

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 around 500 words, and one or two photos, to info@healthscience.org).

Bob Mathews Managua, Nicaragua

I have always enjoyed reasonably good health, which I attribute to good genes, a mostly vegetarian diet, a healthy wariness of "chemicals," rural living, and a love of sports and physical exercise. My brother first told me about the Natural Hygienists in 2008, exclaiming animatedly about their vegan diet and water-only fasting as a preferred therapy. Dave had been studying alternative health-maintenance theories and methodologies since our father died of bone cancer in 1989, so I knew him to be serious and well-informed, such that I should not lightly brush off his revelations as wacko.

I decided to do my second fast (the first was in 2014 for four days) in March 2018 at TrueNorth Health Center in Santa Rosa, California. This time I fasted for six days, and unlike the first time, I did not feel as exhausted. I was able to walk around the TrueNorth facility, work with my laptop computer, and generally stay alert. Upon re-feeding, I found that my tastes had been reset, such that ordinary fruits and vegetables, juiced or whole, were extraordinarily and deliciously enchanting. Who could want more than this?

As a beer lover, I asked Dr. Anthony Soler, a staff doctor at TrueNorth, the following question one morning: "In un-pasteurized

beer that has been naturally fermented, therefore, with live probiotic microorganisms, does the 6% alcohol kill the microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.), rendering the homemade beer not active probiotically?"

Dr. Soler responded that alcohol is an antibiotic. I didn't get it at first, but then I had an epiphany. Alcohol, as I very well knew, is used in all hospitals and clinics as a disinfectant (which is just a euphemism for antibiotic). But I was not connecting the dots to see the full picture, which is: Why am I worrying about the probiotic microorganisms in the beer, when, in fact, I am dumping an antibiotic—the alcohol—all over my gut microbiome!?

One result of my water fast surprised me more than anything else: I lost my taste for, and interest in, beer! Even my friend Falk Erdmann's lovingly hand-brewed (fermented), German-style, unfiltered, unpasteurized beer with exceptional taste held no interest for me any longer. I was completely blindsided by this new change in my taste, and to my social personality. Three weeks after, I was still uncertain of how to accept it, because for as long as I can remember, my most memorable social experiences have included significant amounts of alcohol, which was my "social lubricant."

I joked with Dr. Alan Goldhamer, co-founder of TrueNorth, that I will be reporting



him to the appropriate authorities for this loss of my constitutionally guaranteed right to the "pursuit of happiness," with no warning about possible negative side-effects from their highly recommended fasting therapy. His reply? "I am so sorry that we have destroyed your ability to enjoy health-compromising habits. This is an unfortunate side-effect of fasting." Such a sense of humor!

I was born and raised in the U.S. before moving to B.C., Canada for about 30 years. After many back-and-forth trips from Canada to Nicaragua (where I had been working in solar energy and waterpower with a group of young Nicaraguans recently graduated from engineering university), I found myself enjoying my new lifestyle so much that I decided to move to Nicaragua permanently in 2003. I became a Life Member of the NHA in 2017, as a convenient way to support the organization and to assure delivery of *Health Science* magazine into the future.

Esther van der Werf Ojai, California

My journey to health started when my boss sent me out to buy a birthday card for a colleague. Before buying a card at the local bookstore, I took a few extra minutes to browse the new books. One title intrigued me: *Een Leven Lang Fit* (the Dutch translation of *Fit for Life*) by Harvey and Marilyn Diamond. I couldn't get that book out of my mind, so I went back to buy it the next day.

Through reading *Fit for Life* I realized, for the first time (at age 25), that there is a link between what I eat and how I feel. Until then I thought food simply equaled energy, and if I lacked energy I obviously had to eat something. During the one evening it took to read the book I didn't eat my usual after-dinner snacks, and I felt a lot better the next day; so, I began to change my diet.

Adopting a vegan diet didn't automatically mean I adopted a healthy diet, and I struggled with tiredness, digestive issues, and headaches for a few more years. I looked for more information, eventually finding Keki Sidhwa, and I attended Keki's BNHS conference in England in 1996. I loved meeting like-

minded people. I shifted to a healthier version of a vegan diet, with more raw foods, and heard about the ANHS (now NHA) for the first time; so, I joined and attended their conference in Florida the following year.

That led to an interest in fasting, and thus my first stay at Dr. Alan Goldhamer's TrueNorth Health Center, in California in 1998. There I learned that missing a meal or two, or even thirty-three, was a good thing for me and a positive experience!

Shortly after that I quit my lucrative but unhealthy job with NATO, I began traveling around the USA, eventually settling in the beautiful Upper Ojai Valley of California. While traveling I looked for a healthy way to make a living, and tested each job opportunity on my three essential criteria: it had to be healthy for me, healthy for the people I worked with, and healthy for the environment. If it didn't satisfy these three criteria, I turned it down, unwilling to compromise.

About two years into my travels I came across a method that ended my 16 years of myopic eyesight and gave me back my clear

vision in just two weeks: better than 20/20 visual acuity. This surprised me, so I tried it out on my then-boyfriend, who was much more nearsighted than I was, and he too made great progress: going from not seeing the eyechart at all from



20 feet away to reading 20/50 one month later, which is just one line short of passing the DMV test without glasses.

This natural method did not include boring eye exercises and worked amazingly well! I was excited and started to study Natural Eyesight Improvement in-depth, became a teacher, kept learning more about eyesight, started giving lectures and workshops at international holistic vision conferences, and have even written a few books about it, with another book on the way. I still love this work and it satisfies my three health criteria more than I could have hoped for. All this thanks to an introduction to the science of health. What a blessing! 