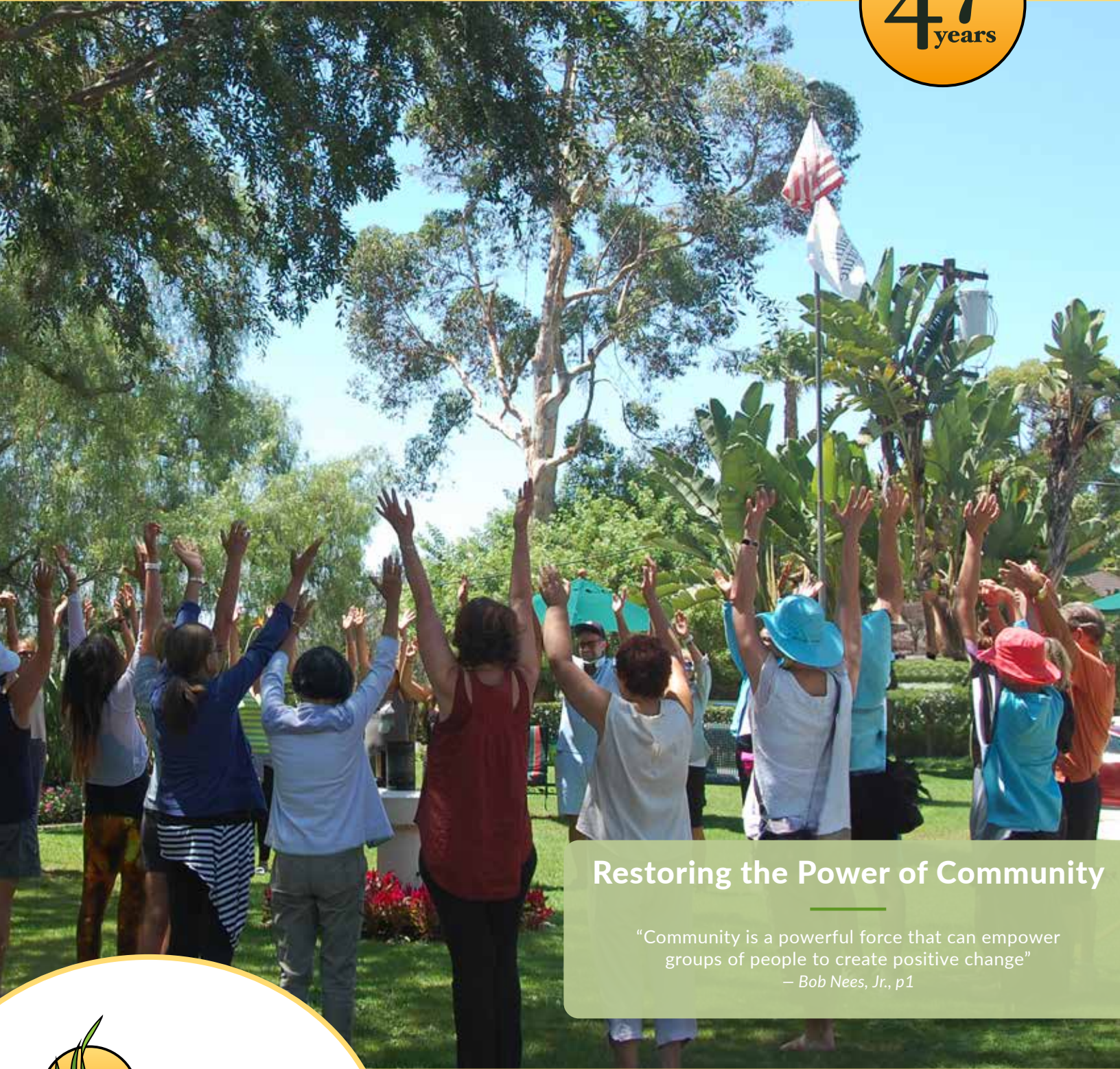


Optimum Health Institute Newsletter

Connecting the OHI Community | SPRING 2024



Restoring the Power of Community

“Community is a powerful force that can empower groups of people to create positive change”

— Bob Nees, Jr., p1



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CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

BOB NEES, JR., SENIOR PASTOR

Greetings OHI community; here's wishing you cheerful fellowship as we enter the spring season. The warmer longer days ahead beckon us to come together and rediscover the affinity between us. In this edition, let's explore the theme of Community.

Restoring the Power of Community

A community is more than just a group of people living in the same area or having similar interests. It is a network of individuals bound together by a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

We have endured the abnormal era of the past four years which fomented an unprecedented division among Americans and among people around the world. Now is the time for us to focus on finding harmony and community once again. It is the return of the wholeness and solidarity that defines community that I wish to address in this issue.

"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf." 1 Corinthians 10:17 NIV

I share this verse not just because it refers to communion which is a coming together with the spirit of Christ; it is an apt metaphor for what we are experiencing today. We all share one loaf whether we identify it as the same planet, country, state, or city where we live, and because we all share and depend on the same resources it makes us all one body of people. In other words, God made us and intended for us to live in community.

We are Hard-Wired for Community

Community is a universal human need that is found in all cultures. The desire to belong and be a part of a group is hard-wired into our system. It is an instinctual need from our early hunter-gatherer history when acceptance in the tribe - inclusion in the group - was a matter of survival.

"More than just a need, community is a powerful force that can empower groups of people to create positive change."

It gives them purpose and aligns the skills, intellects, and efforts of many toward a singular objective. When you bring together the collective strength of people working together obstacles seem to fall away. Suddenly goals that seemed impossible become achievable.

A Blanket of Security

Being in community means we are never alone when we're working through difficulties; it creates a blanket of security because the group is always willing to provide assistance, resources, and empathy to those who need it. It empowers us to deal with uncertainty, and enables us to rebuild after

an emergency or disaster.

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." 1 Corinthians 1:10 NIV

When people are united in community they create a culture that makes everyone feel valued. Community is built on trust and requires honest, open communication. Mindful listening is a trait that unites because people feel like they have been heard. Being in community helps reduce stress in times of trouble because the burden is shouldered by many while the group works to boost each other's morale.

Beware of the Dividers

Challenging our sense of community are those who profit from our division. We must always be on the alert to recognize their corruption. We need to be critical thinkers in this age of fake news. And, it helps to remember the wisdom of Will Durant, American philosopher and historian, who observed, "The political machine triumphs because it is a united minority acting against a divided majority."

We Have More in Common than You Realize

Despite our differences, which many politicians will poke and push to provoke, we still have much in common that we want for ourselves, our friends, and our families. We all want peace and safety - in other words - freedom from fear. We all want the basic necessities of life such as clean water, good food, and a comfortable home. We want good health. We want prosperity, which is more than wealth; it is the freedom to pursue our personal interests and to find happiness. We want friends: to belong and be accepted by others. We want love, to be respected, and have a sense of self-worth. And, we want justice where everyone plays by the same rules.

When we remember all these universal desires it enables us to build bridges between diverse peoples and beliefs to create community. By banding together in common cause, the whole becomes greater than the parts.

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:12 NIV

We practice unity everyday at OHI by focusing on the whole self: body, mind, and spirit. The OHI for Life Body-Mind-Spirit program brings people together and creates a

sense of camaraderie and oneness in ways they have never experienced before. This is especially true in our classes: You Validation, Release Ceremony, Communication, Your Life is a Gift, Mental Detoxification, Emotional Detoxification, and Alpha Meditation Techniques. Even our weekly fun talent event Friday Night Live creates cohesion with love and laughter. After just a week, many of our guests form tight bonds that last a lifetime.

OHI is Built on Community

Now we are creating more unity across our OHI community. Our two locations in Austin and San Diego share one program. The difference is that Austin is a smaller, more intimate, and quieter setting while San Diego is larger, has more people, and is more lively. Many of our guests have tried both locations and have their favorites. Starting in 2024, we will have facilitators from each of our locations to visit and teach in the other. This will help integrate both of our locations and keep them connected.

Also in 2024, we are focusing more on our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) because it is important to connect both in-person and online. We are encouraging all guests, missionaries, and staff to unite in our online community by posting photos, comments, and useful articles to help us all stay connected with the full OHI community.

It is my sincere belief that OHI can spread our special unity to the world at large. Our community at OHI vibrates unity and leads by example when we show love and caring wherever we go. When we walk about in joy and confidence, we radiate a positive influence that people recognize and want to share in, and to be a part of. When that happens we have an opportunity to be a witness for the OHI program and its values and mission of community. We in the OHI community are perfectly positioned to spread a powerful message of unity outward to the world.

What's New at OHI

Over the past few months, we have been busy making enhancements to our program and facilities in both of our locations. We have introduced pricing programs for guests who stay three or more weeks, as well as a rewards program for guests who refer their friends. We have trained more facilitators so that we are now able to reintroduce the variety of classes and hands-on experience in our food preparation classes that were available pre-pandemic.

In Austin, we have re-roofed the main building, replaced windows, refinished bathtubs, and restored the hardwood floors in our guestrooms. We have more wonderful news: Sheryl Haupt, our beloved facilitator, will be returning periodically to teach classes in 2024.

In San Diego, we have refurbished the furniture, spa, and decks in the Courtyard, painted building exteriors, installed new planters and irrigations systems in our organic garden, and refurbished the Courtyard guestrooms. But that's not all! Our beloved facilitators, Sheryl Haupt, Peg Harvey, and

Danielle Demko will be making regular visits to teach classes in 2024.

As I mentioned above we are focusing more on our social media, and we would like you to join us by following OHI on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to stay updated on our latest news and events. Also sign up for OHI's emails, and subscribe to our newsletter where you'll receive regular updates and information about our program and community. Another great way to stay connected is to join our Missionary Program where you will get a firsthand opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

These are just a few of the exciting improvements we've made at OHI, and we can't wait for you to come and experience them firsthand!

Come to OHI this Spring

The sun is shining and the flowers are blooming, this is a great time to reunite and strengthen your bonds with your OHI community. A spring cleanse will help you reset and revitalize your body after the long winter months. Be sure to book early – **call us (800) 993-4325 to book your stay!**

Inside this edition: Read further about the benefits and how to cultivate community. Get to know staff member, Carla Blea; OHI Austin missionary, Holly Butler; OHI guest, Laura Zook; and how an OHI Scholarship helped Pete Stevenson find hope and a new beginning. We remain humbled and grateful to all those who contribute and help people like Pete. Please also consider contributing to the OHI Scholarship Fund which helps OHI community members in need. And finally, be sure to turn to page 10 for details on your Memorial Day Savings.

Here's wishing you health and wellness in this spring season.

Yours in prayer,



Robert P. Nees, Jr.
Senior Pastor and Chairman
Optimum Health Institute of San Diego and Austin



Stay Connected with OHI

Stay connected with the OHI Community on our social medial platforms!

- Facebook: **OptimumHealthInstitute**
- Instagram: **@optimumhealthinstitute**
- YouTube: **@OptimumHealthInst**

How to Cultivate Community for Greater Social, Emotional, and Physical Wellbeing



Fostering community in your life today will eventually create a world where each of us can thrive, and where we celebrate the beauty and richness of our differences.

How to Cultivate Community

As a society, we are going through a long period of division and separation — pandemic separation, political divisiveness, global unrest. There is so much distrust, loneliness, and despair. More and more it seems these seeds of division trickle down to our work lives, our home lives, and the personal internal monologue of our life. So what is the antidote for division?

COMMUNITY!

There are examples of community all around you. When you become a family, you foster community and connections among generations. When you join a company, you look for community with coworkers, striving for a common goal. As a citizen, you contribute to the community by actively participating in politics and supporting leaders who govern with intelligence, passion, and transparency.

So, let's take a minute to understand what community is, and discuss ways we can cultivate, support, and champion it.

What is Community?

Community is the sense of belonging and camaraderie with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and aspirations.

Our communities reflect the essence of our humanity, showcasing the importance of unity and social bonds. Community plays a vital role in our happiness, highlighting the significance of human connections at the core of our being.

It's important to remember that community is not synonymous with uniformity. People who have formed a community and built camaraderie together come from diverse backgrounds and have different perspectives. The strongest communities often arise from groups with a wide range of viewpoints, as they make an effort to discuss their differing ideas, challenge their biases, and find common ground. Community thrives when there is a shared purpose, shared values, and a meaningful objective. Lasting communities are built on a foundation of kindness and empathy. Feeling a sense of community comes from within, and the power of community has the potential to positively transform the world.

What are the Health Benefits of Community?

When we bring a sense of community to our lives, we enjoy some notable health benefits...

- **Boosted Brain Health:** Feeling in community with others has been shown to increase dopamine. Increased dopamine elevates mood, satisfaction, and motivation. Increased dopamine also supports restorative sleep, improves concentration, and enhances memory and recall.
- **Positive Feedback Loop:** Feeling in community makes you feel validated and valued. The more positive social interactions you have, the more you increase your overall feeling of well-being, which inspires more positive interactions, etc. The bottom line is greater social connectedness generates a positive feedback

loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being.

- **Increased Happiness:** Focusing on friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships that are rooted in unity fosters feelings of positivity, calm, and peace.
- **Decreased Anxiety and Depression:** As naturally social beings, feeling connected to others is essential for reducing stress, anxiety and depression.
- **Improved Immune System:** Feelings of connection and unity with others has a positive impact on whole health with a decreased risk of heart disease, reduced inflammation, and a boost to immune system function.
- **Increased Self-Compassion:** You feel the strongest connection with others when you act with kindness and empathy to those around you. As that feeling of community deepens, you'll find the kindness and empathy reflected back to you. The kinder people are to you, the kinder you will be to yourself. Being in community brings you closer to others, but it also has the side benefit of bringing you closer to yourself.

How Do We Cultivate a Sense of Community?

It's not enough to want community. You need to take active steps to strive for cultivating community in your life and in the world:

- **Lose the "me" mentality:** There is one piece of advice for a happy marriage that speaks to the idea of "community" — When you put your spouse's needs before your own and your spouse puts your needs before theirs, everyone's needs will be met. The same idea supports the efforts to foster a sense of community. Reach out to others. Show an interest in others. Listen to others. When everyone drops the "me" mentality and looks to support the "we", communities blossom through reciprocal connection.
- **Let go of the past:** A shared past is often a strong foundation for fostering community. But when the past is filled with anger or disappointment, staying stuck in the past only fosters a sense of division. Let it go! Drop the baggage filled with past injustices you've been lugging around and walk lightly through the world. The bottom line is, you can't change the past, but you can learn from it. Figure out what the lesson is, and then move forward to find new common ground with others.
- **Find creative ways to foster collaboration:** When you make others feel valued, that opens their heart to collaboration. Listen more than you speak. Learn from the experience of others. Share your gifts with humility. Nothing feels more empowering than feeling truly "seen" for your contribution, no matter how small.
- **Maintain respect and respect boundaries:** Being in community doesn't mean speaking with one voice. It means infusing every interaction with respect. When you bump up against another person's boundary, take



it as a teachable moment and try to see the world from their perspective. You just might learn something.

- **Seek out what brings you a sense of hope and positivity:** What brings you joy — religion, nature, art, music, animals, helping others? Join a group that feeds your passion, and that common ground is the seed that could grow into unity.

Improve Your Sense of Community at OHI

Community refers to the state of being united or working together towards a common goal. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, community has never been more critical. When we bring a sense of community to our lives, we enjoy some notable health benefits including boosted brain health, decreased anxiety, and improved immune system function. There are steps you can take to strive for community in your life and in the world: Lose the "me" mentality, let go of the past, find creative ways to foster collaboration, maintain respect and respect boundaries, and seek out what brings you a sense of hope and positivity. The efforts you put into fostering community in your life today will eventually create a world where each of us can thrive, and where we celebrate the beauty and richness of our differences.

One of the best ways to foster community is with a wellness retreat at OHI. Our wellness retreats give you the time and education you need to implement meaningful change in your life. The gift of a healing retreat at OHI promises to be life changing. **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**

7 Daily Practices and Ways to Improve Spiritual Wellness

Spiritual wellness is one of the pillars that supports overall optimal health and wellness. It takes intention to live a life that is in balance, so putting effort into your spiritual wellness is just as important as the effort you put into improving the seven other mutually interdependent dimensions of wellness — physical, intellectual, emotional, social, vocational, financial, and environmental. Let's learn more about the dimension of spiritual wellness, and simple daily practices you can incorporate into your life to improve your spiritual wellness to bring your health in balance.

What is Spirituality and Why Does it Matter?

Everyone seems to have their own definition of spirituality, and their own way of incorporating it into their life. In simple terms, spirituality is not about religion. Rather, it is the belief in something beyond the self. It strives to answer questions about the meaning of life, how people are connected to each other, truths about the universe, and an understanding that there is something greater that connects all beings to each other and to the universe itself. So why does spirituality matter? For many, spirituality is a source of comfort and relief from stress. Those who consider themselves spiritual actively try to deepen their connections with other people, experience compassion and empathy for others, want to make the world a better place, and seek happiness beyond material possessions as they seek meaning and purpose in their life. Research has shown that those who are spiritual and use their spirituality to cope with challenges in life experience many benefits to their health and wellbeing — a lower risk of anxiety and depression, lower blood pressure, more regenerative sleep, a stronger immune system, and more. Spirituality has also been shown to foster better psychological wellbeing by restoring hope and optimism, helping people develop a more positive outlook on life.

7 Daily Practices and Ways to Improve Spirituality

Spirituality is a very personal experience, and there are many daily practices that you can embrace to help enhance your spirituality:

1. **Create movement:** Practice Stretch or yoga to align your body, mind, and spirit, calm the mind, cultivate awareness, and attain peace.
2. **Meditate:** Try spending 10-15 minutes each morning engaged in some form of meditation. It will start your day with a clear mind, a relaxed body, and an open heart, ready to take on the world.



3. **Practice gratitude:** Start a gratitude journal and record what you are grateful for each day. This can be a great reminder of what is most important to you and what brings you the greatest happiness.
4. **Try mindfulness:** By becoming more mindful, you become more aware and appreciative of the present. Mindfulness encourages you to be less judgmental and focus more on the present moment rather than dwelling on the past or future.
5. **Spend time in nature:** Nature engages all five senses and gives you a window on the beauty that exists all around you. From your kitchen herb garden to the Grand Canyon, the beauty of nature is yours to witness every day, symbolizing the ability we all possess to grow and blossom.
6. **Do breathwork exercises:** Breathwork slows your body and mind and allows you to connect with your inner self. It is a tool that can be used to completely shift your energy — it can calm you, energize you, lift your mood, or help you feel more grounded.
7. **Focus on others:** Opening your heart, feeling empathy, and helping others are important aspects of spirituality.

Try a Spiritual Wellness Retreat

Why not jumpstart your spiritual wellness journey with spiritual retreat! Spiritual retreats allow time for self-reflection and prayer, and give you physical, mental, and emotional support as you connect with God and ponder the greater meaning of life. A stay at OHI is a wonderful way to deepen your spiritual wellness, and our wealth of classes can help you on your path to understanding your life's purpose. Our detox cleanse helps heal your body, our community of friends provides the support you need to refocus your mind, and our safe and sacred space offers you the peace you need to embrace spiritual wellness.

Start your holistic journey with a spiritual wellness retreat at OHI San Diego or OHI Austin – **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**



Meet Laura Zook, an enthusiastic guest at OHI!

Laura Zook was introduced to OHI at a very young age through an extremely challenging health opportunity. “Thirty years ago, when I was in college, my boyfriend was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma, and given from six weeks to six months to live,” said Laura. “We heard about OHI, and my boyfriend went there for three weeks. I went with him and stayed for the first week. We did the detox cleanse together. I really feel that the detox and the colonics were a huge factor in slowing the growth of his cancer, and that the wheatgrass juice was paramount in his health journey. He used wheatgrass to heal his surgery scars. He ultimately survived metastatic melanoma, and that is no small feat. My initial immersion into the OHI program was not about me at all, but it ultimately was pivotal

Laura Zook

to my own health journey. The holistic view of optimal health — tending equally to the body, mind, and spirit — really resonated with me. And I found the support of the OHI community was just so powerful. It changed my life and gave me this laser focus on tending to my own health in as many ways as possible. I don’t just eat clean. I don’t just exercise. I don’t just meditate. I do ALL of these things and MORE because I want to live the longest, healthiest life possible.”

Laura was a guest at OHI three more times. Fifteen years ago, she brought her father to OHI while he was facing a health challenge from lung cancer. In 2020 she came to OHI to heal herself from the chronic pain of fibromyalgia. And in 2023 she came to OHI as a retreat to work through the grief of having recently lost her sister suddenly. “To me, OHI is a community of resources,” said Laura. “Over the years, they have helped me connect the dots in working through the cancer diagnoses for my boyfriend and father, as well as in my own quest for knowledge about my fibromyalgia. Just talking to staff members or other guests has given me real insight that my own doctors didn’t provide for me. If there’s one takeaway from all my visits to OHI it is that you should never give away your power to heal yourself to others. You need to take ownership of your own health journey, thoroughly educate yourself as to how the body works and how nature heals, and then seek out alternative, holistic therapies to address any health opportunities you may face. You can live a life with even more vitality and longevity. You just have to find what works for you.”

Laura credits OHI as the force that empowered her to face her chronic health challenge. “OHI taught me that you’ll have so much more control over your health if you make intentional choices,” said Laura. “I can’t say I love drinking wheatgrass juice, but I know how much better my body feels when I do, so I intentionally choose to drink wheatgrass juice. I intentionally choose to eat a clean, raw diet as well as choose alternative therapies like sound therapy and electrotherapy to address my inflammation and pain, and those intentional choices mean I no longer take any meds for my fibromyalgia. I believe the body is divinely designed to

Laura recommends OHI to everyone. “It is a huge blessing to take the time to invest in yourself,” said Laura. “Go to OHI and reconnect with your body. Whether you are facing a health opportunity or looking to lose weight or just want to pivot to a healthier lifestyle. It’s all right here for you. Your health will improve by leaps and bounds if you give yourself this opportunity.”

heal itself, and that God is the healer. I opened myself to His healing and also put in the hard work that supports better health. I pray and meditate. I eat living foods and drink living water. I make chiropractic, acupuncture, and massage therapy part of my health routine. And last, I spend time with people who have good energy. I avoid negativity or drama in my life, and I think I’m all the healthier for all of it.”

Laura has made a pledge to herself to go back to OHI regularly. “I feel at peace when I’m at OHI,” said Laura. “All of the guests and staff are like-minded, awake to the toxins in the environment and the need to take time to make better choices for their bodies and breathe. And the classes are nothing short of magical. The vocal toning class is my favorite. The first time I took that class, after having suffered head trauma in a car accident, the vibrations went right to the source of my injury. That deeper healing experience was transformative and incredible.”

Get to Know OHI Missionary, Holly Butler

When you're an actress, the health of your body, mind, and spirit is essential to your success. Holly Butler moved to Los Angeles to pursue acting at a young age. "My bread and butter was working as a Marilyn Monroe impersonator," said Holly. "I was very successful at that for over 25 years. The role required a very specific look, so I knew I had to take care of my body as an investment in my career. At one point, I had been in an accident and broken my femur, and that left me less active. I had gained weight as a result and wanted to reboot my healthy lifestyle. My partner, Steve, and I were both very invested in our long-term health, so when Steve's sister recommended we go to OHI to jumpstart a clean diet, we listened. We first went to OHI San Diego in December 2014. I absolutely loved the experience. I thrived on the rigor of the program. Learning the science behind the detox cleanse and the raw plant-based diet was fascinating to me. I have been a vegan ever since."

Holly was so inspired by her first OHI experience, she and her partner made it a priority to regularly return to OHI over the years. "We have spent

Holly Butler



time on both OHI campuses," said Holly. "Over the past 10 years we've spent seven weeks as guests at San Diego and eight weeks as guests at Austin. Each time we arrived, I felt such excitement to reboot my diet and eat truly clean. I lost weight. My energy soared. My eyesight improved. My mood was elevated. I was happy for no reason at all — I felt inspired about life in general! Most of all, I felt good about myself and the direction that my health was taking with each returning visit. Spending time at OHI

"OHI is the best place to help you find your sense of purpose in life. The support, the education, the spirituality, and the kindness bring you such clarity and peace. I can't recommend it enough. There is magic here."

felt so good mentally and physically that I decided to apply to become a missionary. I spent twelve weeks on the Austin campus as a missionary and found it to be more fulfilling than I ever imagined."

Holly expected she would learn more about other people's health journeys in the role as missionary, but she found she learned quite a bit about herself as well. "I've always had an empathetic nature," said Holly, "but I didn't realize how great it would feel to be of service to others. The experience has really changed me for the better. I have learned how to support people no matter how difficult the situation or how uncomfortable the health challenge they were facing. I found joy in being a 'giver' even when I couldn't solve the problem. I was surprised that people were just grateful for encouragement, and I appreciated that beautiful energy. After finishing my

missionary program and returning to my day-to-day life working in real estate, I have now found an inner strength and confidence in my own judgement. I feel more comfortable managing people in my business, and I don't shy away from navigating different personalities in uncomfortable situations. I learned about myself through caring for others, and I owe it all to OHI's missionary program."

Holly encourages OHI guests who feel drawn back to campus again and again to become a missionary. "Becoming a missionary is an incredible opportunity," said Holly. "The friendships that I made while living here were so fulfilling. You really feel 'seen' when you are at OHI, and that is something quite unexpected. My three months here also helped me become more grounded both mentally and spiritually. It was the opportunity of a lifetime to go deep into my own self-care for three months."

Holly's advice for those applying to the missionary program is simple. "Realize that you're going to be of service to others," said Holly. "The time spent at OHI is the guest's personal health journey, so completely give yourself over in support of that. Be flexible. Be open to whatever situation is put before you and find the best way you can help. Being a missionary is probably one of the most meaningful things you will ever do."

Holly's parting words about OHI are heartfelt and genuine. "My time at OHI is always inspiring," said Holly. "But what makes OHI life-changing is that I always leave here with a plan of action for my self-care that will allow me to achieve my goals. Serving as a missionary gave me a renewed sense of purpose as I continue my lifetime journey of personal growth."

Thinking about applying for OHI's Missionary Program? **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**

Pete Stevenson, OHI Scholarship Recipient, Thanks OHI for Saving His Life

At age 35, Pete Stevenson was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, with a 7-inch tumor pressing against his heart and lungs. He underwent 6 months of chemotherapy, 26 rounds of radiation, and debilitating immunotherapy that left him physically and emotionally spent. In December 2023, he learned new tumors had formed in his lungs and liver.

Pete turned to OHI for help and was awarded a scholarship. Arriving in January 2024, Pete held grim expectations for his future, but several profound experiences sparked a transformation. Attending OHI's Mental Detox and Emotional Detox classes, Pete opened to the power of self-healing. His catharsis was so profound that he suddenly

held a deep belief that he would survive cancer. By day nine, the cancer pain in his chest and back had vanished. In a burst of vitality, Pete laced up his running shoes, reveling in a freedom he hadn't felt in years.

Upon returning home, Pete committed to a strict raw plant-based diet, stress reduction, and regular juice fasts. Through daily Alpha meditation sessions, he visualized a vibrant future, free from disease.

"I clearly visualized the possibility of a cancer-free life," Pete said. "My oncologist would announce the retreat of my cancer, and my wife, Tash, and I would embrace in celebration."

The power of these new practices led to something miraculous. After completing the OHI 3-week program Pete's PET scan revealed five out of six nodules in his lungs had disappeared. The remaining tumor had shrunk significantly.

Pete hopes to serve as a beacon of inspiration for those considering the OHI program. "I am proof that the program works," said Pete.

"OHI isn't just a retreat," he said. "It's a new beginning, a second chance. Whatever you're facing, take the leap of faith and go to OHI. "It may very well save your life."



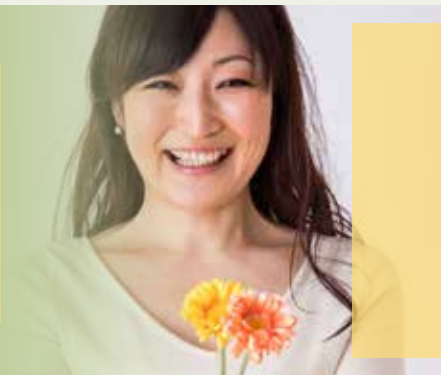
Share the Love, Share the Feeling, Share the Gift of Healing

Please consider contributing to the OHI Scholarship Fund to help those in need experience the benefits of the OHI for Life program. Over the course of our 47 years, OHI has provided scholarships to individuals who could not afford to otherwise attend. In most years, we have been able to fulfill all requests for assistance through the generosity of our community. OHI invites you to join with us in celebrating our healing mission with a tax-deductible gift. Your contribution will help to make our community stronger, healthier, and more vibrant. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Provide the Gift of Healing today by supporting the OHI Scholarship Fund with a **tax-deductible one-time donation, or sustainable monthly contribution.**

Optimum Health Institute is a non-profit, religious organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

Share the Gift of Healing



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Meet Long-Time OHI Staff Member, Carla Blea

Healthy living was always at the core of Carla Blea's life. "I grew up in San Diego," said Carla. "I went to San Diego State University and earned a Bachelor's degree in Food & Nutrition. I worked in an acupuncture office part time, but for years my full-time job was working as an assistant horse trainer. I would work with show horses to train them for competitions, as well as taught riding instruction, safety, and horse care to clients. There's just something so positive and life-affirming about working with animals. It fully engages you — body, mind, and spirit. When I was looking to move my career in a different direction, I wanted something that would align with that body-mind-spirit balance, as well as use my education in food and nutrition. OHI checked off all the boxes, and even better it was right here in San Diego. I joined OHI in April 2015 as part of the kitchen staff. I started in Food Prep, moved to Kitchen Supervisor, and next to Kitchen Manager. I really enjoyed learning all about OHI's version of a raw vegan detox diet and working to prepare recipes for guests that use plant-based, mindful ingredients. When I was given the opportunity to move into the facilitator role, I was excited for the challenge. I have been a facilitator since October 2022."

As a facilitator, Carla teaches twenty-eight different classes at OHI. "After working as part of the kitchen staff for so many years, it was a thrill to teach the food classes," said Carla. "I teach Dehydrated Foods I & II, Fermented Foods I & II, Food Combining, as well as Juicing Instruction. I also facilitate the science classes that cover Digestion and Elimination I & II, as well as the Hands-On Wheatgrass class that teaches guests how to grow their own wheatgrass. Additionally, I teach the Orientation class when guests first arrive on Sundays and lead the Testimonials group where guests share their experiences of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing and wellness at OHI. I also frequently lead the prayer and word-of-the-day circles (announcements) and facilitate Vocal Toning and the afternoon Stretch class. The Stretch class is similar to a restorative yoga class — it increases circulation, improves flexibility, relaxes the body and calms the mind. It's a great way to feel refreshed and revitalized in the middle of the day. While I love all of them, I think my favorite class is the Mind/Body Connection class. That class helps guests learn how to use the relationship between your body and mind to positively influence the state of your health. We help guests discover the difference between the conscious and subconscious mind and how positive thoughts and emotions promote healing. I find it so powerful every time I teach it."

Carla takes delight in interacting with OHI guests in her role as a facilitator. "I look forward to the energy that each new cohort brings to campus each week," said Carla. "It's fascinating seeing how the program changes them over the course of three weeks, and what works for each individual. While the guests expect to learn from me, I learn just as much from them. We share so much while they are here."

While Carla enjoys the guests, she has also forged an unbreakable bond with the rest of the staff at OHI. "The staff at both OHI locations are beyond amazing," said Carla. "We work well together, and



Carla Blea

everyone is so knowledgeable and supportive. We are a true team in every sense of the word. It feels great to work with people that I trust, respect, and admire. We all have the guests' best interests at heart as we hold a safe space to help them work through whatever it is in their life that brought them to OHI in this moment."

When Carla isn't at OHI, she's at home spending time with her husband, Jeff, and her 1-year-old daughter, Cora. "We make all of Cora's pureed food

Working through the OHI program will help you figure out what's important to you, whether you want to take better care of your body, improve your mental health, or deepen your spiritual connections. Give OHI a try. You will find true peace of mind here."

ourselves at home," said Carla. "Now is the time to influence her tastebuds and palate. We want her to grow up understanding how good her body feels when she eats healthy foods so she can make smart choices for herself when she is grown. Homemade food is the healthy, delicious choice!"

Carla has simple words of advice for people considering a stay at OHI. "Be open-minded," said Carla. "There is knowledge to gain and experiences that will change you here, and all of them can help you feel more like yourself again."

Are you looking for a career where you can make a difference by helping and serving others? **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**

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Spring 2024

Visit Us: Sunday Open House

Visit our weekly Open House every Sunday starting at 4:00 p.m. in San Diego and Austin. The OHI Program offers visitors, guests and adherents a personal tour of the facility, lecture, prayer circle and an all-raw plant-based meal. A \$5 donation at OHI San Diego and \$7 donation at OHI Austin is appreciated, but not required.

Contact Us: (800) 993-4325

We'd love to hear from you. To receive special offers and updates, email us at newsletter@optimumhealth.org or call us at (800) 993-4325. For more information about the OHI for Life Body-Mind-Spirit Program, please visit our website at www.optimumhealth.org

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Our Mission

We serve as a change agent for holistic healing by creating a safe and sacred space.

Core Values

Holism, Generosity, Relationship, Life-Long Learning, Stewardship, and Service.

Guiding Principles

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