me realize that everyone is carrying something."

While Heatherly and Hutt are focused

on serving their members day to day, they have their eyes on the future. Over the next year, they plan to double their current membership. They believe it's an attainable goal, driven by word-of-mouth and the strength of their community. But growth for growth's sake isn't the point.

"We didn't just want to open a fitness studio," Hutt says. "We wanted to build something lasting, something meaningful."

While Ember's heart is in its people and programming, the building itself adds its unique character. The studio is located in a historic industrial structure built

between 1901 and 1904. Originally the Chattanooga Plow Power House, it once produced plows tailored for Southern soil. "Isn't that cool?" Heatherly says. "It was a space built for transformation. We're just continuing that legacy."

Ember Movement Studio is open to all – and first-time visitors can try a class for free or sign up for two weeks of unlimited classes for \$30.

"Whether you're lifting, spinning on a pole, or recovering with massage, we offer a chance to reconnect with your body," Heatherly says. "And maybe ignite something even bigger."