

## Complementary Therapies

Healing (not to be confused with the word “cure”) is a process that takes place over a period of time, and may be emotional, mental, physical or spiritual. Complementary therapies are compatible with your basic health care plan. They offer ways to heal and act like a balancing scale, by getting the mind and body to work together. Measure for measure, we need both for regaining our health.

In this issue, we are focusing on complementary ways of healing. Julie Weaver, a remarkable woman, mother and actress has written our “Survivor Story.” She dramatically portrays her positive experiences with two therapies, **Reiki** and **Qi Gong**, healing her body during chemotherapy through the manipulation of energy. Jane Ellen Nielsen has a new column called “Reflections from our President”, giving us a heartfelt, appreciative recollection how she found restoration at “Clare’s Well.”

Our insert has information on conferences and programs throughout the Metro area offering education and support to help you explore complementary ways to heal. **The Honoring Caregiver Ceremony** held once a year celebrates how important community and caregivers are in the healing process. **Pathways** is an organization delivering programs that are designed to support a creative healing response to life-threatening illnesses such as laughter, dance, music, imagery and other ways of renewing life. The American Cancer Society sponsors empowerment workshops. Most hospitals provide supportive offerings of massage, counseling, acupuncture or relaxation techniques.

We are not endorsing any particular therapy or any program, only opening the door to possibilities. Physicians, hospitals, Medicare and managed care organizations are increasingly recognizing and supporting some complementary methods of healing. Ongoing research is charting benefits of each therapy against the weight of after-effects of medical treatments and surgery. As always, we advocate checking with your physician if there is any question as to the safety or advisability of any therapy. Whether turning to prayer, meditation, imagery or acupuncture, you



## Our Mission Statement

Advocates for Colorectal Education is a survivor group striving to reduce colorectal disease incidence and mortality by advocating for early education, surveillance and patient support.

have to judge for yourself if it would work for you. The benefits of any therapy have to be weighed against the possibility of doing any harm and never used as a substitute for conventional medical care. At the end of this issue, we have included some guidelines that may be helpful for you to evaluate complementary, unconventional or alternative therapies.

Finally, Anne Favreau, a sixteen-year cancer survivor and past president of the United Ostomy Association, has written an eloquent poem on “Survivors” from her book, **The Healing Circle**. Complementary therapies may help you to complete the cycle of progress in your healing.

### Survivors

*Caring people  
Conquer affliction  
Move as survivors  
To comfort others.  
Listening ears  
Empathetic hearts  
Hands outreached  
To make a difference.  
Touching others  
Links of Care  
Connect us all  
In the Healing Circle.*

Anne Favreau,  
author of *The Healing Circle*  
2003 winner of the prestigious United  
Ostomy Association Sam Dubin Award

## A Survivor's Story

### JULIE WEAVER

As an actress in the long-running hit musical, *How To Talk Minnesotan: The Musical*, what do you think my first words were, when I was told by my surgeon on April 17, 2000 that I had to arrange my life for cancer to take over? I said, "My understudy has a two-week vacation planned at the end of May, so I'm wondering if we can do the surgery in early June?" He said, "This is cancer... this is a very old tumor...I know what I'm looking at... the pathology report will confirm it, and you have two weeks."

I walked in a daze to my car and drove – no, not to my son's, not to see my best friend, not to my work manager – I drove to see my understudy and tearfully told her that she'd have to re-arrange her vacation plans for May! Cancer changed not only my view of life, the shape of my body, and how I viewed "health", but also brought me to new paths for strengthening my body in unusual ways I'd never heard of before.

A week before my surgery, I went to a favorite music restaurant where a dear pal was playing and met another actress, Deborah, who listened about my upcoming surgery. "Can you stay for a bit?" she asked. That night, I was introduced to Reiki, a form of energy work that anyone can learn. She put her hands over mine from across the table and after a moment, I felt every cell in my body explode with energy. "Just keep breathing, Julie" she said, as I gasped for air.

And then I found out about the untapped energy that surrounds us on this planet. With Deborah's help, I learned how to use that energy to help heal my infected surgical wound which forced me to stay at home for five weeks, waiting for two daily visits from home health nurses. Each new nurse looked at my abdominal wound and said, "Wow, that's textbook perfect healing – if we were making a book about wound care, we'd have to include a picture of this." My surgeon looked at my healed scar during the final post-op appointment and said, "Gee, this looks the way it would have if I had not pulled out all the staples!" I just smiled from the exam table and said, "I have my ways."

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Julie Weaver

During chemotherapy I investigated another form of energy work, Qi Gong. The gentle soul who brought Qi Gong energy to me was a student of this energy work at the time. Cliff took the greatest care with me, let me cry when I was overwhelmed with the side-effects, and opened blocked channels of energy that should move freely through our bodies when we're truly healthy. With him, too, I felt the energy surges that I came to enjoy. Reiki and Qi Gong are *not* religions. They are approaches to physical health and re-energizing what already exists within us; anyone can learn how to capture this Universal energy. Even community education programs now include classes on Qi Gong, Reiki, Tai Chi and other forms of energy work.

I learned so much from my bout with colon cancer. Yes, it was painful, life threatening, and made my life miserable for long periods of time. However, the whole experience was also life affirming, ultimately energizing, and a lesson in opening myself up to what the Universe has to offer us, its Children.

Carol Larson, Editor  
[clarsoneditor@aol.com](mailto:clarsoneditor@aol.com)

# Reflections From Our President

## Gift of Restoration

For my birthday this year, a friend treated me to a weekend at Clare's Well, a holistic, private retreat west of the Twin Cities.



My orders were to clear my schedule, pack my bag, and be open to a different kind of surprise. Indeed it was. It was the gift of restoration.

For two unforgettable days, I had no responsibility, no deadlines, no distractions. I slept in the comfortable womb of a geodesic dome, a hermitage nestled in the middle of a virgin prairie. I emerged for nurturing from the Franciscan sisters who served healthy organic food, family-style, in their humble farmhouse.

The sisters offered therapeutic massage, energy work, and a relaxing hot tub experience in the midst of the plant-filled solarium. Mother Nature provided the crisp night air and amazing universe of solar wonders.

It is not surprising that "Nourishment for the Body, Memories for the Heart, and Healing for the Soul" is how one guest described her experience at the Well. It stuck as their marketing mantra.

Indeed, the founders of the Well envisioned a sacred place where people could come for retreat, healing and respite. Strangers would arrive as guests and leave as treasured friends and family. Love and acceptance would replace stress and

fear. Eroded lives would be restored in mind, body and spirit.

Truth be told, I could not have fully appreciated the value of this experience before my cancer diagnosis. It took a forced "time out" to value contemplative experiences. "BC" (before cancer), I failed to understand how my priorities - although noble - were unhealthy. I was an indefatigable taskmaster, a slave to my own schedule.

I also viewed with skepticism many of the "alternative" therapies outside the box of traditional medicine. Erroneously, I connected some of them to the 70's "hippie" culture, and others to mystical charismatic philosophies.

At Clare's Well, I gave thanks for ten benevolent birthdays celebrated, all tied up with the ribbon of reflective wisdom. For *now* I view my body as a sacred vessel, a well that is to be revered and maintained, not taken for granted. I am open to the many restorative and spiritual practices that grace the pages of this keepsake issue of the *Advocate* and I hope you will embrace one of these possibilities, too.

Sincerely,

Jane Ellen Nielsen  
President

Contact ACE if you have an event or program concerning colorectal disease.  
clarsoneditor@aol.com

## The Many Faces of Hope

Never talk defeat.

Use words like hope, belief, faith, victory.

Norman Vincent Peale

Hope - belief - faith - victory. These words inspired the 250 cancer survivors attending "Stayin' Alive - Healing, Humor and Hope" on October 9, 2004 in Minneapolis. Sponsored by HealthEast Cancer Care, the fourth annual *Many Faces of Hope* conference offered medical updates, spiritual inspiration, humor and artistic expression as companions on our survivorship journey. ACE, represented by President Jane Nielsen, provided participants with colorectal screening and risk assessment information vital to this survivor population.



# “Honoring Caregivers Ceremony”

Saturday, November 6, 3:00 PM  
Metropolitan State University, The Grand Hall  
700 East Seventh St. St. Paul

*A free event for*

## **CANCER SURVIVORS**

Invite any and all of your caregivers

## **CAREGIVERS**

You are invited to come with or without your loved one

*Be a part of the program as well as attend it. Volunteer caregivers and survivors become our dance performers and contributors of poetry and story. The dance movements are easy and gentle and can be done from a wheelchair. Original poems or stories about caregivers are needed. Sentiment is more important than writing ability. If you are interested, contact Ellen Hufschmidt – Creator/Director 612-729-6817.*

## **ACE Services**

**VISITATION:** As survivors, we are offering one-on-one support to patients and caregivers via phone, e-mail, or in person. Call 651-312-1556.

**CARE BASKETS:** By request, we have complimentary care packages for patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer. E-mail Jane Nielsen at janenielsen@earthlink.com

**BRACELETS:** Free, attractive iridescent bracelets available on request as a symbol of those who are struggling with or have overcome colorectal disease. E-mail Mary Bakke at domabak@comcast.net

**SPEAKERS:** Julie Weaver, an actor and corporate trainer, has a cadre of speakers available to talk to groups upon request. Call Julie Weaver at 952-377-1387 or e-mail her at julie.weaver@worldnet.att.net



## Ongoing Programs

**“Support Your Healing Process”** is offered every Tuesday from 6:30-7:30 PM at the Woodwinds Health Campus. Instructor Kate Maher, RN,BSN, Holistic Nurse and Healing Touch Practitioner, discusses the use of essential oils, guided imagery, healing touch, music therapy, acupressure and massage. The seminar is free, but pre-registration is required. Call HealthEast Care Connection 651-326-2273.

**The Natural Care Center** at Woodwinds Health Campus (Woodbury) offers Acupuncture every Wednesday 1:30 – 5:00 p.m. and Therapeutic Massage every Thursday 1:30 – 5:00 p.m. Call 651-232-6830 for more information.

**HealthEast Cancer Care** at St. John’s Campus (Maplewood) offers Healing Touch every Thursday morning, and Guided Imagery on second and fourth Mondays. Call Jane @ 651-232-5799 for more information. A free nutrition class, “Phytochemicals, Antioxidants & Supplements” is offered November 24, 2004, and January 19, 2005,

7 - 8:30 PM, in the Watson Center. No registration is required.

### **Women’s Cancer Resource Center (WCRC)**

Programs at the WCRC include: Caring Hands Touch, Kindred Spirits and Support Groups, and Treatment Choices Group. Visit their Web site at [www.givingvoice.org](http://www.givingvoice.org) or call 612-822-4846 or 877-892-6742.

WCRC advises you may be able to locate additional resources for complementary therapies through:

- The social work department of your hospital.
- Patient information services or patient advocates at your hospital.
- National resources such as the National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society’s Cancer Response System, 800-ACS-2345, or the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship 301-585-2616.
- Your local newspaper’s community pages.
- If you belong to an organized religion, many times they offer support groups.
- Your physician’s office.

**The American Cancer Society** has Empowerment Workshops including healing and spirituality, relaxation and complementary therapies. Call Terry Regalado 651-255-8113.

North Memorial Hospital has a patient support group for colorectal cancer. Call Jane at 763-520-5157 or email Mary Bakke [domabak@attbi.com](mailto:domabak@attbi.com)

### **Clare’s Well Spirituality and Retreat Center**

13537 Forty Seventh St. NW  
Annandale, MN 55302-3507  
(320) 274-3512

### **Integrated Care: “The Healing Coach”**

Nancy Cox offers ongoing emotional support, information and referral to complementary therapies. She is available to meet with you at no cost and may be reached for appointment by calling 863-8724 or [www.abbotnorthwestern.com](http://www.abbotnorthwestern.com)

## Evaluating Questionable Therapies

When you are facing treatments for colorectal cancer, it's important to realize how vulnerable you are. It's tempting to be talked into questionable therapies that make promises you want to hear: the promise of a quick fix without harmful side effects. Good information can be found in the pamphlet *Guide to Complementary and Alternative Cancer Methods*, published by the American Cancer Society. If you have a computer, you can visit the Web site Quackwatch ([www.quackwatch.org](http://www.quackwatch.org)). The site makes a distinction between genuine alternatives, which have met the criteria for safety and effectiveness, versus questionable alternatives, which are unproven and may be harmful to your health.

Some of the questions you may want to consider while evaluating complementary therapies are:

- Does the method offer potential benefits outweighing negative side effects?
- How much money will the treatment cost?
- What does your doctor think about this method or product?
- Is there compatibility between the use of this alternative and your conventional plan of healing?

- What are the so-called experts' credentials?

In addition, look at the way the therapy is being sold. Advertising ploys that make use of sweeping generalizations, scare tactics, emotionally laden words and paranoid statements about the government, the FDA, and your health care professionals should send up a red flag about the legitimacy of the product.

Pseudomedical jargon and anecdotal testimonials, especially in place of bona fide research, should be viewed with suspicion.

Complementary therapies do exist that offer enormous relief for patients in the form of stress reduction, improvement in quality of life, and combating the harsh effects of chemotherapy and radiation. At the same time, be aware that a treatment may not be harmless just because it is touted as "natural." Some homeopathic medicines and dietary supplements, in fact, may react negatively with certain chemotherapy treatments. It is important to talk with your doctors when considering *any* supplementary care in question.

Excerpt from *Positive Options for Colorectal Cancer* to be published by Hunter House, December, 2004.

## Out and About



Carol Larson of ACE speaks to guests at the St. Paul Community Center and the Plymouth Senior Center. Carol relates her experience



with colon cancer and encourages those to read more about it in her self-published book, *When the Trip Changes*, whose proceeds benefit ACE. Many thanks to Carol and Drs. Sharon Dykes and Jeff Marken of Colon and Rectal Surgery Associates for volunteering to speak at these engagements.



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