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THE TEAM

PUBLISHER

Chad Wingo

EDITOR

Dora Scott

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING CONSULTANTS

Stephanie Azevedo

Jill Collings

Scott Conley

DESIGN LEAD

Jacob LaFleur

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CONTRIBUTORS

Morgan Welty-Geisick

Melissa Balderston

Lisa Renner

Juliette Phyllis Kunin

Michael Stone

Melissa Rose

Alicia Funk

Jeanne McHugh

Eileen Mello

Jess Hartley Litton

Mary Anne Davis

Kirsten Dees

Comfort Keepers

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530-273-9561

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WELCOME TO THE SIXTH ISSUE OF HEALTHY YOU!

After a year hiatus, *Healthy You* is back! *Healthy You* was the brainchild of my predecessor, Valerie Costa, who loved to promote and try all the health and wellness options in Nevada County. It is with great pleasure that I can carry the torch and continue to inform & inspire our community about how to live a happier and healthier lifestyle.

Health is something that affects everyone, and it is something that many take for granted until something goes amiss.

Many health issues affect those around us, perhaps unbeknownst to us. For the cover, Alexander Conheim represents a man seemingly in prime health—an arborist and tree climber—but a single tick bite completely uprooted his life. Fighting against the Lyme Disease he contracted, but also the medical and social systems that do not acknowledge or offer support for those suffering from chronic Lyme, Conheim's story is about resiliency against all odds.

The idea of resiliency is present throughout the publication, from father & son who have journeyed into a sober and clean life together to skin resiliency tips from a local esthetician to the benefits of palliative care in ensuring quality of life in our older years. There are so many other topics to enjoy, with people of various backgrounds and passions who all care for local health in their own way.

Here's to a healthier you!



Dora Scott

Dora Scott,
Editor

dscott@theunion.com



Photo by David Thuman

ON THE COVER

ALEXANDER CONHEIM, A LOCAL ARBORIST AND TREE CLIMBER, HAD HIS LIFE UPENDED FROM A TICK BITE. CONTRACTING CHRONIC LYME DISEASE AND ITS CO-INFECTION, BARTONELLA, CONHEIM STRUGGLED FINANCIALLY, PHYSICALLY, AND MENTALLY TO COPE WITH THE MULTITUDE OF DEBILITATING SYMPTOMS THAT HE FACED ON THE DAILY.

AFTER TREATMENT, CONHEIM IS ABLE TO CONTINUE WITH HIS PASSION FOR NATURE AND OUTDOORS AS AN EDUCATOR, BUT HIS STORY SPEAKS TO HOW EASILY OUR HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE CAN BE ALTERED.

Navigating Trauma

Understanding its Impact on Brain Development and the Power of Mitigating Factors such as Self-Care and Positive Childhood Experiences

By Morgan Welty-Geisick & Melissa Balderston

Trauma, especially in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), leaves an indelible mark on individuals, shaping not only their experiences but also their brain development. The effects of trauma can be far-reaching, influencing one's emotional well-being and responses to stress. Understanding these intricacies can pave the way for healing and resilience.

Research into trauma has revealed its profound impact on brain development. During traumatic experiences, the brain's natural defense mechanisms, often referred to as the "fight, flight, freeze, or fawn" responses, activate to protect oneself. These responses become ingrained patterns of coping, shaping future reactions to stressors.

The amygdala, the brain's emotional center, becomes hypersensitive, leading to heightened reactions to perceived threats. Conversely, the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making and emotional regulation, may experience alterations, affecting one's ability to manage emotions effectively.

Children exposed to trauma may face developmental challenges, impacting their cognitive abilities, social interactions, and emotional regulation. However, it's crucial to emphasize that the brain remains adaptable throughout life, showcasing remarkable resilience. With proper support and interventions, individuals can rewire their brains and develop healthier coping mechanisms.



Self-care emerges as a vital tool in this journey of healing. Engaging in activities that promote relaxation, such as mindfulness, exercise, and creative pursuits, can help regulate emotions and reduce the impact of stress. Seeking therapy or support groups provides avenues for processing trauma and developing coping strategies.

Furthermore, those working in caregiving professions may experience compassion fatigue and burnout due to continuous exposure to others' trauma. Recognizing the signs of burnout and practicing self-compassion are essential for maintaining well-being and providing effective care to others.

Promoting resilience involves fostering a supportive environment that acknowledges the impact of trauma while offering empathy and resources for healing. Communities, institutions, and policymakers play pivotal roles in creating safe spaces and implementing trauma-informed practices that prioritize understanding and support.

It's crucial to acknowledge that healing from trauma is a nonlinear process, and each individual's journey is unique. By acknowledging the impact of trauma on brain development, embracing self-care practices, and fostering environments of understanding and support, we can pave the way for healing and resilience.

The relationship between trauma, brain development, and self-care is intricate, yet it holds the key to understanding and addressing its effects. Empowering individuals with knowledge, support, and resources is fundamental in nurturing resilience and promoting overall well-being.

In the intricate tapestry of childhood experiences, positive interactions play a pivotal role in counteracting the effects of adversity. While adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can leave lasting imprints, the presence of positive influences holds the potential to neutralize their impact. In the realm of education, the role of school staff—bus drivers, coaches, teachers, assistants, and front desk clerks—cannot be overstated in shaping these positive encounters.

Research underscores the significance of positive experiences in buffering the effects of adversity. A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente revealed the profound impact of nurturing, supportive environments on children's resilience. Positive experiences at school, whether through small acts of kindness, encouraging words, or a



supportive presence, can counterbalance the negative effects of traumatic experiences.

Within the school community, every individual interaction holds the potential to create a positive ripple effect. Bus drivers greeting students with a warm smile, coaches instilling confidence through encouragement, teachers fostering a safe and inclusive classroom environment, assistants offering a helping hand, and front desk clerks welcoming children warmly—all contribute to building a nurturing atmosphere.

These seemingly small gestures can make a world of difference for a child navigating the complexities of their world. They can be the beacon of hope for those facing adversity at home, offering a sense of safety and support beyond the classroom.



Moreover, school staff members are uniquely positioned to recognize signs of trauma and offer the necessary support or referrals to resources. Implementing trauma-informed practices in schools equips staff with the tools to create environments that not only educate but also nurture emotional well-being.

Creating a culture of compassion and understanding within educational institutions can foster resilience and empower children to thrive despite challenging circumstances. By acknowledging the pivotal role school staff play in shaping positive childhood experiences, we recognize the potential for transformation in the lives of countless children.

The collective efforts of school staff in creating a positive, nurturing environment hold immeasurable significance in buffering the impact of adverse childhood experiences. Their daily interactions and support can serve as catalysts for resilience, offering children the foundation they need to flourish and overcome obstacles on their journey to adulthood.

Nevada County Superintendent of Schools offers Trauma Informed Practice training to schools and community partners for little or no cost. For more information, please contact 530-478-6400 ext. 2030. Additional online resources can be found at <https://padlet.com/NevadaCountyFYS/nevada-county-foster-youth-services-ztzw-2j64intmwywc>



Morgan Welty-Geisick is a dedicated advocate for youth and homelessness issues, with a deep-rooted commitment to creating positive change in her community. Morgan has dedicated herself to supporting foster, former foster, post-adopted, and school-placed youth since 2010, initially at an STRTP and later at the Superintendent of Schools office, where she serves housing-insecure and former foster youth for the last six years. Her impactful work includes initiating a collaborative meeting to end homelessness among transition-aged youth, demonstrating her commitment to systemic change and community welfare.



Melissa Balderston, MSW PPS, is a passionate advocate for children with complex trauma, drawing from over 15 years of experience at the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools. As Program Coordinator, she oversaw vital initiatives including Foster Youth Service, Independent Living, THP+ Housing, and Indian Education. Melissa's advocacy is deeply personal; as a native of Nevada County and a mother of six, two adopted from foster care, she understands the challenges intimately. She is a certified

Trauma Informed Practice Trainer and Nurtured Heart Trainer, dedicated to empowering others in supporting vulnerable children. Melissa's relentless commitment and expertise make her a driving force for positive change in her community and beyond.

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LOCAL MATERNAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

By Lisa Renner

Nevada County Public Information Contractor

In a quiet room in the back of the Madelyn Helling Library in Nevada City, two mothers weigh their two-month-old babies and discuss the challenges of new parenthood.

“It’s great to meet people who are going through the same thing,” said Kaitlin Welch, as her son Archie rests on a blanket on the floor. Samantha Vivo, mother of baby Stevvi, said she appreciates the chance to get her questions answered. “It’s

nice to know you’re not alone,” she said.

The drop-in baby feeding support group is just one of several free programs offered to expecting families and new parents by Nevada County’s Maternal Child Adolescent Health Program. All are open to everyone, regardless of income level.

“I want families to know that they don’t have to go through their birthing journey alone,”

said Jessica Ferrer, director of Nevada County’s Maternal, Child & Adolescent Health program. “It takes a village to raise a child and we’re here to be part of that village. We are interested in optimizing the health and development of the next generation through supporting the caregivers.”

Home visits connect families with resources

The centerpiece of the program is free home visits offered by

nurses. As soon as a woman learns she is pregnant, she may request a visit from a public health nurse who can meet with her on a schedule determined by her needs. Some moms meet weekly if they have significant needs like figuring out housing and provisions for the baby. Others, with fewer issues, choose monthly visits.

“We don’t have any waitlist,” Ferrer said. “We have nurses that can go straight away.”

The nurses can continue to visit once the baby is born to help the family get adjusted to their new life. They can offer guidance on proper nutrition, getting exercise, how to manage stress, and understanding warning signs that require medical attention.

They can receive breastfeeding support and health assessments as well as help with any issue that may come up. “Getting connected with home visiting is a great place to start with connecting with all resources,” Ferrer said.

As examples, they can connect families with assistance in accessing affordable housing, childcare services, financial aid, or transportation to medical appointments.

“There are many, many resources in Nevada County working together with families toward



Courtesy Lisa Renner | Kaitlin Welch and her two-month-old son sit by public health nurse Jeana McHugh (left) and volunteer Mercedes Ricciardi at the Monday morning baby feeding support group at Madelyn Helling Library in Nevada City.

the same goals,” Ferrer said. “(Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health) has worked hard to develop trusting working relationships among many community partners, and can help families find the organizations that best fit their needs and goals.”

Parents who sign up for home visits can also be connected to individual counseling in the “Moving Beyond Depression” program, a “comprehensive, evidence-based and integrated approach to identifying and treating depression in mothers.” A therapist offers 15 private one-hour sessions in home of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, a type of therapy that focuses on helping individuals recognize and change negative thought patterns and behaviors. There is no charge for the program.

The program helps with coping skills, normalizing the experience of anxiety that can come with big changes, and decreasing worries women may feel that they are not good mothers.

Strengthening families

Through the counseling visits, the therapist realized that a source of stress was relationship issues. In response this year, the county launched “Becoming Us,” a four-week program offered monthly throughout the year. The class helps couples learn how to negotiate differences, develop good communication, and establish their new roles and responsibilities. Parents learn how to cope with little sleep, anticipate needs, and get prepared. The class location is flexible.

The program has been especially helpful to parents who didn’t have strong parental role models themselves, Ferrer said.

Parent teaching parents

A weekly Parent Circle in Grass Valley allows parents and guardians of children of all ages to meet and socialize. Instead of looking for expert advice, parents share their struggles and trade ideas about how to support each other.

“The goal of it is for them to teach each other,” said Jeana McHugh, program coordinator for Nevada County Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health program.

The class focuses on a different topic each week and includes activities for children and refreshments.

Community baby showers

The Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health program also organizes two free Community Baby Showers each year. Everyone who has had a new baby is welcome to come and bring their other children. In the past, the shower has included representatives from dental services, Head Start, and family resource centers. They have also included car seat installations.

Preventing Problems

Ferrer said her goal with all the programs is to set up families for success so they can handle any problem that comes along. Supporting families contributes to the overall health of communities and societies. Ferrer is inspired by Frederick Douglass’ quote: “It is easier to build strong children than to rebuild broken men.”

For details about each program:

Baby Feeding Support Group

Mondays, 10-11:30 a.m., Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City. For more information, call Jeana McHugh at 530-847-8293.

Home Visits.

Visit www.NevadaCountyCa.gov/MCAH or call 888-301-1450 to request a home visit. To access the “Moving Beyond Depression” program, you must first schedule a home visit.

Parent Circle

Tuesdays, 3-4 p.m., The Learning Center, Sierra Nevada Children’s Services, 420 Sierra College Drive #100, Grass Valley. RSVP is requested by not required by calling Jeana McHugh at 530-847-8293.

Becoming Us

Scheduled monthly. Enroll at

www.NevadaCountyCa.gov/MCAH or call 888-301-1450.

Community Baby Showers
Watch www.NevadaCountyCa.gov/MCAH to learn about the next dates.



Lisa Renner is a freelance writer who previously worked as a full-time newspaper reporter (Modesto Bee, San Mateo County Times). She has 30 years of writing experience and has written for Capitol Weekly, UC Santa Cruz Campus Communications, California Health Report, and Bay Area Parent Magazine. She can be reached at lmillegan@gmail.com or 209-345-6977.



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5RHYTHMS MOVING MEDITATION

EXPLORING LIFE THROUGH DANCE

By *Juliette Phyllis Kunin & Michael Stone*

5Rhythms is a movement meditation practice devised by Gabrielle Roth at Esalen Institute in the 1970s. It draws from indigenous and world traditions using shamanistic, ecstatic, mystical, and Eastern philosophy tenets. It also draws from Gestalt therapy, the human potential movement, and transpersonal psychology.

“I vividly remember my first encounter with the 5Rhythms and Gabrielle Roth,” stated Michael Stone, a certified teacher in 5Rhythms who holds monthly sessions at South Yuba Club. “It was a chilly November evening in 1974, I had been invited to a party thrown by Werner Erhard at the Jack Tarr Hotel in San Francisco. Arriving late, I rushed to the ballroom to find that the event had already started. The entranceway was covered with long, brightly colored silk banners overlapping and hanging vertically over the portal. As I worked my way through the silken maze, I was spun around and into a darkly lit room of undulating dancers, moving to the beat of exotic music. I was home!”

He continued, “I became a regular dancer with 5Rhythms, visited teachers worldwide, and later became a certified teacher to bring this beautiful work to Nevada City in the late

’80s. A small group of us started dancing at my friend Robert Young’s house, and more and more people started participating. So, we rented a space in the gym, which later became the South Yuba Club. There were classes every Friday. On Sunday, we would hold ‘Sweat Your Prayers’ practice groups. This became our church alternative. The 5Rhythms are elegant maps of evolving consciousness that help us re-embody ourselves and deepen our emotional awareness while opening to an enhanced sense of belonging and connectedness. I am infinitely grateful to Juliette Kunin for keeping the tradition and practice alive!”

“As a music and dance lover my entire existence, I jumped in when a friend of mine invited me to a 5Rhythms class in the early 2000s,” stated Juliette Phyllis Kunin, who is also a certified 5Rhythms teacher. “Not knowing what to expect, I felt trepidation as I entered the room. A charismatic teacher was spinning the music, and it was good! Fabulous music from various genres fueled the dancers, and soon, I lost some of my self-consciousness and joined them in the movement.”

She continued, “That very first time on the dance floor piqued my curiosity. Along with my strong will and support from my local teacher, Michael

Stone, I showed up regularly to explore movement in a new and expanded way. Movement, music, poetry, and some clear instructions supported me. It encouraged me to dive into

“If you have a body, you can dance.”

—Gabrielle Roth,
founder of 5Rhythms





dance in a different way from traditional forms of movement that use pre-prescribed steps and forms. This was a new way of moving, with no steps to follow, instead moving from the inside out!”

What is 5Rhythms all about?

5Rhythms is a movement meditation practice that invites us to delve into our inner depths through movement, dance, and theatrical expression, allowing the potent essence of the rhythms to permeate our being. Roth identified five core rhythms mirroring life’s cycles, encapsulating everything from birth to completion, regardless of the endeavor—a house’s construction or the inception of a relationship. Each rhythm embodies archetypal phases universally shared:

- **Flowing** represents new beginnings, femininity, receptivity, circles, earth, inertia, and the inhale.
- **Staccato** embodies decisiveness, masculinity, straight lines, fire, rigidity, and the exhale.
- **Chaos**, a fusion of flowing and staccato, signifies letting go of the mind, water, and confusion.
- **Lyrical** embodies the shape shifter, change, air, effervescence, fingertips, and toes.
- **Stillness** signifies endings, unity, spirit, emptiness, and the breath.

The journey begins through music and dance, where these rhythms unfold amidst a rich and diverse soundscape.



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Workshops allow individuals to explore this vast practice with more intimate guidance, bringing awareness to various aspects of the body, heart, mind, soul, and greater spirit. In a two-hour class, self-reflection spans a multitude of dimensions—from expanding into connection and experiencing bliss to tuning into the inner landscapes of oneself and others, nurturing acceptance for all that arises, and deepening into the power of the breath, all within the vibrant ambiance of the dance floor.

- Dancing embodies **the full spectrum of the human experience**—an intimate communion with the present moment, an avenue to liberate ourselves from lifelessness, and a celebration of global rhythms that propel us beyond borders.
- It forms a communal tapestry, weaving our souls with others and fostering a sense of **interconnectedness**.
- Through movement, we shed the weight of what no longer serves us, **rediscover our true essence**, and welcome the emergence of the pulse of evolution within.
- It's a sacred pause in our lives, a **reflective mirror unveiling** our patterns, inviting exploration within the liminal spaces, and embracing movement and stillness.
- **Dancing is an act of surrender**—a release of old habits and the integration of healthier ones, propelling us from the confines of the mind into the realm of somatic intelligence, where **self-**

“I expect that others are just like me: they want to wake up and be set free. Freeing the body to experience the power of being. Expressing the heart to experience the power of love. Emptying the mind to experience the power of self-knowledge. Awakenning the soul to experience the power of seeing, embodying the spirit to experience the power of healing. Movement is my medicine.”

— Gabrielle Roth

love flourishes, emotions are liberated, and emptiness becomes an infinite canvas for new beginnings.

- It's an ode to inspiration, a space where emerging facets find their embrace, a passage through adversity, **a vessel for despair and ecstasy**, and a portal to unleash the overflow of creativity.
- In dance, we bridge the gap to spirit, unshackle our beating hearts, and embark on a journey toward holistic healing—a **union of body, mind, and soul**.

“Put your body in motion, and the psyche will heal itself.”

— Gabrielle Roth

This description is a glimpse; the reasons to dance weave an endless mosaic of human experience.

Join us for Sweat Your Prayers every Sunday morning from 9:45 a.m. to noon at South Yuba Club in Grass Valley. Although it may seem like a lengthy session for a workout, it offers much more than that! With varied music and pace, you can adjust the intensity of your movement to suit your needs, making time fly by. Sweat Your Prayers is a longstanding global tradition. To explore 5Rhythms further, visit 5Rhythms.com for videos and teacher listings worldwide. Discover more about our dance community at juliettekunin.com. Stay updated on classes, workshops, and events by joining our email list and following us on Facebook at DanceTribe Nevada City/Grass Valley and Instagram @dance.nevadacity.grassvalley. For any inquiries, please text 916-216-0950.



Juliette Phyllis Kunin is a Certified 5Rhythms® Teacher and a natural space holder with a love for music and movement. Juliette reveres the profound and lasting transformation she has experienced and witnessed in others through consistent dance practice. She values family and friendship and is a devotee of all things of beauty and nature. She holds creativity as one of her highest ideals.



Michael Stone is a spiritual author, mentor, shamanic practitioner, radio host, producer, and trauma integration facilitator who has taught and led groups and transformational programs for over 50 years. He is a certified teacher in 5Rhythms, Soul Motion, and Trance Dance. At 78, Michael still DJs and holds 5Rhythms sessions once a month at the South Yuba Club.

ALL THINGS ANTI-AGING

By Melissa Rose

Whether your skin is baby-smooth or if you have fine lines and wrinkles, now is the time to start an anti-aging skincare regimen. While many turn to anti-aging products and treatments to help reverse signs of aging, they are a great way to prevent future signs of aging too.

Some of the main signs of facial aging are sagging/loose skin, fine lines and wrinkles, age spots, dry skin, and dull skin. Within the beauty indus-

try, skincare is the dominant segment and takes up 42% of the market share, which is more than hair care at 22% and makeup at 18% combined, according to “The Ultimate List of Beauty Industry Stats 2023” by Josh Howarth. Within that, anti-aging is one of the most popular categories of sought-after skincare products and treatments. However, how are we as consumers able to differentiate what products are actually helpful on your anti-aging journey?

When motherhood completely changed my

skin, due to hormonal and lifestyle changes, I knew that I had to step up my anti-aging game. Now, as a Licensed Esthetician, there are certain skincare ingredients that I know are tried and true to give you more youthful skin.

Beginning an anti-aging skin care regimen can be extremely overwhelming, especially with all the ingredients and products marketed to us today, however, with my professional knowledge and ongoing education I am here to simplify





that for you. Four of the most popular anti-aging ingredients on the market today are hyaluronic acid, retinoids, vitamin C, and sunscreen. When it comes to anti-aging treatments, there are a number of different facials that target the signs of aging, but HydraFacial has become the most popular in-office treatment. HydraFacial is the go-to facial for seemingly everyone because it targets many of the most common skin concerns

like dryness, dull skin, hyperpigmentation, clogged pores, and signs of aging with little to no side effects.

Hyaluronic acid is a humectant, a substance that retains moisture, and it is capable of binding over one thousand times its weight in water. Hyaluronic acid is found naturally in the body, but as we age the production of hyaluronic acid decreases causing a loss of volume and hydration in the skin. Applying

hyaluronic acid topically to the skin can deliver an immediate plumping effect as well as improve the skin over time. Hyaluronic acid can be found in serums and moisturizers but I personally like to apply it in serum form because it works best when applied to damp skin. When hyaluronic acid is applied to damp skin, it can draw water from the surface of the skin, helping to lock in moisture and keep the skin hydrated throughout the day; this enhances the fullness and firmness of the skin, delivers immediate hydration, and improves the appearance of fine lines and crepey skin.

Retinoids were first introduced in 1971 as a treatment for acne, psoriasis, wrinkles, and other signs of aging. Retinoids are considered to be the holy grail of anti-aging ingredients, they are often credited with being the most effective at battling wrinkles. Retinoids are derived from vitamin A and work deeper in the collagen to help with collagen remodeling, as well as on the skin's surface to increase skin cell turnover and improve discoloration and uneven skin tone. Retinoids are mostly found in creams and serums, there are over-the-counter retinoids and prescription retinoids. I recommend starting with a low percent over-the-counter retinol and working your way up. Retinoids should only ever be applied to the skin at night. Overall, retinoids are powerhouse anti-aging ingredients that work to stimulate cell turnover and increase our skin's natural collagen production in the epidermis and dermis.

Vitamin C is a potent antioxidant with many skin benefits. Vitamin C lightens the skin and reduces the appearance of brown spots, increases collagen production which aids in diminishing fine



Full Circle of Living and Dying provides guidance and support from trained End-of-life Doulas, assisting in co-creating comprehensive End-of-life care plans and offering comfort care options, including home-based funerals and remembrance projects. Our services encompass documenting wishes for End-of-life and after-death care, remembrance projects, letter writing, facilitating conversations with your caring circle, and preparing individuals for the dying process.

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lines and wrinkles, reduces redness and inflammation, and boosts the skin's natural healing and repair which decreases post-inflammatory red marks. Although you may be ingesting vitamin C in your diet, there is no way to guarantee it's going straight to your skin. Applying a vitamin C serum is the most direct way to achieve the results it provides. Vitamin C products can be used morning and night and are vital to maintaining a smooth, even, and glowy complexion. Vitamin C has also been proven to work well with sunscreen to protect the skin from UV and free radical damage. Under laboratory studies according to Dermatologist, Dr. Saokar Pumori Telang with The Skin and Laser Clinic, it has been shown that the application of 10% topical vitamin C showed a statistical reduction of UVB-induced erythema by 52% and sunburn cell formation by 40-60%. All in all, sunscreen and Vitamin C are the power couple of sun protection. My go-to vitamin C serum is the "Vital C Hydrating Anti-Aging Serum" by Image Skincare: this serum contains multiple forms of vitamin C to help brighten, hydrate, and improve the appearance of fine lines. It has a fresh energizing aroma derived from natural orange peels which smells amazing and makes you eager to apply it.

The last, but most important, anti-aging skin care product is sunscreen. Prevention is key when it comes to anti-aging skincare and the most effective habit you can adopt is to start wearing a broad spectrum SPF 30 or higher every single day. The sun causes more than a sunburn, it causes up to 80% of visible skin aging. Sun damage, often referred to as photo-aging is when the sun prematurely ages the skin, this causes wrinkling, loss of skin elasticity, pigmentation, sun spots, and redness. Photo-aging occurs when ultraviolet (UV) light hits the skin unprotected by sunscreen, causing DNA changes at a cellular level and even skin cancer. Because photodamage happens in the deepest layers of the skin, the dermis, it can take years before the damage surfaces and becomes visible. Wearing sunscreen not only prevents sun damage but it gives your skin cells a chance to

rest and regenerate, which helps diminish the development of wrinkles and uneven skin tone. There are so many different sunscreens on the market today, you can choose from a clear lightweight sunscreen, moisturizing sunscreen, SPF serums, tinted sunscreens that give your skin coverage similar to makeup, SPF setting mists, and even brush-on sunscreens. With all the sunscreen products readily available to us today, there is absolutely no reason to not wear sunscreen every day, and make sure you are reapplying it every two hours to keep skin healthy and more youthful looking.

If you are wondering what you could be doing to enhance your anti-aging skin care regimen and maximize your results, the answer is simple: monthly facial treatments. Skin cells renew every 27 days, therefore treating your skin with monthly facials will remove dead skin cell buildup and improve the efficacy of your skincare products. Monthly facials will also deeply cleanse the skin, remove impurities and clogged pores, improve fine lines, plump and hydrate, and improve overall skin health.

The most popular in-office facial treatment right now is the Hydrafacial. Hydrafacial is the newest advance in non-laser skin resurfacing, all done painlessly without irritating or harsh chemicals. Hydrafacial is a non-surgical, non-invasive skin rejuvenation treatment that will give you instant results and improve your skin health for the long term. This three-in-one treatment deeply cleanses, exfoliates, extracts, and hydrates your skin utilizing super serums filled with antioxidants, peptides, and hyaluronic acid. You'll get similar results as you would from an extraction, peel, and facial, without the irritation or redness. Only HydraFacial uses patented Vortex-Fusion® technology to achieve immediate, visible results. Hydrafacial is suitable for almost all skin types and has zero downtime, you will leave this treatment feeling and looking rejuvenated. If you are interested in obtaining a youthful-looking appearance, I highly recommend you find an esthetician and treat yourself and your skin to monthly facials, wear sunscreen every day, and include hyaluronic acid, retinoids, and vitamin C into your skincare regimen. I hope you are newly in-

spired to start your anti-aging skincare journey and just remember, results take consistency, patience, and time.



Melissa Rose is a Licensed Esthetician and owner of Rose Esthetics. Melissa changed her career path when motherhood drastically affected her skin. She tried everything to improve her skin on her own and even sought medical advice. After refusing to go on oral medications for her acne, she decided to go to beauty school in Sacramento to help heal her skin on her own. She became immensely interested in the industry and found her passion as an esthetician. After graduating and passing the state board exam she went off to work at a few different skin care clinics, and then went on to open her own skin care clinic, Rose Esthetics. Melissa is constantly expanding her knowledge as a skin care professional by continuing her education through advanced trainings. If you would like to learn more or book an appointment, visit www.RoseEstheticsCA.com or stop in Rose Esthetics located at 147 ½ Mill Street, Grass Valley CA 95945.





The Climb from Chronic Lyme

By Dora Scott

I'm sure we are all guilty of it. Romping around outside in Nevada County, many of us have had to deal with a pesky tick or two. We pluck it out and continue about our day—ticks are just another thing that comes from living in the foothills. However, you might want to take more caution because Lyme disease is no longer an “East Coast disease” and—while still somewhat uncommon—is present locally. In an interview with Alexander Conheim, a professional tree climber & arborist, he revisited how a tiny tick bite changed his life.

“I spent my childhood on the edge of the American River Canyon in Auburn, the majority of it, and then a little bit across Deer Creek [in Nevada City] with family friends,” Conheim explained, continuing, “I’ve always been a really athletic individual. I was always inclined to be outside more so than inside.”

Born in 1985, from a young age, Conheim was naturally athletic, playing soccer, basketball, football, running track, and riding mountain bikes. “I ended up breaking my femur racing downhill mountain bikes at 17 and all of that really beautiful childhood changed immediately and sent me on a different trajectory,” Conheim explained, continuing, “It changed my life so drastically that it was the first time in my life where I learned very early on that this vessel that we have is not permanent, very fragile, and can’t be fixed sometimes if you break it.”

Conheim could no longer pursue his passion for athletics and had to use a cane for two years after his accident. As they say, “When it rains, it pours.” Afterward, he struggled with chronic pain in his leg, and around the same time, his father was diagnosed with cancer.

“I learned very early on that this vessel that we have is not permanent, very fragile, and can’t be fixed sometimes if you break it.”

—Alexander Conheim

“I went back to the doctor and asked for help, and what I was given was Oxycon. So I got Oxycon back into my life,” Conheim stated, explaining how he ended up becoming addicted to the painkiller and met people who taught him how to abuse it. Painkillers transitioned to heroin usage, and after going through several rehabilitation facilities and eventually being put in jail, Conheim was able to stop using and is now 16 years clean.

When asked what led to his recovery, Conheim quoted a TED Talk by British journalist Johann Hari, titled “Everything You Know About Addiction is Wrong,” stating that, “The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it’s connection.”

“I could only describe it as somebody took like a piece of wood and slammed it right into my sternum. . . I pulled my shirt up and found it and ripped it out. It left a black hole. I never really noticed anything after. It did leave a ring.”

—Alexander Conheim

“I ended up getting my life cleared up and things continued to get better and better. I found the river; I became a whitewater raft guide. People wanted to strengthen the connection when I came back to town, rather than isolate me,” Conheim stated.

The Bite

Conheim’s love and connection to nature led him into professional tree climbing to then also become an arborist and licensed contractor and run a business in tree management locally.

In 2015, guiding a hike with Plant Science students in Nevada County, Conheim had one of his more “remarkable” tick bites. Where he now has a large tattoo of a tick on his sternum, Conheim felt immediate pain after the bite. “I could only describe it as somebody took like a piece of wood and slammed it right into my sternum [...] I pulled my shirt up and found it and ripped it out. It left a black hole. I never really noticed anything after. It did leave a ring,” he described.

Conheim explained how among all the times he had been bitten by ticks, only two were noteworthy: the one on his sternum and one in his belly button. Both caused a chain reaction-like feeling to his nerves immediately after.



Ticks were always around whilst he grew up, but there was not the same awareness or caution for Lyme Disease on the West Coast in the late '80s and '90s. "Basically nobody talked about that," Conheim explained, continuing, "I remember the first time that I got bit it was very small, and it was in the back of my armpit and my mom's friend grabbed and ripped it out—and that was it."

It took six years for Conheim to receive his Lyme Disease diagnosis. It wasn't until two years after he was bitten in 2015 that symptoms appeared—but they were masked by his pre-existing auto-immune disorder (for which he required five GI tract surgeries) and traumatic brain injuries incurred from sports and car accidents. When asked about his onset of symptoms, it is still difficult for Conheim to pinpoint where his other medical ailments ended and chronic Lyme Disease started.

During one of his GI tract surgeries, "I was going in and out of sepsis, which was causing my brain not to work too [...] And I also wasn't a perfectly healthy person, and then all the sudden one day I went, 'What is going on, what's wrong?' It just got worse and worse," Conheim explained.

A turning point in his symptoms started after he got vaccinated for COVID-19 to compete in Hawaii at an international tree-climbing competition. "That night, I had a horrible pain in my spine that I'd never felt before—deep, searing in my spinal cord. I didn't really think anything of it, but it never went away and my neck stopped working correctly shortly thereafter. I started to get so stiff and so weak that I couldn't look up without losing my vision, without getting nauseous," Conheim stated.

Soon after, Conheim got into a head-on collision: "It was a low-speed collision where I tensed up, and I twisted and shifted vertebrae up in my spine when I tensed up [...] I started losing my vision more; I was in so much pain and discomfort that the hair on my face hurt, my eyeballs hurt, my eyelashes, my teeth hurt, my gums hurt—everything hurt," Conheim listed.

Throughout all the piling and worsening symptoms and accidents, Conheim did not go to a doctor but finally caved when the pain became unbearable. "Coming from being a fully-functioning person and a professional athlete, and a father that had a brain tumor, I've been hit in the head so many times and everything else, I was like 'Oh my god, I need to go to the doctor. Something is wrong with my brain,'" he stated.

The Diagnosis

In a stroke of luck, the local Physician Assistant who saw Conheim was also a Lyme Disease patient. "She was asking me these questions over and over and you should've seen her eyes—they kept getting bigger and bigger," he recounted how his symptoms of frequent urination, chronic headaches & fatigue,



“With Lyme Disease, you are looking for like four or ten spirochetes, and these bacteria don’t stay in your bloodstream, so you are not going to see it. They are lodged into soft tissue: your heart, your spinal cord, your brain, your brain stem. So I think it’s important to note that with my diagnosis it was definitely a clinical diagnosis.”

—Alexander Conheim

neurological issues, joint pain, and loss of vision sounded the alarm bells. Conheim was then referred to a doctor in the Bay Area who was “Lyme-literate.”

It was only at the end of 2023 that the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) acknowledged that Lyme Disease can become chronic, a turning point in a decades-long debate. The lack of acknowledgment from reputable medical establishments stagnated research, diagnostics, and treatment methods for the



disease—leaving many chronic Lyme patients with no choice but to foot the bill for long-term treatments that are not covered.

The CDC recommends a two-step blood test for diagnosis. These tests are designed to react to antibodies to infections incurred by Lyme Disease. “What I had was a positive test for the IgM and the IgG,” Conheim clarified how his test, costing \$1,200 out of pocket, was reactive to the two types of antibodies. He had tested positive for Bartonella, commonly known as “Cat Scratch Fever,” a co-infection of Lyme Disease.

“The co-infection, in my understanding, is just another infection that is commonly in conjunction with Lyme Disease,” explained Conheim. In other words, a single tick could carry numerous infectious pathogens, not just Lyme Disease.

The difficult thing with diagnosing Lyme Disease and its co-infections, Conheim explained, is that it is only clinically diagnosed. Meaning, that doctors would not only rely on the antibody test but look at symptoms, medical history, and more to diagnose a patient. “With Lyme Disease, you are looking for like four or ten spirochetes, and these bacteria don’t stay in your bloodstream, so you are not going to see it. They are lodged into soft tissue: your heart, your spinal cord, your brain, your brain stem. So I think it’s important to note that with my diagnosis it

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Lyme Disease has been termed the “New Great Imitator” due to its biological similarities to Syphilis, “The Great Imitator.” Both bacteria are Spirochetes, with a spiral shape, and often have been misdiagnosed due to how their manifestations can present as other illnesses.

A Rough Road to Recovery

Though traditional medicine often prescribes high-dose Doxycycline, an antibiotic to kill the bacteria, for Lyme Disease patients, Conheim decided to take a different route. He described how his decision was not an easy one amidst swathes of social pressure and opinions from those around him. “But I was also very straightforward and stuck to my guns and went with what felt right and what felt correct and I ended up doing high-dose, very obscure antibiotic in the penem family called Ertapenem or Invanz and it’s like chemo—it just kills everything,” he explained. Ertapenem was recommended by his doctor due to its effectiveness in treating co-infections like Bartonella.

His decision to take an alternative medication had its repercussions. None of his medical treatments were covered by insurance, costing him over \$150,000 from his life savings in 15 months. “Nothing was covered because I couldn’t go to a traditional doctor, and then I couldn’t even get to an infusion center,” Conheim stated. Because his Lyme diagnosis did not match his prescription for Ertapenem, he had to do the infusions for his antibiotics at home, at first through injections, and then later switching to a port.

Luckily, Conheim’s health started to improve with the treatments, as he did not have the funds to continue. However, he still struggled with spine-related symptoms like dizziness, loss of vision, and fatigue. Getting more investigative, he drove to Boulder, Colorado to see a specialist where he was a candidate for a procedure. “They take bone marrow from your hips, isolate stem cells and other peptides, and they inject it through the roof of your mouth into your throat. So they did that right next to my brain stem where I have like an atlas area, stretched out ligaments,” Conheim explained. The procedure was \$15,000 in cash, and then the travel-related expenses on top of that. Conheim doesn’t experience the same level of spinal pain anymore after the procedure but still has to take it one day at a time.

When asked if he hoped to continue treatment, Conheim responded, “You could focus all the time on the symptoms or the fight. Or you could spend some time actually living your life. I spent a year and a half doing nothing but treating myself, and I didn’t get to do anything else. Not only did I run out of money, but I ran out of time.”

One of the most difficult things about having a chronic illness, to Conheim, is that it robbed him of a predictable and stable future. His illness prevented him from running his business, buying a house, and building and maintaining relationships. “I let go of all hope or ideas of if there was going to be a future—I thought I was dying; it sure felt like I was,” Conheim stated.



Coming from a line of work where he was always outdoors some might assume that getting Lyme might have changed Conheim’s relationship with nature for the worse. “I think it has deepened my connection with nature in the sense that it has given me a chance to slow down and smell the roses, which I did anyway, but now I find myself in a tree crying for a second or shedding a tear at how magnificent this all is and the fact that I get to work with it and be a steward,” he explained. Though he no longer manages a tree maintenance business, he is still in the industry as an educator.

Though there is no end-all cure for those suffering from chronic Lyme Disease, Conheim has made lifestyle changes to further manage his symptoms, practicing and learning more about

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Eastern medicine. “I see myself in the mountains of China in Nepal or Tibet, quiet for several months studying Kung Fu, Chi Gong, or Chinese medicine and being able to in the next decade, maybe, be able to share that with people where I live,” he explained his future aspirations.

Protect Yourself from the Bite

Nevada County is known for its scenic trails, rivers, and other natural landmarks. However, western blacklegged ticks are nestled in nature, waiting to crawl onto the unassuming passerby. The immature, nymph ticks pose the highest risk of transmitting disease in spring and early summer.

To prevent tick bites, use tick repellent, avoid grassy areas, and stick to the center of trails. When hiking, make sure to continuously check, and shower and do a full-body check when you return from an area where ticks may be present. Make sure to bring along a pair of tweezers in case you do get bitten for prompt removal.

You’ve been bitten? According to the California Department of Public Health: “Use tweezers to grab the tick as close to your skin as possible. Pull the tick straight out, using a firm, steady motion; do not jerk the tick. Do not twist, smother, or burn an attached tick; these are not effective methods for tick removal.”

Wash your hands and the bite site with soap and water and apply an antiseptic. Make sure to monitor yourself for signs of Lyme Disease, which includes the signature ring-like rash, flu-like symptoms like muscle aches, swollen joints and lymph nodes, fatigue, headache, and fever.

To have the tick tested, place the carefully extracted tick (including the head) into a Ziploc bag with a moist cotton ball. Make sure to take note of the date, the location the tick attached, the location on your body that was bitten, and any other noticeable symptoms. You can go through your health provider or an independent laboratory to have it tested for diseases.



Elderberry Time

Its benefits & easy recipes

By Alicia Funk

With spring comes the new, and the change of the seasons offers a chance to reset our goals and improve our physical health. Elderberry, an easy-to-grow plant that is native to California, offers a way to keep our immune system healthy throughout the year.

Elderberry is one of the most commonly sold immune remedies and a native to California from the foothills to the coast, as well as other parts of North America, Europe, and Asia. Stores sell Elderberry in over-the-counter syrups, extracts, lozenges, and capsules for immune support, typically from the species native to Europe, *Sambucus nigra*. The species of Elderberry native to California is *Sambucus nigra* subspecies *caerulea*, growing wild in open habitats below 10,000 feet.

The berries are sold as a treatment of cold and flu symptoms including coughing, nasal congestion, mucous discharge, and fever, and as an immune system stimulant. In 2022, global sales of Elderberry supplements were \$1.1 billion, and sales are forecasted to grow to \$2.9 billion in the next 10 years. This number doesn't include sales of the flowers or the use of the berries for flavoring in beverages.

Historical Use

Elderberry has been used by humans around the world for more than 10,000 years. Seeds and pollen from Elderberry have been found in neolithic sites in Europe and ancient sites used by Indigenous peoples of the Americas. North America's indigenous population were the first stewards of California Elderberry and many tribes continue to use the plant today. California tribes traditionally used the flowers to make tea for treating fevers and enjoyed the berries as a food. The canes were hollowed to make musical instruments called clappers.

Elderberry in the Mountain Maidu language is called *lokum hini* or *nokomhyni* and *nok* in Nisenan, according to Farrell Cunningham of the Mountain Maidu, who was a teacher active in helping preserve the Maidu language. Indigenous languages are an essential part of a sustainable and close relationship to the local environment.

Dating back to 5th BCE, the early Greek and Roman writings from Hippocrates, Dioscorides, and Pliny describe the medicinal uses of the Elder tree. The English common name, 'Elder,' is from the Anglo-Saxon word *æld*, meaning "fire" since blowing into the hollow stems of the young branches helped start fires.





Scientific Studies

Numerous laboratory studies on European Elderberry have demonstrated anti-viral, antioxidant, and immune system effects, with modern research confirming its traditional use. The Living Wild Project initiated an independent study on antioxidant content (called ORAC Value) of native fruits and found that Elderberry gathered from Nevada County had more than three times the antioxidants of pomegranates.

Researchers at UC Davis have recently published studies on the compounds in native California Elderberry. The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is active in gathering information on the use of native Elderberry in traditional knowledge systems, supporting scientific studies, and encouraging farmers to grow it in hedgerows. Hedgerows provide protection from the wind and add biodiversity to agricultural areas.

Easy-to-Grow Health Care

Blue Elderberry is a small, fast-growing tree with clusters of creamy white flowers that occur in spring and summer, followed by blue to black berries.

Elderberry tolerates many types of soil conditions and is relatively easy to grow. It is drought tolerant, but holds its leaves longer and looks better with moderate summer irrigation.

Elderberry is protected in California's Central Valley because it is the host plant to the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle, which is listed as a federally threatened species. The flowers and berries attract bees, birds, and other wildlife.

Recipes

The berries are ripe and ready to harvest when they turn bluish-white in color and should be cooked or dried before use. To dry, use a fork to remove berries from as much of the stems as possible. Place a thin layer of berries outside in the sun on drying screens or a baking sheet for about four days, dry in the oven at 200 degrees, or use a dehydrator. After drying thoroughly, store berries in mason jars.

Elderberry Syrup

1 cup dried Elderberries
3 cups water
1–4 cup sugar or honey to taste

- Add berries and water to a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes.
- Pour liquid through a strainer into a mixing bowl, discarding berries or freezing for use in future recipes.
- Return liquid to saucepan, add sugar or honey to taste, and simmer until thickens into a syrup.
- Freeze until ready to use or can in sterilized canning jars.

Elderberry Lozenges

Elderberry Syrup
Silicone Candy Molds
Candy Thermometer

- Bring Elderberry Syrup to a boil and simmer for at least six minutes, or until it reaches 300 degrees.
- Let cool for a few minutes and then pour into mold. Freeze overnight. Store in refrigerator or freezer.

Elderberry Spritz

1 tbsp elderberry syrup
2 tsp fresh lemon juice
¼ tsp. fresh, grated ginger
Sparkling water

- Pour elderberry syrup, lemon juice, and ginger into a glass, filling the rest with sparkling water.
- Garnish with a sprig of Douglas Fir or with a festive, native plant ice cube. Make the ice garnish by adding a sprig of evergreen with other seasonal natives such as Madrone berries, Black Cap Raspberries, or Elderberries to an ice cube tray and then freeze overnight. For a cocktail instead of a mocktail, add 1 part alcohol of choice.

CAUTION: Only gather berries sustainably and when 100% certain of the correct identification. Avoid consuming Red Elderberry, *Sambucus racemosa*, since it contains hydrocyanic acid.



Alicia Funk is the editor of six books on herbal medicine and the managing editor and co-author of *Living Wild—Gardening, Cooking and Healing with Native Plants of California*, with profits benefiting the California Native Plant Society. She facilitates living wild programs for children and adults and will have an elderberry exhibit at RIPE AREA on June 2, 2024, funded by a CA Creative Corps grant. Visit livingwild.org to request elderberry references and more information.

HEALING THROUGH VULNERABILITY

A FATHER & SON'S PATH TO RECOVERY

By Dora Scott

Those who meet David & Shawn Estey, a father & son duo who run Estey Electric locally, or their employees would not assume that they have struggled with addiction. The two operate their business off the values they have learned from Project H.E.A.R.T. (Holding Excellence Above Relapse Team), an organization that began in 2011 and aims to “provide a safe group of friends for those in recovery from life-damaging issues.”

Though a difficult business model, many they hire are involved in Project H.E.A.R.T., and they would not have it any other way. “The lineage with Project H.E.A.R.T. members—across the board from the founders to members who have stayed with Project H.E.A.R.T. for any length of time—you see the massive amount of growth that people have come through to become who they are. It’s amazing, and that’s why we hire these men,” said David. Shawn added that one of the biggest misconceptions about people who have been addicted to drugs or alcohol or have a debilitating life challenge is that they are not trustworthy or they are weak. This, however, could not be further from the truth, especially for those who are putting in the work and are given the chance to prove themselves.

“You get someone in recovery that’s really doing the work on growing. The most honest, compassionate, committed, faithful, and all of those things,” Shawn stated. “We have the best employees and people have no idea, have no clue—constant, on a daily... Nobody knows that these guys—us—are working through the struggles that we are together. It is amazing to be a part of,” David emphasized.

David adds, “It is not uncommon for a customer to ask us about Project H.E.A.R.T. after seeing its symbol on our truck or work jersey. From that question forward, quite often, conversations with strangers find its way into incredibly vulnerable conversations where stories are told, wounds surface, and love and encouragement take place. It is commonplace that people are struggling in personal and emotional areas that even those closest to them know nothing about due to the fear of being vulnerable, being judged, or being penalized in some way for talking about those hidden areas of their lives. People truly want to feel safe enough to speak about areas of life they have never been able to talk about.”

“When we think about success from the standpoint of recovery, men and women who have been through some of the most



“It is commonplace that people are struggling in personal and emotional areas that even those closest to them know nothing about due to the fear of being vulnerable, being judged, or being penalized in some way for talking about those hidden areas of their lives.”

—David Estey

difficult times, who have given excellence before relapse a chance become transformed. They establish the tools to be present and stand in that pocket with someone needing that conversation. There is something very special about that transaction. This is the transformation we see among

Project H.E.A.R.T. members, including ourselves,” David said.

Years ago, David & Shawn would likely be unrecognizable to those who know them today. “Before I walked in the door [to Project H.E.A.R.T.] I had no idea how inauthentic

a major part of my life was. I did not realize I was living in such a fear-based reality with an unhealthy position. I found myself in a perpetual form of running from an area of my life like I had left home early and never stopped running. I was all in when it came to the career, my other family members' challenges, and anything else that removed me from dealing with that inner turmoil. Once those areas I seemed to be hiding behind disappeared, I found myself in quite an emotional spiral. It was the message of vulnerability and humility while attending Project H.E.A.R.T. that allowed me to come to terms with a tremendous amount of shame and anger. What I was carrying internally, I did not understand at the time," David explained how the organization and relationships developed have changed him since he joined several years ago.

Shawn, who first got involved with Project H.E.A.R.T. years ago, stated, "Whoever those men were—before we started showing up at Project H.E.A.R.T.—they are dead men. Totally dead men, 100%. And I see that in my dad too. Of course, we slip back and it's a process. It's about the journey, not the destination, but the old me died. He's gone."

As much as their story is about recovery from addiction, it is also about healing together and breaking away from generational trauma.

David grew up in San Diego in a household as one of eight children. "I had a challenging upbringing for sure. Some of those challenges led to me



“The bottom line when it comes to generational trauma is that it goes on until someone does the necessary work to end it.”

—David Estey



leaving home at 15 years old. I was quite unprepared for the life of survival I was about to experience,” he explained.

“My father was quite violent and abusive, so that was something that I witnessed and overheard quite a bit of. This is an important part of the overall picture of how a father-son team would be involved in Project H.E.A.R.T. together. When we inherit good attributes from our parents, it is great. When it is not great, the potential can be quite difficult, confusing, and painful for the child. Without going down the rabbit hole of violent outbursts and abusive behaviors, I can say children were hurt, one severely in her early teenage years due to maniacal behavior in my childhood home. With a great amount of certainty, I will add that the impact from that period has translated down to my children and family measurably,” David stated.

“Truly one of the greatest services we can do for our hurting children is to help them understand the mistakes we make as parents by being honest about what those errors have been and then by partnering in the framework of healing,” David touched on the path to breaking away from generational trauma. “Chances are, if the parents are misguided, the children are as well. These are the areas Project H.E.A.R.T. helps with the most in my opinion. The building of relationships through vulnerability heals families. We see it quite a bit.”

“I clearly remember in 7th grade sitting in an English class and trying to understand



what the teacher was saying,” David gave an example, continuing, “Looking back now, I see clearly that I was in big trouble by the age of 12 years old. By 13 years old, I was getting high and smoking, and by 15, I would be removed from school by police officers for let us just say it was maximum alcohol consumption.”

David’s father was an orphan who wanted a family with a lot of children. “He just never developed the tools to rear kids well,” he explained. “That is all over now, and I have no regrets and have found a way to cherish fond moments of my parents and that period of my life. There are no victims any longer, just the work to better understand all the challenges from my parents

“My number one thing is that, at all costs, we have to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.”

—Shawn Estey

on down through children and children’s children. There is no better work than the work of healing, especially if this includes the healing of our family members and children.”

“The bottom line when it comes to generational trauma is that it goes on until someone does the necessary work to end it,” David said. “I am grateful that Shawn and I can discuss and work through this. Shawn is a dad now and his commitment is that his children and wife never see or endure what he and I have gone through and

“They read that creed and everything in that creed was the man I wanted to be. I wanted to be a man of integrity. I wanted to like my life morally, ethically, and legally.”

—Shawn Estey

that includes decisions I have made that have undoubtedly put him at a disadvantage.”

When Shawn was young, both of his parents were at one point using drugs. “I remember specifically sitting in a jail cell and hearing Shawn’s voice asking where his dad was,” David recounted. “I would tell his mom, ‘Don’t bring him here; I don’t want him to see this or see me in this situation,’” David said, explaining how that was a life-changing experience that determined the type of father he wanted to be for his son. Shawn’s parents divorced

“I think what really brought us together was that life was challenging for the both of us,” Shawn stated, adding, “There were a lot of times where that was all we had was each other.” The two had worked together for years as wiremen. “We were in communication construction for quite a long time. I think Shawn worked with me off and on for almost ten years,” David explained.

Shawn moved out at 19 years old and started experimenting with drugs. “The next thing you know I’m 19 or 20 years old with a heroin problem,” he explained. Throughout his twenties, he tried to stay off drugs, going through around nine institutionalized rehabilitation facilities in an attempt to become clean.

early into their marriage, and David eventually assumed custody of him and became a parental figure whom Shawn looked up to and depended on.

“Unfortunately making changes changed a lot of the surface-level behavior. From a surface standpoint, everything looked good, but internally, emotionally I was still deeply struggling with shame and anger,” David stated, showing how changing oneself isn’t so simple, taking an extra step of work that Project H.E.A.R.T. helped with.

One of the other misconceptions about addicts is that the drugs or the alcohol is the problem. “In actuality, at the time, drugs are a solution to the problem. There is an inner turmoil in people,” Shawn described how drugs were his “solution” to not feel this turmoil. For those taking that step towards recovery, Shawn advised, “My number one thing is that, at all costs, we have to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.”

“Using drugs and alcohol over time you become comfortable

in chaos. When you are not involved in chaos you're uncomfortable and I had no idea how to be uncomfortable. I had no clue how to sit with discomfort of any kind. I could be doing great and winning and succeeding. The lack of chaos was something that I didn't know how to do," Shawn stated.

Before moving to Nevada County with his girlfriend (now wife), he went through the Salvation Army and was clean for about half a year after starting to use methamphetamine. Later, he had a moment of realization where his faith propelled him to go to the Lovett Recovery Center in Nevada City. "I woke up four days later [...] It was a Thursday when I woke up and went to Project H.E.A.R.T. and the thing that got me with Project H.E.A.R.T. was the creed," Shawn stated.

"They read that creed and everything in that creed was the man I wanted to be. I wanted to be a man of integrity. I wanted to like my life morally, ethically, and legally. I just wanted to be a man of heart," Shawn explained the reason why Project H.E.A.R.T. drew him in after one meeting, where years of all other forms of rehabilitation never stuck.

The difference between Project H.E.A.R.T. and other recovery groups, Shawn described, is that Project H.E.A.R.T. focuses on relationships and the idea of "true friendship." "I had no idea what a friend was when I got in there. My friends were not friends. So for a lot of us who put ourselves through addiction and drugs and alcohol, our definitions of things are very skewed—love, friendship,

a lot of those things. We really need to define what a true friend is," Shawn said.

To Shawn, integral to true friendship is absolute honesty—the friends that will help you grow and call you out in moments of bad decision-making or behavior.

David, supportive of Shawn's path to recovery, attended a men's meeting at Project H.E.A.R.T. Leaving the meeting, David told another, after being asked how the meeting went, that he was there to support his son when he was promptly called out. "I really had to go and look in the mirror and think about what this man had said to me that, for most of my life, people were afraid to say. I thought a lot about why Shawn was in there and there was a part of me that always knew that these behaviors and struggles my son was having are what happen when parents aren't doing a good job," David stated, adding, "The man had a point and I thanked him down the road for being candid. He turned out to be one of two men who showed up for me later on in what I would characterize as the end of one road and the beginning of another."

From then on, David reflected on how he could best support his son, and that change started with himself and his own struggles. "Through the process of vulnerability, over time, I was able to enter a real-life picture of Shawn's struggles as an adult and take an internal personal inventory of my behavior and parenting style, and apologize to Shawn for my part in his struggles," David elaborated, adding,

"Of course, from there, I have engaged in an ongoing effort, study, and willingness to change, which none are possible without accessing our true story, without fear, through vulnerability and hard work."

When asked what advice they would give to those recovering from addiction, both said honesty with yourself is an

not just us." Their example has influenced many others in their lives to become clean and sober with an excellence-above-re-lapse approach to daily living.

"Today we still have our challenges as every human being does," David stated, adding, "However, we are committed to a life of integrity, sobriety, taking responsibility for our

"There is nothing better than reinventing who we are. . . We have engaged in recovery to a point where it has completely changed the dynamics of our entire family, not just us."

—David Estey

important first step—to admit you have a problem in the first place and that you cannot undertake this journey alone.

"Show up; come to Project H.E.A.R.T.," was their next piece of advice. "If you're in an addiction, whether it be a chemical dependence or an unhealthy emotional behavioral cycle, we have women's and men's meetings. Everything that you need is in there, and if it's not, there is someone that's going to help you get there," Shawn stated.

"There is nothing better than reinventing who we are," David explained how going against his fear of change led to an incredible journey of self-discovery and altered the relationship dynamics with people around him. "That's the most amazing part of the whole thing. We've reinvented our relationship. We have engaged in recovery to a point where it has completely changed the dynamics of our entire family,

actions and breaking the chain of irresponsible generational behaviors that separate family and community."

David and Shawn are extensively involved in Project H.E.A.R.T., carrying its values into every aspect of their lives. David and Shawn are active members of the organization's board of directors as well as ongoing mentorship and leadership responsibilities.

Project H.E.A.R.T. has a men's team with meetings on Thursdays from 5-6 p.m. and a women's team with meetings on Mondays from 6-7 p.m. They also have small group meetings, special events, and community service activities, which allow members to build relationships and mend communities.

For more information about Project H.E.A.R.T. or to become involved, please visit project-heart.net.

MAY IS MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

By Jeana McHugh

Pregnancy can be a beautiful time full of hope, excitement, and joy as well as many unexpected struggles. The Maternal Child Adolescent Health (MCAH) Department through Nevada County Public Health has a focus on this time of life and preparing and supporting families through the roller coaster of welcoming a new baby into the family and caring for them through their first years of life. We believe it takes a community to raise a child and we are here to be part of each family's community through support, education, and resources.

Throughout the month of May, MCAH would like to take the opportunity to highlight the importance of maternal mental health. One in five birthing parents will experience symptoms of depression or anxiety during or after pregnancy, as well as one in 10 partners. These are symptoms that go beyond the expected transient ups and downs during pregnancy, or baby blues that can last for the first two weeks post-partum. These are symptoms that can interfere with daily life, they can interfere with bonding with baby, and can have serious consequences if treatment is not made available. Suicide is the leading cause of maternal mortality in the United States, and this suffering is very much avoidable with the right support and treatment.

There are many long-term consequences of untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD). Birthing parents suffering with these symptoms are more likely to go into early labor, have a baby born with low birth weight, have complications during labor, and are less likely



to breastfeed. Children whose parents were suffering from PMAD were later found to have attention and concentration difficulties, trouble regulating emotions, delays in language, and are more likely to develop depression in adolescence.

The good news is we have many resources in Nevada County to help support these families. MCAH, along with other local organizations, offers home visiting for all our prenatal families and families with young children. Through this in-home support, symptoms can be identified early, techniques can be taught to help with mild symptoms, and timely referrals can be

sent to higher levels of care. This could include the obstetrician, primary care doctor, pediatrician, a local therapist, and support groups. MCAH provides a 15-week cognitive-based therapy program, "Moving Beyond Depression," at no cost to families. This program provides one-on-one in-home therapy, with our therapist, Toni McCormick, a licensed clinical social worker who has spent much of her career focusing on perinatal families. We are also lucky to have many local private practice therapists with this focus.

Before baby is born, parents can enroll



in “Becoming Us,” a new program being offered for expectant families. Many programs focus mainly on the birthing parent, while this unique approach focuses on the family as a whole. This four-part class is led by licensed therapist, Toni McCormick, and public health nurse, Jeana McHugh, to compassionately guide parenting couples through strengthening their foundation as they welcome a new baby into the family. The class meets as a small group one night a week for four weeks. The couples are guided through “building their nest” by introducing many topics that are important to discuss before baby arrives, such as practicing communication skills, managing conflict, balancing individual needs, and discussing what their vision of family may look like. The risk of PMAD is discussed and prevention, signs, symptoms, and support resources are identified, to make sure the couple feels prepared. This class is provided by Public Health at no cost to the family

and is open to all prenatal families in Nevada County.

As a community, it is crucial that we are supporting our families through this vulnerable time through reducing the stigma, starting conversations, and making treatment options easy to access.

If you or someone you know is struggling with PMAD or looking for more support, you can reach a local public health nurse at 1-888-301-1450. The national Maternal Mental Health Line is available 24/7 to speak to or text with a mental health professional at 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262). For immediate crisis in Nevada County, you can call the Crisis Response Team at 530-265-5811 or 988 for the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

For more information on any programs please reach out to Jeana McHugh, PHN at 530-847-8293 or jeana.mchugh@nevadacountca.gov



Jeana McHugh is a public health nurse and certified lactation counselor at Nevada County Public Health. She goes on home visits with families and organizes multiple weekly groups and events for MCAH. She has two young children and you can often find her out enjoying all the family events Nevada County has to offer.

Using Astrology for Improved Mental Health

By Eileen Mello



Before diving into this topic, I would like to give you a definition of astrology, so that we can be sure we're on the same page!

Astrology is the study of the planetary bodies and their movement through the heavens, and how that movement coincides with events on Earth and in our personal lives. Astrology is *not* a belief system. It is an empirical art and science that is incredibly nuanced and technical. Yet, it's also accessible to anyone who takes the time to study and observe first-hand the power of astrology. (Some famous astrologers include scientists, Johannes Kelper, Galileo Galilei, and Carl Jung).

Let's now review some of the ways astrology can prove beneficial to the health of your Mind-Body-Spirit. Since sci-

ence continues to prove there is no separation between the health of our Mind-Body-Spirits, I will be speaking to the integral whole rather than just "mental health."

(By the way, astrologically, the Mind-Body-Spirit is represented by the Virgo archetype, which is found somewhere in your unique astrology whether you are a Virgo or not!)

Self Awareness

Over and over ... and over again, I hear my clients and students say, "Astrology helps me understand myself better." If you're on a healing or spiritual journey then astrology can definitely provide context and insight—as well as remedies—for navigating life.

It can illuminate your virtues and your shadows, natural

talents, or challenges in an impersonal way that encourages an objective understanding of the self. Doing so, it can benefit your mindset by providing context and meaning to those things we most enjoy or dislike about ourselves.

Validation and Empathy

"I feel so validated and understood," is the second most common thing I hear from clients. Our astrology reveals the underpinnings of our personality in an uncanny way. To illustrate this point, I'll provide an example of a client who arrived feeling low about a specific personality trait and left feeling empowered:

During a consultation with Julia, I told her that her astrology indicated her life was about learning how to act on her insatiable curiosity and

embrace her spontaneous spirit. She was likely to be a Jill of All Trades and master of none. She was also likely to feel confined and bored by routine and structure, both at home and at work.

"You mean I'm supposed to be this way?! I've been judging myself for years, feeling shame every time I lose interest in another activity. My family doesn't take me seriously," Julia responded.

Apparently, Julia had always thought of herself as "flighty," "inconsistent," and "lacking follow-through" because she had grown up in a family that prized commitment and mastery. At 35, she had spent the majority of her life criticizing herself and sincerely believing there was something wrong with her because she couldn't

stick to anything. Our session completely flipped the script on one of her narratives.

Astrology has a healing effect on many folks who have lived feeling “less than” or as though there’s “something wrong with me.” Suddenly, they aren’t just validated, but they’re encouraged to celebrate their authentic selves as exactly correct for their spiritual growth and life’s purpose. Julia needed the validation that she really was “supposed to be this way.”

Shifting Perspectives

Astrology can help you find remedies and feel empowered to move through difficult times with greater ease rather than leaving you to feel victimized by others and life. Astrological transits—a tool that shows how current planetary movement interacts with your horoscope (which is essentially a 2D map of the heavens at the time of your birth)—help you to understand what archetypal themes you are experiencing throughout your life and during a certain period of time.

Some transits are more strenuous than others, which we can see reflected back to us in our daily lives. If you’re undergoing a divorce or loss of income then you’re obviously experiencing a more difficult cycle than someone who just got married or received a long-awaited promotion. Understanding the nature of this cycle, as well as its duration, can almost always provide psychological relief.

Overwhelmingly, my clients and students are individuals who are undergoing a time of great transition or who have



encountered much suffering throughout their lives. It’s not uncommon that I have someone walk into my office with hunched shoulders and a feeling of despair.

When I tell them they’re undergoing a difficult transit, they’re not surprised, but they are usually relieved to have it validated. Unfortunately, there’s no magic pill for relieving suffering. But, these folks do leave with a shift of perspective that elevates their self-esteem and courage. Most importantly, they have greater context and understanding for how they can work with the energies they’re experiencing. Rather than feeling like life is happening to them, they see how the experiences can serve as a stepping stone toward positive growth and change.

Spiritual Connection

If you have an inclination to cultivate or deepen your spiritual practice, then astrology can provide a meaningful con-

nection to Divine. One of my favorite teachers went through a profound despair in his early adulthood that left him in a state of severe and suicidal depression.

It was at this time that he discovered astrology and learned that he was going through a strenuous and spiritually significant transit. His studies helped him gain greater self-awareness; it validated and provided empathy for a depression that he feared would kill him; and gradually, his hopelessness turned to meaning and purpose. Today, he is respected as one of the leading Evolutionary Astrologers and teachers, and he credits astrology for helping him overcome his health crisis.

This is not an uncommon story. Like all healers, astrologers—and our clients and students—are often led to this ancient practice because it illuminates aspects of our lives and psyches that otherwise

remain hidden. Humans have always been fascinated by the mysteries of the cosmos. This archetypal language can quite literally transform your life and improve the overall health of your Mind-Body-Spirit.



Eileen Mello is a second-generation practicing Evolutionary Astrologer. She’s also a former editor at *The Mountain Astrologer* and editor of *The Evolving Astrologer*. In addition to her astrological practice, she’s a successful independent consultant for small businesses and nonprofits needing operations support (building infrastructure, implementing technology, establishing systems and processes).

Please visit www.eileenmello.com for ways you can work with Eileen or email her at eileen@eileenmello.com.

TRAUMA—THE INVISIBLE PANDEMIC

AWARENESS, INTEGRATION & POST-TRAUMATIC HEALING

By Michael Stone

“Healing means releasing yourself from the version of you that you created for survival.”

—Alice Miller

There is a hidden pandemic that affects us all. We don't often recognize it because it has been normalized and remains difficult to see clearly despite how pervasive it is in our culture. We are swimming in a sea of personal, familial, collective, and ancestral trauma. It is the most misunderstood, avoided, belittled, denied, and untreated cause of human suffering on our planet. If we look at the most critical personal and collective challenges we face today, they can all be traced back to unintegrated trauma. The most significant impact of trauma is that it fractures our ability to genuinely connect and relate with others, reinforcing our sense of being disconnected, defensive, and separate from life itself.

Trauma isn't about the events that occurred to us but rather about what happens in us when faced with overwhelming situations. It's like a psychic wound lodged within our nervous system, body, and mind. While it might be tempting to judge our responses to trauma and label them as a disease, pathology, or brokenness, that's inaccurate. These responses are an inherent intelligence within our nervous system, honed over hundreds of thousands of years to protect us. When we have threatening or overwhelming experiences, our nervous system, working faster than our minds, reacts by fragmenting, freezing, tensing, and constricting a part of our essential self. These fragments manifest as body tension or numbness, often leading to pain and discomfort. Recognizing this dynamic helps us approach our trauma responses with more compassion and a new lens. It

“People must become aware of their physical sensations and how their bodies interact with the world around them to change. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past.”

—Bessel A. van der Kolk

guides us in integrating these fragmented experiences, offering a path to healing and resolving past injuries that linger within our bodies, hearts, and minds.

When we experience physical tension or numbness in our bodies, it often signals the presence of trauma. Initially, our responses to trauma might encompass feelings of exhaustion, grief, anxiety, panic, agitation, confusion, dissociation, hyperactivity, and apathy. If left unaddressed, trauma can potentially lead to various health issues such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, long-term stress disorders, and gastrointestinal problems.

“From early infancy, our ability to regulate emotional states depends upon the experience of feeling that a significant person in our life is simultaneously experiencing a similar state of mind.”

—Daniel Siegel

A significant portion of our trauma originated during the formative phases of our development when we were vulnerable children relying on caregivers to provide emotional security. As mammals, receiving emotional support—being felt, seen, soothed, heard, held, nourished, guided, and protected—is crucial for our growth, development, and evolution. When this support is lacking from caregivers, it impedes our ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and actions effectively. To develop the capacity for self-regulation, we need the foundational experience of co-regulating and forming bonds and connections with others. When we allow another person to witness our pain, it supports us in integrating, evolving, and healing the hidden, dissociated, and painful parts that have been suppressed and numbed.

Some years ago, my path led me to establish Trauma Integration & Meditation Circles. In these sanctuaries, I witnessed a quantum leap in post-traumatic healing among individuals who were previously only focused on individual trauma resolution. What truly touched my heart was witnessing the powerful healing when people realized recovery isn't solely an individual journey but flourishes with shared experiences. When we have a safe environment to share challenges, difficulties, addictions,

“Trauma fundamentally means a disconnection from self. Why do we get disconnected? Because it is too painful to be ourselves.”

—Gabor Maté

and dysfunctions, we begin to recognize that we are not alone in our struggles.

Within these closed committed circles, running for four to six months with weekly sessions, we build a cocoon of trust and mutual understanding. This space becomes a safe haven where genuine conversations unfold, embracing authenticity and vulnerability while making sense of what didn't make sense when we first encountered the overwhelming experiences we call trauma. Here, we learn and build the courage to feel the things that haven't felt safe, let alone talked about in the past. Many of us walked solitary paths, lacking someone to confide in during our darkest moments, especially as children. But within these circles, our stories interweave, creating a tapestry of healing through shared compassion and empathy. It's remarkable how we find solace, strength, and a renewed sense of connection by embracing our shared struggles.

In our programs, we introduce embodied, awareness-centered practices that foster individuals' experience of feeling felt, seen, held, and heard within a supportive group setting. Our circles begin with a grounding, centering, and “presencing” meditation designed to expand inner spaciousness and deepen external awareness. This intentional practice aims to create a safe space to meet, embrace, and integrate personal, familial, collective, and ancestral traumas. From this place of connectedness, we open the circle by exploring practices, encountering challenges, and embracing opportunities for trauma awareness, release, integration, and achieving post-traumatic healing.

We invite you to visit one of our Monday evening donation-based Open Circles in Nevada City or set up a 15-minute introductory call with Michael. When we do this kind of healing work, it ripples out into our families and our descendants and amazingly heals the repetitive trauma of ancestral trauma. We like to say, “We're healing the world, one nervous system at a time.”

“Resilience is not a trait that people either have or don't have. It involves behavior, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and practiced!”

—Arielle Schwartz



We welcome you to join us in healing the wounds that separate, alienate, and marginalize us...

At Well of Light, Michael Stone offers various transformative healing and personal growth opportunities. The Trauma Integration & Healing Circles, conducted in closed groups over four to six months, provide a nurturing space for weekly healing sessions. Due to high demand, these programs have a waitlist—apply via the Well of Light website to secure your spot. Additionally, the Weekly Drop-in sessions, held at Inner Path Studio, 200 Commercial St., Nevada City, from 5:30-7 p.m., offer collective meditation, integration, and healing circles on a donation basis.

Michael Stone's services include Private Counseling and Guidance, specializing in Somatic witnessing, Trauma Integration, and facilitation for individuals and couples. Tailored movement and meditation Experiences are also available to promote holistic well-being. As part of his offerings, Michael Stone, a seasoned spiritual guide, is available to speak at your organization, church, club, or gatherings, sharing wisdom and insights.

For further details and inquiries, please visit www.WellofLight.com or at 530.277.0937. Join us at Inner Path Studio, 200 Commercial St., Nevada City, for transformative programs.

Note: Although this practice can be deeply therapeutic, it is not a substitute for therapy. Somatic witnessing is a method to enhance our emotional, physical, and relational awareness. This practice involves meditation, contemplation, and sharing to integrate trauma and foster spiritual awakening.



Michael Stone is a spiritual author, mentor, trauma integration facilitator, and deeply versed in the timeless traditions of shamanism and mysticism, with over five decades of leading transformational programs. He is the author of *Living A Shamanic Way of Life* and is on the faculty of the Shift Network, where he hosts the yearly Shamanic Wisdom Summit. His upcoming book, *Traumatized: A Love Story*, recounts his journey through trauma, turning it into a spiritual path. Beyond a memoir, it offers hope and a transformative roadmap for healing, inviting readers to embrace their own evolution toward wholeness.

BALANCE YOUR ELEMENTS, HEAL THE EARTH

By Jess Hartley Litton



I want to welcome you to view life through a lens. The lens of the elements. When you look outside, what do you see? A pond, wind blowing leaves on a tree, a boulder or maybe a mountain, the sun?...these are all representing elements. There's air; the power of wind and movement, light and dry. There's fire; the power of heat and transformation, illuminating and energizing. There's water; the power of moisture and coolness, soft and nourishing. There's earth; the power of groundedness and stability, dense and structural. Then there's ether; the "emptiness" between everything that connects everything, spacious and expansive. These elements make up everything that is.

Let's look at the elements within our bodies and minds. Earth is our bones and muscles and structures of density and support. Within our mind, it is stability, containment, structure, and a methodical and slow nature. Water is seen in all the fluids of the body, and many feelings, particularly love. Water keeps things flowing, cool, and calm. Fire is seen in our digestion, our intellect, and our willpower. It is the power of transforming raw material (food, new knowledge, and experiences) into understanding. It can show up as anger and other heated emotions, and inflammation and heat, when in excess. Air is seen in the movement of our heartbeat and our thoughts, how much and how quickly we move in the world. Air is also directly connected to the nervous system, and how triggered it can be. Ether is seen in the empty cavities of our body, necessary for the flow and holding space

of the other elements. It is also our spirit, our ability to connect to Spirit and the realm of creativity. The unseen realm. So we all have an intimate relationship with all of the elements, within and surrounding us. We just don't normally see things in this way. But what if we did?

What if we saw that our water element was essential for love, and that we should honor and protect the waters of the body...and furthermore, the waters of the world? What if we cared to the health of our earth element in such a way, that we wouldn't want to poison or taint that earth element within? We might choose to buy organic and not support the poisoning of foods that then become our element of earth within and surrounding. We might refrain from harmful substances for the body, or limit them. What if we cared to the balance of our fire? We might choose foods or quantities that properly feed our fire, not flare it or snuff it out. We might instead nurture a healthy fire, in turn having less outbursts of uncontrolled fire, or zero energy from low or no fire. We might see this reflected in an understanding of the essential relationship of controlled burns in our environment. What if we cared to the air of the body? We might choose to slow down and not run ourselves ragged and stressed. We might choose to breathe deeply and resist the urge to run run run, finding new avenues of livelihood and entertainment. We would also be mindful of the quality of air we breathe, advocating for clean air for the world. What if we saw the desire toward con-

nection, with each other and of the Greater, as paramount in our lives? Then made space for that with spiritual practices and/or creativity and connection with community, everyday! We might find we're less desiring of substances or vices that bring us to that place of "connection". We might find there's less addiction in the world. Truly, everything can be healed and resolved with elemental theory. The key is, balance of opposite qualities. If you're feeling ungrounded and rushed, your air element is too elevated, bring in earth element and ground...eat grounding roots, meditate, or do yoga. If you're feeling heated, irritable and intense, your Fire is elevated, bring in Water...cooling foods, a nice swim, wear the color blue, connect to a loving person in your life. If you're feeling heavy and dense, sluggish and stuck, bring up your movement, or increase your heat...go for a walk, eat light and spicy foods. Everything can find balance.

Ayurveda translates to the "study of life," broken into basic fundamental pieces of a great puzzle. Everything can be seen through the lens of elemental theory. We have to simply observe the qualities present within and around, then choose that which brings balance. It can be as easy as that. We are all microcosms of the macrocosm. So if we all pay mind to our own balance and health of the elements, the world will know balance and wellness. We all have this power and responsibility.

Ayurveda takes care to assess each individual thoroughly and offers a detailed and

expansive repertoire of tools for balance. No two programs look the same, as no two people are the same. Yet the fundamental model always follows this basic lens of the elements within and surrounding. So I implore you to tune in and see what elements are presenting for you, and if you're in need of some assistance, I am here for you. You have the ability to find balance, equilibrium, optimization, and perfect health. Doesn't that sound wonderful?



Jess Hartley Litton is a Clinical Ayurvedic Specialist and healer, with over 15 years experience, a graduate of the California College of Ayurveda. She also just published a Young Adult novel that incorporates elemental theory and Ayurveda, set in Nevada County, called *A Dreamer: Book 1*. Available now on Barnes and Noble and Amazon, and soon in your local bookstores. She has been a resident of Grass Valley for over 35 years and lives with her husband and two daughters on a second-generation Tree Farm. She can be reached at jessicahartley@me.com for either Ayurveda, intuitive healing, or book readings/signings.

PALLIATIVE CARE

IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

By Mary Anne Davis

On average, there are over 12 million adults and 400,000 children across the country living with a serious illness. For these individuals, palliative care can make a significant difference. Receiving palliative care has been shown to improve quality of life and reduce caregiver burden, and in so doing, reduce avoidable hospital visits.

Palliative care is medical care provided to a patient with a serious, life-threatening, or terminal illness to manage symptoms, relieve pain, stress, and discomfort. This specialized care also meets the emotional, needs of the patient. The focus is on providing relief from the stress and symptoms of the illness (such as pain or fatigue) to improve the quality of life for both the patient and their family.

A specially-trained team provides palliative care. They work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is provided based on the needs of each individual patient, not on the patient's prognosis—the care is customizable to suit each. You can seek palliative care at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and you can continue to seek curative treatment at the same time.

This specialized approach is designed to improve the overall well-being of individuals dealing with serious chronic medical conditions. Unlike hospice care, palliative care can be provided at any stage of illness, alongside curative treatments, and is not limited by prognosis. A team of experienced medical professionals and social workers can collaborate to create personalized care plans that address the physical and emotional needs of the patient.

Palliative Care Improves Quality of Life

The goal of Palliative care is to en-

hance the quality of life for those who suffer from the symptoms and stress of serious illnesses such as cancer, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), and many more. Symptoms for serious illness may include pain, depression, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, and anxiety. When your care team is all on the same page, you have more control over your care and your quality of life improves.

How is Hospice Care Different From Palliative Care?

There are similarities and differences between hospice and palliative care services. Both are meant to provide comfort and relief, but they differ in important ways. Hospice care includes palliative care, but palliative care alone is not hospice. Both hospice and palliative care provide comfort care, to help keep the patient as pain-free and comfortable as possible. Both also can have a comprehensive team of healthcare workers on

Hospice vs. Palliative Care		
	HOSPICE	PALLIATIVE
DIAGNOSIS	Terminal	Serious, but not necessarily terminal
TIMEFRAME	Final 6 months of life	Anytime
TREATMENT	Pain management (no curative treatment)	Pain management plus curative treatment
WHERE	Anywhere you call home	Anywhere you call home
TEAM	Doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, dieticians	Doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, dieticians

hand to provide assistance including doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and aides. Both can also help with any psychological or emotional challenges patients may have when facing a life-limiting illness. The overarching goal of both palliative and hospice care is to improve the quality of life in patients.

The most important differences between the two are the time-frame and treatment. While hospice care is for the estimated last six months of life, palliative care does not have that length of illness requirement. You are eligible for palliative care if you are still seeking curative treatment, but hospice care is for those who have stopped seeking medical treatment to cure their disease.

Benefits Palliative Care

- Improved quality of life through expert symptom management and personalized care plans.
- Enhanced emotional well-being for both patients and families, fostering open communication and understanding.
- Empowerment to make informed medical decisions that align with personal values and preferences.
- Comprehensive coordination of care, ensuring seamless transitions between different healthcare providers.
- Holistic support that addresses physical and emotional needs, promoting a sense of comfort and peace.

How Do I Find Palliative Care Providers?

Talk with your doctor or call a palliative care provider directly, as a referral is needed from your doctor.

While palliative care clinics provide symptom management, each one may do so in slightly different ways depending on their particular resources available. One local choice is Sierra Community Palliative Care, led by Hospice of the Foothills, is a collaborative community-based palliative care clinic in Grass Valley. Call them at 530-272-5011 with any questions you may have.



Mary Anne Davis is a local author and Event and Marketing Manager at Hospice of the Foothills. She has resided in Nevada County since 1987 and has worked in sales, marketing, event management, and writing.

Are you or someone you know living with a serious illness?

Palliative care is a specialized approach designed to work alongside your healthcare providers to help you manage pain and other symptoms that often come with treatment.

Our team of experienced medical professionals and social workers can help you manage these symptoms and improve your quality of life.



- *Onsite palliative care clinic*
- *We create a care plan that meets your unique needs*
- *Connection to resources for whole person care*



If you or someone you love can benefit from palliative care, please call 530-272-5011

hospiceofthefoothills.org/palliativecare

Bringing Hope to Western Nevada County

Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital Foundation's Alzheimer's Outreach Program

By Kirsten Dees

In the quiet corners of our community, amidst the beauty of Western Nevada County, there lies a silent struggle that affects thousands of families. Alzheimer's and related dementia are not just diagnoses; they are life-altering conditions that touch the lives of individuals and their loved ones in profound ways. In the face of these challenges, the Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital Foundation (SNMHF) has been a beacon of hope through its Alzheimer's Outreach Program (AOP).

With an estimated 3,000 residents in our service area grappling with Alzheimer's or related dementia, the day-to-day challenges of family caregiving looms large. The journey of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's demands unwavering patience, boundless compassion, and a support system that extends far beyond the walls of one's home. This is where the SNMHF Alzheimer's Outreach Program steps in, offering a lifeline of support and guidance to families navigating these uncharted waters.

At the heart of the program lies a comprehensive array of services designed to address the multifaceted needs of individuals and their caregivers. Central to this support network are the family caregiver support groups, which serve as a sanctuary for sharing experiences, finding solace in shared struggles, and gaining



invaluable insights from others who walk the same path. These groups provide not only emotional support but also practical advice, equipping caregivers with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of caregiving with grace and resilience.

Recognizing the critical need for respite care, the SNMHF Alzheimer's Outreach Program offers caregivers much-needed relief from the demanding responsibilities of caregiving. Amidst the constant demands of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's, caregivers often neglect their own well-being.

Respite care services provide a vital opportunity for caregivers to recharge, rejuvenate, and tend to their own physical and emotional needs, knowing that their loved ones are in safe and capable hands.

Education serves as a cornerstone of the program, empowering both caregivers and individuals living with Alzheimer's with knowledge and understanding. Through a variety of educational programming, including workshops, seminars, and one-on-one consultations, participants gain insights into the disease process, learn practical caregiving techniques,

and discover resources available within the community. Armed with knowledge and information, caregivers are better equipped to navigate the challenges of Alzheimer's with confidence and resilience.

In addition to group settings, the program offers support through home visits, ensuring that families receive tailored assistance and guidance in the comfort of their own homes. These visits foster a sense of connection and trust, strengthening the bond between families and program coordinators and ensuring that individuals receive the support they need

to thrive in their own environment.

In the last fiscal year, the impact of the Alzheimer's Outreach Program has been profound and far-reaching. The Alzheimer's Outreach Program held 39 family caregiver support groups, 21 families received respite care, 285 clients received educational programming, 60 home visits took place, and 125 client referrals were served. In addition, SNMHF introduced a new pilot program last fiscal year—educational classes designed to enhance the understanding of dementia among local law enforcement.

Together, these numbers represent more than just statis-

tics—they are a testament to the unwavering dedication and impact of the Alzheimer's Outreach Program in supporting and empowering those affected by Alzheimer's and related dementia.

One upcoming event that underscores the program's commitment to raising awareness and providing essential information to the community is the "10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's" workshop. Scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2024 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Hospice of the Foothills, this free workshop offers attendees an opportunity to learn about the early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and gain insights into strategies for early detec-

tion and intervention. Whether you're concerned about changes in a loved one, a friend, or even yourself, this informative session equips participants with the knowledge and resources needed to take proactive steps in addressing Alzheimer's and related dementia.

For those interested in attending or learning more about the workshop you can either visit our website (<https://supportsierranevada.org/aopevents>) or contact Linda Aeschliman at 530-648-0592 or linda.aeschliman@dignityhealth.

As we stand united in the fight against Alzheimer's, let us draw strength from the resilience of our community and the



unwavering support offered by the Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital Foundation's Alzheimer's Outreach Program. Together, we can embrace hope, uplift one another, and make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's, one family at a time.



Kirsten Dees works as the Marketing and Communications Associate at the Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital Foundation (SNMHF) and has over 17 years of experience in the non-profit sector. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Child and Family Development from San Diego State University and a Master's in Social Work from Boston University. Apart from her work at SNMHF, Kirsten serves as Vice President of the Board for Community Beyond Violence and is actively involved in the Special Education Community Advisory Council for Nevada County.

A Guide to Helping Your Parents Navigate Aging

By Comfort Keepers

We're so used to our parents living independently that we don't always notice when they begin to struggle with handling daily activities. Changes can begin gradually as they start to slow down, or they can happen quickly when a parent has an unexpected diagnosis or accident. No matter if you live across town or across the country, proactively creating a senior life plan for your parents will give you peace of mind and allow them to continue to live their lives to the fullest.

Communication

Approaching aging parents about planning their senior years can be a touchy subject for everyone involved. As a general rule, it is recommended to start having these conversations by the time you're in your forties, or they're in their seventies (known as the 40-70 rule). Of course, you know your parents' habits and personalities best, so you are the best judge of their physical and mental health. Here are some factors that can determine the appropriate time to initiate this conversation:

- Start the conversation early, using the 40-70 rule, so you have time to make or change plans based on your parents' needs.
- Create a comfortable and open environment for the conversation.
- Plan more than one conversation so you can cover all possible issues.
- Take notes so you remember what was discussed and can keep track of the next steps.
- Keep a list of all their passwords for accounts such as computer, email, phone, and cable.

Create a Caregiving Plan

A caregiving plan will ensure everyone is on the same page about the care needed and how it will be handled as your parents age. If they require additional care, consider how you can support their needs. This might involve coordinating with local caregivers, hiring professionals to assist with certain tasks, or, if you don't live nearby, planning regular visits to spend time with them.

- Have a caregiving plan ready in case your loved ones need in-home care.
- Discuss changes to your parents' healthcare needs with their doctors.
- Research different caregiving options.
- Find out if your loved one has any specific needs to maintain their health and happiness.



Health and Medical Care

A senior life plan starts with understanding your parents' health statuses and medical needs. When they are in excellent health, it's essential that their care and treatment preferences are detailed in a living will or advanced directive and discussed with family members. Have this conversation now, during the planning stage, rather than during a medical emergency.

- Designate a healthcare proxy who can speak with doctors on your loved one's behalf and make healthcare decisions, especially if they are hospitalized.
- Keep a list of their medications up to date, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, supplements, and vitamins.
- Keep a list of your parent's doctors and specialists, including their contact information.
- Ensure they are following their doctors' advice and taking medications as prescribed.
- Make a note of the closest urgent care facility and hospital.
- Get to know their primary care physicians.
- Discuss your parents' latest check-ups and help schedule upcoming appointments.
- Encourage your parent to write a living will or advanced directive and keep a copy on file.

Safety and Living Arrangements

Most seniors want to remain in their homes as they age, connected to family, friends, and community. If your parents are able to continue living at home, consider home remodeling

options to help them safely age in place. In addition, develop an emergency plan with your parents and make sure they know what to do in case of a natural disaster or other emergency.

- Evaluate the safety of their home and make modifications if necessary.
- Review any mortgage or financial concerns about the home.
- Check in regularly, either in person, or by phone or video chat.
- Consider long-term care insurance in case long-term care is ever required.
- Develop an emergency plan and list of emergency contacts.

Social and Support Network

A strong social support network helps keep seniors healthy and active and gives them a sense of connection, belonging, and purpose. This support can include neighbors, friends, or other family members who can assist your loved one if needed. If possible, foster connections with their support network to have reliable contacts in case of emergencies.

- Encourage your parents to stay socially engaged and participate in activities that bring them joy.
- Check if your parents have a support network in their local community.
- Keep the name and number of a neighbor who can regularly check on your loved ones.
- Create a schedule of friends and family who call or regularly video chat.
- Ensure your parents have access to reliable transportation when needed, especially if they don't drive.

Review Finances

Discussing finances can be tricky. Seniors sometimes want to keep their financial information private, even from family members. Reassure them that they can keep exact dollar amounts confidential, but make sure you have access to the information if you need it. Have them assign a Durable Power of Attorney (POA) to someone who can make financial decisions on their behalf. When going over how your parents would like their finances handled, topics to discuss include outstanding debts, homeownership, savings, and retirement funds.

- Find out what financial accounts are open and where they are held.
- Make a list of advisors' contact information.
- Ensure they are making informed decisions about retirement, investments, and insurance.
- Stay up to date on Social Security benefits.
- Check that beneficiary designations are current.
- Make sure your loved ones have a POA representative.
- Streamline bill paying by setting up automatic payments.
- Ensure they know how to avoid scams.

Gather Legal Documents

Discussing and taking care of legal issues while your parents enjoy good health can ensure everything is planned and un-

derstood. Make sure you know where your parents keep their personal information and important documents in case you need them. Go over everything together and meet with their estate planner so you can ask questions about their wishes and how to ensure they are carried out.



- Discuss important documents and where they are stored.
- Find out if your parents have a will and a living will, and where they are located.
- Make sure their POA for finances and healthcare proxies are in order.
- Read through their estate plan/will to make sure beneficiaries and responsibilities are correct and up to date.

Review Insurance Plans

Regularly review your parents' insurance policies. It's essential to know if their policies are adequate, up to date, and where the accounts are located. This information can help avoid undue financial burdens during medical emergencies or accidents.

- Make a list of active insurance policies such as auto, home, health, long-term care, etc.
- Review homeowners, auto, and life insurance policies to ensure they are adequate and up-to-date.
- Review health insurance coverage for any policy changes that need to be made based on current or future needs.

Comfort Keepers® Can Help

This checklist gives seniors and their families a way to confidently and purposefully navigate the next few years. We offer resources with helpful information and insights that help you care for your loved ones so they can experience all that life has to offer. And if they need in-home care, we can provide compassionate care that focuses on connection and purpose and experiencing more joy every day. To learn more about our in-home care services, contact Comfort Keepers at 530-274-8600 or www.comfortkeepers.com/marysville-ca today.



WHY CHOOSE A NONPROFIT HOSPICE?

By Mary Anne Davis

When it's time to start looking for a hospice agency for yourself or your loved one, how do you know which one to choose? It can be as simple as asking, "Who owns this hospice agency?"

Nevada County is one of the few communities remaining that has a nonprofit hospice. Hospice of the Foothills belongs to the community, not to some large corporation. What started as a community-based reaction to a need for expert end-of-life services has now become (to some) a very attractive and profitable enterprise.

Today, of the 2,600 hospices in California, only 6% are nonprofit.

What is the difference? All hospice organizations must abide by the same Medicare minimum requirements, but how they each operate and deliver care within those requirements can be drastically different.

Hospice of the Foothills has provided compassionate end-of-life care for more than 44 years in Nevada County. This organization has always been nonprofit and community-owned—this means we answer directly to the communities we serve rather than investors or a larger healthcare system.

Here are some things you should know about all nonprofit hospices:

1. Patients Come First

Nonprofit hospices prioritize the well-being of patients, above financial gain. Their mission revolves around providing comprehensive care that suits each individual's needs. This creates an environment where patients and their families feel heard, valued, and supported.

2. Community Commitment

Unlike for-profit hospices that are driven by the bottom line, nonprofit organizations deeply invest in their communities. They continually go above and beyond required minimum care thresholds because they can. Their focus goes beyond basic care to include outreach programs, education initiatives, and support systems that enrich the lives of those they serve.

3. Compassion over Commercialism

Nonprofits aren't motivated by shareholders or commercial interests but rather by compassion for the patients they serve. This absence of profit-driven motives ensures that decisions are made with the best interests of the patients at heart prioritizing high-quality care above all else.

4. Financial Accessibility

Nonprofit hospices often go above and beyond to ensure that financial constraints don't hinder access to end-of-life services for individuals in need. There is no cost for our hospice services at Hospice of the Foothills. This aligns with a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

5. Transparency

One important aspect of nonprofit hospices is their emphasis on practices and transparency. These organizations are structured in a way that promotes openness and accountability which helps build trust among patients, families, and the community as a whole.

All hospices are not the same, and you do have a choice. We hope when that time comes your search leads you to Hospice of the Foothills. It will be our honor to provide comfort and the highest quality care to your family.



Mary Anne Davis is a local author and Event and Marketing Manager at Hospice of the Foothills. She has resided in Nevada County since 1987 and has worked in sales, marketing, event management, and writing.



Humankindness lives here.

At Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital, we believe in the healing power of humankindness and are committed to providing exceptional, high-quality care to our Nevada County communities. That commitment is demonstrated by our nationally recognized programs—all available right in the heart of Grass Valley. Some of our many accolades include:

- 2023 Top Rural Hospital
- Accredited Mammography and CT Program
- Certified Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehab Program
- Certified Primary Stroke Center
- Certified Quality Breast Center of Excellence
- Designated LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader
- Integrated Cancer Network Accreditation
- Nationally Ranked for Patient Safety

We're proud to have served as your health partner since 1958. And we're honored to continue supporting you in all the years to come. Learn more about us at DignityHealth.org/SierraNevada.

Hello humankindness®

