



Gayle was born in Albert Lea, Minnesota and graduated from ALHS in 1971. She then went to Macalester College, majoring in sociocultural anthropology and history. She and David Washburn started the first Sweatshop in Loring Park and grew the business through hard work and sweat equity.

The Sweatshop Health Club, the St. Paul-based Pilates, group and private training, yoga and fitness center, was awarded the first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award from Stott Pilates during a gala ceremony in Toronto, Canada on Oct. 22 for their work in training fitness professionals. The global award, presented to SweatShop founder and president Gayle Winegar of St. Paul, an Albert Lea native, by Stott Pilates founders Moira and Lindsay Merrithew, honored the SweatShop's 14 years as the Midwest's first licensed training center for Stott Pilates — one of only 56 in the world. Since then, the SweatShop has trained close to 800 Stott Pilates instructors.

*Albert Lea Tribune, December 5, 2009*

The SweatShop started in 1981, long before Title IV made athletics more accessible to women. The gym gained national acclaim after launching a body positivity campaign in 1999 that published a calendar spoofing a Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. They even posted a billboard of naked men over the gym building. That also gained the attention of national news.

Winegar takes pride in having helped launch careers for more than 1,800 group fitness, personal trainers, and Pilates trainers. Sweatshop trainers are world-renowned. Some even trained celebrities like Taylor Swift, Josh Hartnett, Sting, Twyla Tharp, and Andrew Zimmern.

But of the gym's many accomplishments, Winegar says she's most proud of being at the forefront of women's empowerment and body positivity at a pivotal moment in history.

*Winter Keefer, Twin Cities Business, December 13, 2022*

Gayle has been a successful female entrepreneur, has promoted female positive body image and health, and has introduced pilates training to the Twin Cities. In addition, she is always looking for ways to help the unfortunate. She has "adopted" Macalester students from foreign countries, giving them a home away from home, every week she takes leftover bakery items from the bakery in her building to the food pantry and has volunteered and hosted numerous events for charity. She travels extensively, mostly to Ikaria, Greece which she considers her home away from home. She has an adult daughter, Zosha and a huge extended friend/family.