

Optimum Health Institute Newsletter

Connecting the OHI Community | SUMMER 2025



Mikayla Hyde, OHI San Diego Missionary

Community is the Key to Healing

"Studies show people are more likely to heal when they are in healthy relationships where they feel seen, heard, validated, and respected. Our OHI community provides that." — Bob Nees, Jr.



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CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

BOB NEES, JR., SENIOR PASTOR

Greetings OHI community, and welcome to summer - the season of recreation, fun, and camaraderie. The longer days and warmer weather create more opportunities for us to connect or reconnect with others in our community.

Community is the Key to Healing

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

I begin with this verse because it describes the essence of our community here at OHI. In the New Testament book of Mark, verses 12:28-31, a Jewish priest asked Jesus what was the most important commandment. He replied that it is to love God; and second is to love your neighbor as yourself. We fulfill the law of Christ when we love our fellow man by helping them carry their burdens. And, we help each other best when we create caring communities - which is what I wish to address in this issue.

You may recall from our Spring newsletter, I wrote about the history of ritual cleansing and how holistic healing starts with cleansing. I noted that a ritual is more than just a habit; it is a way of thinking. And, how a cleanse opens up space for growth. I then suggested that creating a ritual of holistic cleansing at OHI several times a year is a great way to routinely reset and renew your life.

In this issue I wish to return to a subject I have written about many times before; one I cannot emphasize enough, and that is the power of community at OHI.

Community Requires Vulnerability

When you first arrive at OHI everything seems alien, but then you are surprised by how quickly you warm up to your new environment. As you take the classes you start to bond with the other guests, missionaries, and staff. You start to relax and you begin to feel, as my grandmother used to say, that you can let your hair down. Before you know it, you can feel the stress you've been carrying start to melt away.

There is a requirement however for this to work: you have to be yourself. You must be authentic. When you open up to others, and show your vulnerabilities, others will be more likely to open up to you as well.

In this day and age it's easy to fool ourselves that we're not vulnerable. We develop impenetrable personas to protect ourselves from social hurt. Personas that prevent us from really getting to know other people. But we are vulnerable, everybody has suffered some trauma, and at some point we all need other people, and because of that community is more critical than ever today.

Dr. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, said,

"There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community."

This risk we fear in being vulnerable is that it will be met with indifference at best and rejection at worst. We fear what people will think of us, when most of them don't think of us at all. The important thing to remember is that we are all so much alike in this way, that when we finally open up with each other and realize our similarities, it's like a breath of fresh air.

More than a Support Group; OHI is a Support System

Holistic healing is improved by joining a nurturing community like OHI. It means that you are establishing strong connections with like-minded participants who have empathy, are open to authentic communication, and share their own experiences that you can relate to. These profound connections empower healing and aid in recovery while you help others do the same.

The OHI community serves as a space for you to share your story and connect with others who have gone through similar experiences.

When you gather together with others in a supportive environment you can openly talk about your experiences while learning the coping strategies of your new peers. It's amazing the amount of valuable and practical advice you'll receive. When you engage with your fellow guests at OHI, who may be having or have previously faced similar challenges to yours; you gain strength and resilience because you see that you are not alone on your journey. Seeing the success of others is often all that is needed to convince you that you can do it too.

OHI is a Safe Space to Share Your Personal Experiences

Learning from others is just the beginning. More important is the emotional encouragement you'll receive to propel you along your journey. The support you get from our community is vital for ongoing recovery. We provide a safe, sacred, and supportive space where you will feel that powerful sense of belonging and connection. You will be regularly reminded of how your particular experience and challenges are valued. Your contributions to the group will also be highly welcomed. At OHI you can share your stories without fear.

A cohesive community will celebrate everyone's successes. An example of this is OHI's "You" Validation Class where fellow

guests share qualities they like about you.

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable at OHI enables you to break free from isolation.

Community is more than just connection; community is a feeling - the feeling of being accepted for who you are. That feeling comes from being supported by your fellow guests who often become your friends, companions, and confidants. The connection and support you get from the OHI community makes you feel wanted and loved. Becoming part of a community helps you break free from isolation - we were never meant to live in seclusion - as social beings having a community is critical for us to thrive and survive.

Many times, I have attended conferences or visited different organizations where I didn't feel like I fit in. Finding yourself in a situation like that creates a sense of loneliness that can be heartbreaking. It's an experience no one likes. When you join a group, you want to feel accepted, to feel like you belong. When you feel like you belong - you identify as a part of that group. You are a member. Which reminds me of the old American Express slogan: "Membership has its benefits." There are many benefits to being a member of our OHI community.

Belonging is a very different feeling than what you feel if you have to force yourself to conform to be a member of a group. If you can't be authentic then you are living a lie, and that is not healthy. An authentic sense of belonging means you can be your true self inside the community. You can be vulnerable and not fear rejection. Your unique qualities are celebrated, embraced, and appreciated. You don't have to change a thing about yourself to be accepted.

Who Do You Turn To When You Need Help?

It's important to have people you can turn to when you need something. A community that is ready, willing, and able to supply you with support when you need to feel safe and cared for is vital to life itself. Studies show people are more likely to heal when they are in healthy relationships where they feel seen, heard, validated, and respected. Our OHI community provides that.

The function of community in the healing process is mostly overlooked by the healthcare industry, yet the power of collective healing is tremendous. Healing does not have to be done alone. In fact, it makes it harder. When connection is fostered, and a support system provided, members of our community see better results for their goals.

Our communal atmosphere creates a positive healing energy. And, when we practice meditation, prayer, and other group activities together the vibrational energy of the group is amplified and promotes greater healing. When people come together in a community like OHI, they heal faster, better and more completely.

What's New for 2025

We're excited for you to see the new updates at OHI San

Diego! We're refreshing our buildings with new paint, replacing the main building's roof, renovating the sun deck, and upgrading the jacuzzi with advanced spa mechanics. Many guest rooms will have energy-efficient air conditioning, and we're using solar energy for over 65% of our energy needs. Additionally, we're adding carports and EV charging stations for our electric and hybrid vehicle guests. We can't wait for you to enjoy these upgrades on your next visit.

Earlier this year, OHI San Diego and Austin launched a new property management and reservation system designed to enhance our guests' experience by monitoring your preferences. Additionally, we are streamlining our check-in process to ensure quicker and more convenient arrivals. We're thrilled to place you at the heart of this new system!

In May and June, our beloved facilitator Sheryl Haupt came to OHI San Diego to conduct classes. Then, in June, July and August, Danielle Demko and Cheryl Green will be offering limited schedules at OHI Austin. We are always thrilled to see these familiar and friendly faces.

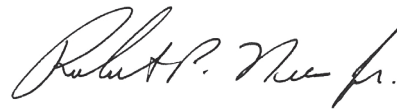
Come to OHI this Summer

The fabulous summer weather is here, it's a wonderful time to connect or reconnect with your OHI community. Be sure to book early – call us (800) 993-4325 to reserve your stay!

Inside this edition: Read further about vulnerability and its role in the healing journey, along with some tips on how to embrace it. Get to know staff member, Pauline Vargas; OHI missionary, Mikayla Hyde; OHI Austin guest, Cece Bowen; and how an OHI Scholarship helped Kathaleen Baisch hit the Reset button. We remain humbled and grateful to all those who contribute and help people like Kathaleen. 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 Endless Summer Savings.

Here's wishing you health and wellness this summer.

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 media platforms!

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

Understanding Vulnerability and the Healing Process



Embracing vulnerability is a key part of the healing process. When we choose to be vulnerable and address pain we send a message to the body and mind: I am safe. I am healing.

For many, the word vulnerability conjures feelings of weakness, exposure, or fear. Yet increasingly, scientists and psychologists alike argue the opposite: vulnerability is not a liability — it's a profound strength. It is also a biological and psychological necessity for emotional healing.

Dr. Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston and renowned expert on shame and vulnerability, brought the conversation to the mainstream with her viral TED Talk, *The Power of Vulnerability*. In it, she describes vulnerability as “the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity.” But beyond these inspiring words, there is growing scientific evidence to support her claims. Neuroscience, psychology, and psychophysiology all point to one compelling truth: vulnerability is a critical component of healing — mentally, emotionally, and even physically.

Emotional Expression and the Brain: Calming the Fear Center

At the core of vulnerability is emotional expression — the willingness to acknowledge and name our inner experiences. Neuroscientific research shows that this act alone has a powerful regulatory effect on the brain. Specifically, studies using functional MRI have demonstrated that affect labeling — putting feelings into words — reduces activation in the amygdala, the brain's fear and threat detection center, while increasing activity in the prefrontal cortex, the region associated with reasoning and emotional regulation. This mechanism, explored in the work of UCLA psychologist Matthew Lieberman, reveals how simply naming what we feel — “I'm scared,” “I'm ashamed,” or “I feel lost” — actually decreases the intensity of that emotion. Instead of being hijacked by fear or sadness, we become more capable of managing our responses.

Suppressing emotions, by contrast, often backfires. Chronic emotional suppression is linked to higher stress reactivity, poor sleep, and increased risk of anxiety and depression. Vulnerability, by encouraging openness and self-regulation, activates neural pathways that help us soothe ourselves and process distress more effectively.

Social Connection as Medicine: The Psychology of Trust and Belonging

Humans are wired for connection. Our nervous systems evolved in communal settings where social bonds were essential to survival. When we are vulnerable — sharing our struggles, fears, and insecurities — we signal trust. And trust, as it turns out, is one of the most healing forces we have.

Dr. Brené Brown's research, based on thousands of in-depth interviews, shows that people who live wholeheartedly — that is, those who embrace vulnerability — tend to form deeper connections and report higher levels of empathy, authenticity, and joy. Her findings are echoed by decades of attachment theory and social psychology, which demonstrate that emotional openness strengthens relationships and enhances our sense of belonging.

On a biological level, vulnerable connection reduces levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone, and boosts the production of oxytocin, often called the “bonding hormone.” Oxytocin not only promotes emotional closeness but also supports cardiovascular health and reduces inflammation.

Feeling seen and supported is not just comforting — it is physiologically healing.

Vulnerability and the Immune System: The Psychophysiology of Expression

The link between emotional suppression and physical illness has been well-documented. Suppressing negative emotions has been associated with elevated blood pressure, poorer

immune function, and even increased mortality risk over time. In contrast, emotional expression — particularly in safe, structured ways — can improve immune function, reduce stress, and support physical recovery.

One compelling body of evidence comes from the work of Dr. James Pennebaker, who studied the effects of expressive writing. His research found that people who wrote about traumatic or deeply emotional experiences for just 15-20 minutes a day for several days experienced improved immune function, lower stress levels, and faster wound healing compared to those who wrote about superficial topics.

This form of vulnerability — putting one's raw truth onto paper — is not always easy, but the physiological payoff is real. It offers proof that acknowledging our pain, rather than hiding it, activates internal mechanisms of repair and resilience.

Trauma Recovery: Facing the Pain to Heal It

Trauma fundamentally alters the way our brains and bodies respond to the world. It often leads to hypervigilance, emotional numbing, and shame — states that discourage vulnerability and reinforce emotional isolation. Yet, modern trauma therapies are increasingly built around helping individuals safely access and express their most vulnerable emotional states.

Therapeutic modalities such as Internal Family Systems (IFS) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) rely on the principle that healing comes not by avoiding pain but by confronting it with self-compassion and curiosity. IFS, for example, helps clients connect with “exiled parts” of themselves — often representing deep wounds, fears, or memories — allowing these parts to be heard, honored, and reintegrated. This process requires vulnerability, but when done safely, it transforms inner chaos into coherence.

Neuroscientific studies of trauma therapy show that when individuals feel safe enough to share and process their vulnerable experiences, regions of the brain involved in memory integration, such as the hippocampus, become more active. At the same time, the hyperactivity of the amygdala diminishes, signaling reduced fear and greater emotional regulation.

Vulnerability in therapy is not simply catharsis. It is a rewiring process — literally teaching the brain and body that it is safe to feel again.

The Courage to Be Real: Redefining Strength

One of the most damaging myths surrounding vulnerability is the belief that it equates to weakness. But as Dr. Brené Brown asserts, “Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like



courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness.”

From a scientific standpoint, emotional bravery is indeed a form of resilience. Researchers studying resilience have found that individuals who openly acknowledge their pain and seek support recover more effectively from setbacks, trauma, and grief than those who attempt to “tough it out” alone. Vulnerability enables access to resources — emotional, relational, and cognitive — that support adaptation and post-traumatic growth.

What's more, modeling vulnerability in families and communities creates psychological safety — a culture where others feel free to express themselves without fear of judgment. In schools, workplaces, and therapy rooms, this culture improves outcomes across the board: better relationships, lower burnout, greater creativity, and enhanced well-being.

Vulnerability: The Science of Showing Up

Healing is not a linear process. It is often messy, nonlinear, and unpredictable. But vulnerability is a compass — a way of orienting ourselves toward truth, trust, and transformation.

Science affirms what many intuitively know: that healing begins when we stop running from our pain and instead meet it with openness and self-compassion.

Whether it's through journaling, therapy, honest conversations, or simply naming what we feel, every act of vulnerability sends a message to the body and mind: I am safe. I am human. I am healing. Vulnerability is not a detour on the road to recovery. It is the path itself.

At OHI, there are many classes that support mental and emotional healing. Our Emotional Detoxification class spotlights the healing power of vulnerability and forgiveness and helps you understand the important role your emotions play in creating and maintaining health and wellbeing. Our Mental Detoxification class teaches you how to cancel, reframe, and replace negative thoughts with positive ones to facilitate the healing process, as well as develop a mindfulness practice using affirmations, visualization, journaling, gratitude, and living in the present to improve wellness. By embracing vulnerability as part of your wellness journey, you heal yourself so that you can embrace a more joyful, connected, fulfilling life.

A wellness retreat at OHI gives 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.**

How to Embrace Vulnerability with Confidence

Vulnerability is an act of courage. Whether admitting you need help, opening up emotionally, or sharing an unpopular opinion, vulnerability is at the heart of connection, authenticity, and growth. You can learn to be more comfortable with vulnerability. Like any skill, it takes intention, practice, and the right mindset. Here's how...

1. Understand What Vulnerability Really Is

Redefine vulnerability as courage, not fragility. Dr. Brené Brown, a research professor and leading expert on vulnerability, defines it as “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.” It's being authentic when the outcome is uncertain.

Differentiate vulnerability from emotional dumping. Vulnerability means opening up thoughtfully, not impulsively revealing everything. It's about being intentional — sharing what matters, with the right people, at the right time.

Recognize the benefits. Research shows vulnerability strengthens relationships, deepens trust, and builds psychological safety. It's the foundation of empathy and intimacy, and it allows others to be real with you, too.

2. Build an Inner Foundation for Confidence

Before practicing vulnerability outwardly, strengthen your inner resilience.

Practice self-compassion. Self-compassion improves emotional regulation and reduces fear of judgment. Instead of criticizing yourself for feeling exposed, try saying: “It's okay to feel this way — being human means being imperfect.”

Develop emotional self-awareness. Ask yourself: What am I feeling? Why does this matter to me? What am I afraid of? Understanding your triggers makes it easier to communicate them calmly.

Challenge your inner critic. Replace harsh self-talk with supportive affirmations like “I am brave for sharing this,” or “My worth isn't based on others' reactions.” This builds internal safety — a critical part of being vulnerable with others.

3. Take Actionable Steps Toward Vulnerability

Start Small. Begin with small disclosures — like telling a friend you're feeling stressed or asking for help with a task. Each success builds confidence.

Choose your audience wisely. Start with people who have earned your trust — close friends or supportive family members. Dr. Brené Brown puts it this way: “Share with people who've earned the right to hear your story.”

Create or identify safe spaces. Foster emotionally



intelligent relationships where mutual respect and listening are valued. These environments make vulnerability feel safe.

Express your needs clearly. Name your feelings with clear statements like, “I feel overwhelmed right now,” or “I need some quiet time.”

Embrace imperfection. Growth often comes from the discomfort of not getting it right the first time. See mistakes as part of the process.

Ask for support. Ask for help as you unpack fears around being vulnerable, especially if past experiences left you feeling rejected or judged.

4. Strengthen Your Confidence Muscle

Celebrate small wins. Did you speak your truth today? Ask for help? Admit a mistake? Celebrate it! Every act of vulnerability is an act of bravery.

Adopt a growth mindset. Research shows that people who believe abilities and behaviors can change are more likely to take risks. Frame vulnerability as a learning experience, not a judgment of your worth.

5. Consider Cultural and Personal Contexts

Acknowledge cultural influences. In some cultures or families, emotional openness is discouraged. Understanding these norms can help you navigate your vulnerability in a way that respects your background while allowing room for growth.

Heal past wounds. If you've been hurt or rejected after being vulnerable, give yourself grace. Healing may require revisiting those experiences — ideally with the guidance of a trusted friend.

Becoming more comfortable with vulnerability is not about eliminating fear — it's about building courage. Vulnerability isn't a single grand gesture. It's in the everyday acts of honesty, authenticity, and emotional risk. At OHI, there are many classes that support mental and emotional healing. Our Emotional Detoxification class details the crucial role emotions play in our wellbeing. Our Mental Detoxification class teaches you how to reframe and replace negative thoughts to facilitate healing. As you begin to trust yourself and others more deeply, you'll discover that vulnerability can be your greatest source of strength.

Nurture your body, mind, and spirit with kindness with a wellness retreat at OHI San Diego or OHI Austin. **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**



Meet Cece Bowen, a devoted guest who makes OHI a priority in her life!

Cece Bowen believes in God winks. “Divine intervention first brought me to OHI,” said Cece. “The story starts with my sister being diagnosed with melanoma. That prompted me to go to a dermatologist for my own baseline screening. They found melanoma on my hand, and I needed surgery. Later, the dermatologist found a second growth in the corner of my eye, so I followed up with Mohs surgery. I felt very blindsided by my health opportunities, and I realized I was living in a very unhealthy marriage. My doctor said my unhealthy marriage was contributing to my health issues, and my homeopath said my entire immune system was shutting down. A person who was a new acquaintance at the time saw my struggle and invited me to come with her to OHI. She said, ‘If you only do a physical detox, you’re not going to get better. At OHI, you’ll get the emotional and spiritual detox you really need.’ I felt like God was speaking to me through her. I hesitated for a few days and finally decided to take a huge leap. I asked my husband for a divorce, then got in the car and drove to OHI.”

It took Cece time to process all she was going through during her first visit to OHI. “I started very closed off during my first visit,” said Cece. “A guest gave me a copy of *Codependent No More* by Melody Beattie. That book helped me open

Cece Bowen | up, and OHI has been my lifeline ever since. I went to the San Diego campus annually for a few years, but I knew I needed more support. I started going to the Austin campus twice a year and felt so much better for it. I took a bit of time off during Covid, but after suffering some major personal setbacks — my mom, dad, sister, and ex-husband all passed over the course of several years, and my health took some major hits (Covid, shingles, a kidney infection) — I knew I had to get back to OHI to focus on my own wellbeing. I now go to OHI twice a year for two weeks at a time. It’s been 13 years since I first visited OHI, and I am a completely different person than when I first walked through those doors. OHI is a HUGE part of my personal growth.”

Cece has been an OHI guest for years and approaches each stay with a fresh curiosity as to what God will reveal she needs to work on. “The first week of any visit gives me an opportunity to focus on the food/diet and reboot myself physically,” said Cece. “The second week is when I go inward and give myself a much-needed spiritual reboot. It’s like I’m peeling back layers, and something new reveals itself for me to work on each time. Through Louise Hay’s book, *You Can Heal Yourself*, I have learned how the emotions we hold in our body turn into the health opportunities we end up dealing with later. The Mental Detox, Emotional Detox, and Vocal Toning classes really help me peel back those layers to get to the essence of a healthier me.”

Cece says OHI offers her a much-needed timeout in her life. “Being a guest is never the same experience twice,” said Cece. “I turn off the phone and computer and fully immerse myself in the experience. It is so inspiring to be surrounded by like-minded people, all putting in the work. I make it a priority to take advantage of all the spa services at both OHI locations — Reiki, energy work, massage, salt scrubs, colonics, chiropractic — I find that these services support my efforts to work through emotional detox.”

There is one practice Cece learned in the Emotional Detox class that she uses consistently. “I have a God Box,” said Cece. “It’s a little needlepoint box my mom made me, and when I feel like I’m spinning, I write my worries on a Post-It Note, put it in the God Box, and release it up to Him. When my box is full, I’ll dump the notes out and read through them to see how God has answered all my prayers, one by one. It’s so powerful.”

“Cece has some heartfelt advice for anyone considering a visit to OHI. “If you’ve gotten a tap on the shoulder from God, follow it,” said Cece. “Going to OHI the first time was divine intervention that changed the trajectory of my life. Every visit I learn something in a class that I’ve never heard before. Every visit, my body reacts differently to the detox. I have found that God makes sure you get exactly what you need in the moment when you visit OHI.”

Get to Know OHI Missionary, Mikayla Hyde

Mikayla Hyde is on a journey for knowledge, connection, and opportunity. At age 21, she's one of OHI's youngest missionaries, and she is loving every minute of it. "I came to OHI as a guest in January," said Mikayla. "I was looking for inspiration for my next step in life. I did the 3-week program and found it completely life changing. As my stay ended, I immediately applied to the missionary program. My aunt had been a missionary at OHI 20 years ago and spoke very highly of the experience, so I was confident I would find an extended stay at OHI to be very rewarding. I was accepted into the program and set my start date for April. I spent February and March as a volunteer in Costa Rica and was also able to get my yoga certification while I was there. I came back to OHI completely inspired, and ready to take on the role of missionary."

Mikayla has a very personal interest in health and nutrition. "I was diagnosed with Celiac disease 3 years ago," said Mikayla. "I control my Celiac symptoms by eating a clean diet, but I still have inflammation and brain fog. The wheatgrass juice cleanse has taken my healing to a whole new level. The detox helped eliminate GMOs from my body

Mikayla Hyde



and given my brain and body a complete reset. After just one month here, I feel amazing. I've lost 15 pounds. My skin is clear. I have so much more energy. And I feel myself processing my emotions better. With all those positive changes taking place in my body, mind, and spirit, OHI has only further deepened my interest in health and nutrition."

As a missionary, Mikayla enjoys the variety in her day. "As part of the staff, I get to do a little bit of everything," said Mikayla. "I assist with classes. I prepare juices in the kitchen. I work in the herb garden. It's never the same day twice."

Mikayla has also found great joy in helping with programming. "The Friday Night Live talent show is my favorite event. Everyone comes together to enjoy each other's company and have a good time. The outside world just falls away, and you feel so connected with the people here. It's really the social connections that set OHI apart from any other wellness retreat. The sense of community here is so strong. The people that I've met from all over the world are so inspiring."

Mikayla finds immersing herself in the classes at OHI to be time well-spent.

"I absolutely love the Alpha I & II meditation classes," said Mikayla. "The Vocal Toning class is also a favorite. It offers such powerful healing. The food classes teach you such vital information about how to do the program at home. And the Eat, Pray, Live class is fun every time. It's fascinating to learn how to make your own almond milk and then take the almonds you just strained in the cheesecloth to make almond

flour cookies. It feels good to learn how to make healthy, clean food that makes the most of every bit of food available to you. It's as good for the planet as it is for your body."

Mikayla was surprised with one fundamental aspect of the missionary program. "I feel so at peace and grounded living here," said Mikayla. "I had this mistaken perception that by living and working in the same place with new guests going in and out each week that there would be a certain amount of 'happy chaos' to the experience. But I find just the opposite. The sense of peace that has come over me since I joined the missionary program is beautiful. I have really bonded with the other missionaries and find working together on projects to be so fulfilling. And the guests that come here are very serious about healing, so while we may be very different, we all have the same mindset. That connection with the staff and guests, the dedication to the program, and the release of old habits and beliefs that don't serve me anymore has grounded me in a way that feels like such a relief. I don't have to worry about my health and wellbeing anymore because I have found a program that will keep me thriving for the rest of my life."

Mikayla has advice for anyone considering applying to the OHI missionary program. "You should pursue your passions," said Mikayla. "Go through the interview process and ask all your questions. See if the missionary program would be a good fit for you. Then take the leap of faith and make the commitment. You will be amazed at the personal growth you can achieve when you devote all your time and attention to your health journey and the health journey of others. It's a priceless experience."

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

Meet Scholarship Recipient Kathaleen Baisch



Kathaleen Baisch

In October 2022, Kathaleen Baisch was diagnosed with two different kinds of breast cancer in each breast. Her

oncologist recommended chemotherapy as well as a mastectomy. "I didn't tolerate chemo well," said Kathaleen. "And the decision to do surgery felt very rushed, so I cancelled it. It took years for my tumors to grow, so I wanted to take some time to try to heal myself holistically. I was at a San Diego farmer's market speaking with a vendor, and when she heard my story, she recommended OHI. I researched the program, and it was exactly what I was looking for. My extreme health opportunity and my financial need qualified me for the scholarship program, and I was invited to come to OHI for a 3-week stay."

Kathaleen committed fully to the program. "I am in immense pain from the tumors, but I want to give my body every chance possible to heal," said Kathaleen. "It took two weeks before

I started feeling my head clear, but it's like the clouds parted and I could finally think straight. I know the wheatgrass is the foundation of the detox, so I started putting wheatgrass poultices on my chest. I have immense pain in my upper body from the tumors, but while I was at OHI my pain significantly subsided. The tumor in the center of my chest noticeably reduced in size. The poultices combined with lymphatic massage made an enormous difference in my comfort."

Kathaleen is so grateful to OHI for the scholarship she received. "I want to thank OHI for changing my life," said Kathaleen. "The scholarship has literally saved me. I finished my 3-week stay on May 4, and I'm already approved to return to OHI on May 31 to start the missionary program. OHI is where I feel safe right now. I want to be of service to others and help them on their wellness journey as I continue to pursue my own. Adhering to the OHI program allows me to see positive change in my body, and that is a God send. Thank you for giving me hope, OHI!"

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 48 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 OHI San Diego Staff Member, Pauline Vargas

Food has always been an important part of Pauline Vargas' life. "I started my career managing health food stores for 10 years," said Pauline. "I next went to culinary school where I started learning about rustic breads and pastries. I opened my own small business with the Cottage Food ACT. I was licensed to operate a bakery from home, selling in farmers markets and delivering my food through Uber Eats. After putting my business on hold while I recovered from carpal tunnel surgery and raised my family, I rented space in downtown San Diego for my own holistic coffee shop where I put my own natural spin on classic Mexican desserts and rustic breads. Unfortunately, the pandemic hit. In transitioning from running my coffee shop to a new phase of my career, I knew I wanted to continue to work in a natural holistic environment. In July 2023 I joined OHI to work in the kitchen doing raw food prep. OHI is a great fit for me because I had adopted a vegan diet in my early 20's and have been vegan for well over 20 years. I love working here because OHI has expanded my knowledge of fermented food, and I have learned so much about how detoxing the body supports healing. It inspires me to improve my own health, and the education has awakened my interest in my own spirituality."

Pauline puts her heart into her work at OHI. "I spend my days off researching new vegan food options and creating recipes for interesting side dishes," said Pauline. "I modify Mexican and Indian recipes, and incorporate fermented foods, seed cheese, legumes, and crackers to give guests a new way to experience a raw vegan diet that meets all the OHI guidelines. I once took an Indian potato recipe and put my own spin on this flavorful dish using dehydrated cauliflower and spices. It makes my heart happy to create food that people enjoy. Delicious food makes guests feel loved."

Pauline looks forward to meeting new guests each week. "I love what I do," said Pauline. "I take pride in creating beautiful plating presentations for the food, so guests don't feel like they are always eating the same thing. It's hard for some people to do this diet, so I like to come up with different ways for them to be able to enjoy healthy veggies and legumes. And for guests who want ways to change up their wheatgrass juice during the cleanse, I can turn it into a smoothie, I can add fresh stevia to it, or sprinkle cinnamon on top. Food is my love language. Input from guests is the inspiration for so many of my new recipes. I share all my recipes with guests to make it easier for them to maintain their motivation to stay on the OHI diet when they go home."

Pauline genuinely feels at home at OHI. "Almost everyone here is facing a health opportunity," said Pauline. "There is no judgment, only support. OHI helps each individual to feel at peace with themselves, and that is truly a gift. To find peace among struggle is often unexpected, and it is so moving to see guests find inner peace."

Pauline has shared some of the holistic healing practices she has learned at OHI with her daughters. "My daughters are 14 and 15 years old, and one thing we do are home facials," said Pauline. "I taught them how to



Pauline Vargas

do facials with fresh wheatgrass, and they love it. We'll have a Girls Night with our wheatgrass facials, and munch on seed cheese and crackers together. It means so much to me to spend time with them in such a wholesome way. Our Girls Nights bring me so much joy."

Pauline has one piece of advice for those considering a visit to OHI. "Coming to OHI isn't just about facing your health challenge. Coming here will help recharge your body, mind, and spirit," said Pauline. "The food, the classes, and the camaraderie are what helps floss away the stress and worry you've been storing for so long and allow you to focus on healing. It is a gift to be able to focus on your health. Give yourself the gift of a stay at OHI and see what blessings come to you."

Pauline closed the conversation with heartfelt gratitude. "I am so fortunate to work here," said Pauline. "It is such a privilege to contribute to someone else's health journey. OHI is a place of love. I have met amazing guests from around the world, and I have received more hugs here than I can count. To all the guests that I have met over the last two years, thank you for letting me be a small part of your OHI experience. Come back and visit us again soon."

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Summer 2025



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

Trustworthiness, Respect, Empowerment, and Alignment.



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