

# spotlight on members



*Spotlight on Members gives us the opportunity to hear about what our members are up to today, as well as how they found their way to the NHA Health Program. If you're interested in sharing your own story, we'd love to hear from you (please email essays of at least 500 words, and one or two photos, to [info@healthscience.org](mailto:info@healthscience.org)). This month's Spotlight is on NHA Century Club member, Gwyn Whittaker.*

## **Gwyn Whittaker** Herndon, VA

The cul-de-sac was filled with blaring lights and sirens as I arrived home. Just 20 minutes earlier I had been talking with my fiancé, Tony, 50, on my way home from work. We were discussing what to have to dinner, and he had offered to pick up take-out. The conversation ended abruptly with him saying, "I feel dizzy." I hung up, but something didn't feel right. I redialed, but there was no answer, and I immediately called 911.

Tony, a naval aviator and VP at the research company Gartner, did not survive. He became one of nearly 800,000 people in the U.S. every year who die needlessly from heart disease. At the time, I had assumed that it was genetics since both of his South Carolinian parents died of heart disease as well.

Several years passed, and I was fortuitously introduced to the most widely viewed documentary on Netflix, *Forks Over Knives*, and my journey to plant-based nutrition began. I quickly read *The China Study* and learned that both Drs. T. Colin Campbell and Caldwell Esselstyn were going to be attending the Holistic Holiday at Sea cruise in the Caribbean. I signed my boyfriend and myself up for the trip and thought that maybe we'd listen to a few of the lectures and enjoy the cruise; but we ended up attending *all* of the talks, and our perception of a healthy diet was upended.

A doctor in the audience took the microphone after Dr. Esselstyn's lecture and angrily asked, "Why weren't we taught this in medical school?" Dr. Esselstyn responded that most doctors receive little, if any, classes on nutrition.

After all, they are Doctors of Medicine. It dawned on me that doctors treat symptoms with medications and treatments, but not the root cause. Cheap food and expensive pharmaceuticals seem to be the way of life today in our culture, where almost every other person is prediabetic or has type 2 diabetes.

### **Getting Involved**

I had been a successful executive and entrepreneur for 35 years in the national security arena, culminating in the sale of a 10-year-old company that I founded, providing consulting services in big data and high-performance computing. I started my company after 9/11 to focus on counterintelligence and data analytics, and sold the company after Osama bin Laden was gone. So, I had time and energy to focus on what interested me, which generally was health, the environment, and animal welfare.

I have been on the board of the Washington Humane Society (now the Humane Rescue Alliance) for almost eight years, and have always had a love for animals. I had been moving toward becoming vegan as I read about the poor treatment of animals. One by one, I would eliminate certain types of animal foods from my diet. The connection between animals and health was a major discovery. I had been taught that

it was essential to get protein and calcium from animal products, and that my health would be harmed if I quit consuming them. This was overturned by *Forks Over Knives* and the succession of lecturers on the cruise by Dr. Neal Barnard, Dr. Michael Klaper, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, and others who offered the compelling science behind this great myth that causes millions of deaths every year from heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

After attending Dr. John McDougall's 10-day Program, visiting Dr. Alan Goldhamer at TrueNorth Health Center, and completing the Plant Based Certification from eCornell's Center for Nutritional Studies, I reached out to Colin Campbell and he graciously allowed me to visit him.

I asked Dr. Campbell how I could help with my time and energy, and I ended up helping to fund Nelson Campbell's film, *PlantPure Nation*. Nelson also established the Oasis Jumpstart Program, to bring healthy food and science-based nutrition education to



*From left to right: Pericles Silva, Gwyn Whittaker and Dr. Neal Barnard*

underserved neighborhoods across the country. I asked Colin and Nelson if they would support a project in my town of Reston, Virginia, and they agreed. I signed up 45 people (including two medical doctors and two CEOs) who paid \$250 each (to cover costs) for a program with Colin and Nelson Campbell, and 10 days of frozen meals from PlantPure (Nelson's nonprofit).

I hired a local nurse to do blood testing at the start and end of the program. Results were astounding: On average there was a 20% drop in cholesterol, 5.5 pounds of weight lost, and some people were able to go off their medications in this short period of time. A neighbor had been on four medications for red, swollen, and painful rheumatoid arthritis. In just 10 days she was able to go off three of her medications, and a few months later she discontinued the fourth, and was pain-free. I received many thank you notes from participants, telling me that this project had changed their lives.

## Opening a Restaurant

During this time, I met Pericles Silva, who began the Health Starts Here program at the local Whole Foods and had been running it for five years. He was a PCRM Food For Life Instructor and had a degree in sports nutrition after a career as a professional volleyball player. I shared with him my plans to open a restaurant to deliver education

on the benefits of whole plant foods, and he was interested.

Pericles joined me as the operations



**GREENFARE**  
healthy people. healthy planet

manager for GreenFare Organic Café, which opened on International Vegan Day on November 1, 2015. We began offering the 21-Day Kickstart from the PCRM book, *21-Day Kickstart Your Health for Weight Loss*. Its principles include minimally processed plant foods, and no added salt, oil, or sugar. We began the process to become certified (a year-and-a-half-long process) as one of only six USDA Organic Certified



Gwyn hosting the Cafe's monthly "Dinner and a Movie" night.

restaurants in the U.S. Every month we offer the Kickstart, with up to 20 people in the program. We have had over two dozen medical professionals and several dozen CEOs complete the program.

One of our participants, a former CEO of a defense contracting firm, had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, and several months after the program she left me a message indicating that her doctor said she no longer had this condition. I have watched people go on our meal plan for two weeks after being on pain medication for years, and tell us that all their pain is gone. In addition, Kickstarters who started with type 2 diabetes watch their A1C levels drop on day one and continue to plummet until they are coming in to celebrate being off insulin after

years of being on medication. Doctors are now referring patients to us for obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes and are thrilled when their patients return to discuss getting off medication and to share their pleasure at weight loss and pain abatement. Athletes have taken the program and won races at record times.

Today, GreenFare Organic Café has graduated over 450 people on the PCRM 21-Day Kickstart program. We teach the skills to enable people to continue this lifestyle on their own, including oil-free cooking, how to break food addictions, how to prepare quick and easy meals, and how to read food labels. All the while people enjoy two meals a day of freshly prepared,

organic, plant foods: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans/nuts/legumes. We hold monthly "Dinner and a Movie" nights to bring together those interested in meeting others on this journey.

We also offer dozens of books for sale, and most of the authors have given lectures at GreenFare. We have been very fortunate to have hosted most of the leaders in this movement, including T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Dr. Neal Barnard, Dr. Michael Greger, Dr. John McDougall (via Skype), and Dr. Robynne Chutkan. We also hosted Chef Del Sroufe and two vegan comedians, Matt Kazam and Myq Kaplan.

GreenFare is a restaurant that many people don't yet know they need. But as






word travels and people wonder why their friends are looking younger and slimmer, they discover the secret of plant-based nutrition. A

recent article in the *Washington Post* featured our story, and has helped spread the word and created quite a stir (see bio below, right for information).

As a business, we pay a living wage of \$15 per hour and are 100% powered by offshore wind power. Our meal plan containers are fully compostable, and we recycle and compost with the local Mom's Organic Market. We buy 80% of our produce from local sources and have a seasonal menu that includes no animal products.

We are one of many businesses who are promoting a healthy lifestyle of whole plant foods with community support, an amazing group of passionate employees, and a supply chain that provides local, organic produce.

We are deeply appreciative of our employees, our farmers, our loyal customers who provide support, and the doctors who gave us their time. GreenFare is not a restaurant, it's a mission!

I joined the NHA because of its fabulous publication, which so nicely ties together the whole-food, plant-based, SOS-free movement, and for the opportunity to support this growing base of health-motivated people. 



*The GreenFare Cafe staff from left to right: Chris Cox, Petry Bell, Gwyn Whittaker, Justin Matthews, and Pericles Silva.*

**Gwyn Whittaker** is a Certified Master Gardener, PCRM Food For Life Instructor and on the PCRM President's Council, eCornell Certified in Plant-based Nutrition, and is on the Board of Humane Rescue Alliance as VP Governance. To visit the GreenFare website, visit [greenfare.com](http://greenfare.com). To view the *Washington Post* article, "A tech expert now works to keep people from terrorizing themselves with toxic foods," visit [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com) and search "Gwyn Whittaker."

## Hope for the future...

**Where there's a will, there's a way.**

**M**any of our friends have helped preserve the legacy of "Health through Healthful Living" for future generations through bequests to the National Health Association.

A large number of people do not have wills, and there are many others who may consider updating their wills because of sweeping changes in tax laws in recent years. Bequests are important sources of support for our future achievements and goals.

The following format, at right, may be used by those who wish to make a bequest to NHA:

*"I am committed to 'Health through Healthful Living.' Therefore, I give the National Health Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit education corporation presently with headquarters in Youngstown, Ohio, the sum of (\$\_\_\_\_\_), and/or other specifically described property free of all death taxes, creditors' claims, and expenses of administration of my estate, for discretionary use in carrying out this aim and purpose."*

**The total dollar value of a bequest to NHA is deductible for Federal estate tax purposes. You can consult with your attorney about the procedure for naming NHA in your will or you can contact the Association.**

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