

Healthful Hideaways ~

Creative Health Institute: Sharing Living Foods with the World

By Petula Brown

Within the quaint community of Union City, Michigan, one does not expect to find an internationally known nutrition-focused health program. Yet, the unassuming community nearly ten miles northwest of Coldwater is home to the Creative Health Institute, a place dedicated to education, wellness and renewal. The laid back environment is well suited for the Institute's focus as "a natural health learning center which provides a natural program of body purification, nutrition and rejuvenation." Established in 1976, it was the brainchild of Donald Haughey, who was facing not only a variety of diseases, but also an onslaught of traditional medications and treatments that were ineffective. He traveled to Massachusetts and consulted with Dr. Ann Wigmore, a woman considered a pioneer in understanding how living foods can address nutritional deficiencies and toxicity that can be the root cause of illness. The combination of Dr. Wigmore's teachings and Mr. Haughey's commitment transformed a 6,500 square-foot residence into a shrine to wellness. Key to the Institute's philosophy towards health is that "the body heals itself, you just need to change the inputs," comments Institute Director Barry Duncan.

That philosophy drives the educational focus of the Institute's programs to help visitors implement the living foods philosophy at home. Visitors become students via two-week programs that include videos, classroom discussions and hands-on activities in the Institute's kitchen and gardening facilities. Classroom discussions explore a range of topics from "Colon Health & Elimination" and "Tissue Cleanse" to "Food Combining" and "Is Raw Food for You?" Students travel from across the globe to participate in the daily tasks associated with growing food and preparing meals. According to Mr. Duncan, "students 1) have health challenges and are looking to living foods to assist in healing, 2) are attempting to detoxify or 3) already have some knowledge of living food practices, but want to enhance their understanding or techniques and health." All participants prepare and consume the same meals, but are able to customize some educational activities to focus on specific areas. "There is so much to learn here," comments staff member Joe Best, "it can be overwhelming. So students can focus on a particular area – fasting, food preparation, etc....something that they can successfully continue back at home." After the two-week session, program graduates can obtain "energy exchange" scholarships to stay up to three months by participating in internal projects in exchange for subsidized room and board. Projects typically available include food preparation, gardening, maintenance and administrative work. All of the Institute's full time staff began as energy exchange participants, so new students may sense a strong bond exists between the staff and current energy exchange members.

The synergy was very evident at a recent graduation of the two-week program. A graduate from the Chicago area noted that, through her experience, she realized that "food is love." Watching staff and exchange members prepare the luncheon buffet of salad greens, pizza and strawberry shortcake, it was evident that the act of harvesting garden ingredients, preparing the recipes and presenting the dishes was nearly a Zen-like experience. A graduate from Ohio was so inspired by her journey into the living foods lifestyle that she scheduled a second visit prior to her graduation and shared a heartfelt song during the course of the ceremony. For a sampling of the experience, Sunday brunches at 2:30 offer a chance to sample a variety of living foods dishes as well as meet some of the people whose knowledge and spirit are essential to their creation.

Although there are ample bonding opportunities via the meals as well as educational sessions, Institute activities and amenities can also accommodate more introspective participants. Participants can broaden their experience to include colonic treatments, massage, outdoor walking time or use of the Institute's various amenities, including a meditation room, various exercise machines, and a sauna (banya) house. The Institute also maintains a library of wellness-focused books and videos for participant use or purchase. However, students should be prepared, with the help of Institute staff, to become "immersed in the lifestyle" that focuses on living foods as opposed to raw foods. For example, "raw, dry almonds are not considered living foods," clarifies Mr. Duncan. "Working with sprouting almonds provides a higher degree of nutritional value." The combination of a growing interest in alternative therapies, the Institute's educational focus and world renowned reputation (nearly all visitors, who have hailed from as far away as South African and Australia, hear of their programs via word of mouth), has led to plans to offer more food preparation classes. The importance of those classes to students committed to lifestyle change is emphasized by staff and graduates alike. As stated by one energy exchange member, "the classes provide the tools that promote lifelong change."

Recipes from the Creative Health Institute to try at home:

Cranberry Salad

1 pound bag fresh cranberries
3 oranges, peeled and ground
3 stalks of celery, chopped fine
1 1/2 cups chopped walnuts
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 cup frozen raspberries
1/2 fresh pineapple
1/2 to 3/4 cup honey

Mix well.

Mashed Potatoes

3 cups chopped cauliflower
1 cup cashews
1/2 cup fresh-squeezed lemon juice
1/2 cup fresh thyme, chopped
1 tbs minced garlic

Place all ingredients in a blender using a little lemon juice.

For more information, contact the Creative Health Institute at (866) 426-1213, 112 West Union City Road, Union City, MI, 49094, or email info@creativehealthinstitute.US.