

spotlight on members

During a Thanksgiving 2016 vacation to Sun City Hilton Head, South Carolina, my wife, Wanda, and I had the amazing experience of meeting three of the most remarkable sisters we have ever encountered, all of whom are now proud members of the NHA. All three live in Sun City Hilton Head and are the found-

ers and dynamic leaders of the “Eat Smart, Live Longer” Club with over 500 members, which promotes the whole-food, plant-based diet and lifestyle that the NHA has advocated since 1948. Their story is truly inspiring! —Mark Huberman

“Eat Smart, Live Longer” Club

Sun City Hilton Head, SC

Thanks to the “Eat Smart, Live Longer” Club in Sun City Hilton Head, South Carolina, people in this over-55 community are coming off of their long-term prescription medications, reversing chronic diseases, experiencing dramatic improvements in their health, and in some cases, seeing dramatic levels of weight loss. All of this has been due to the promotion of a whole-foods, plant-based way of eating by ESLL. With over 500 club members, the club is going strong.

ESLL was founded by three sisters, Karen Heitman, who served as president for the club’s first two and a half years, Leslie Haas, who has been the club’s vice-president since its founding, and Mary Lou Beavers, who manages the club’s extensive library of books and DVDs and who leads grocery store tours at the local Publix. Breast cancer took the life of their mother and diabetes was a disease that their father struggled with for a good part of his life. Seeking to not go down that same path,


the sisters watched *Forks Over Knives* and then later a lecture by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Jr. to the city of Medina was the tipping point that convinced them that eating whole, plant-based foods was the way to go. As Karen likes to say, “We went cold turkey without the turkey the very next day.” And they’ve never looked back.

Their next decision, however, is what has made such a powerful impact on the lives of others in their community. They decided to form a club. But that was not a decision taken lightly. Karen wanted to ensure that they were well grounded with the knowledge necessary to help others. In order to do that, she enrolled and earned a certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies at Cornell University. She and her husband also went on the “vegan cruise,” officially known as the Holistic Holiday at Sea. There, they heard dozens of lectures by some of the most pre-eminent doctors in the whole-foods,

plant-based way of eating. Armed with the knowledge she had learned, it became time to form the club.

From the club’s first meeting in May 2013, with approximately 60 members joining after seeing *Forks Over Knives*, the club has grown to over 500 members. Today, the club is much larger than what the three sisters can manage on their own. There is a team of volunteers who make the club work. And work it does. At two monthly meetings, videos are often shown in order to encourage and motivate members to stay with the whole-foods, plant-based way of eating. Occasionally, speakers have come in, including Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Dr. Michael Greger, and Dr. LeAnne Campbell.

The club has developed a lending library with over 100 DVDs and books, provides grocery store tours, maintains a products table of acceptable products to eat, holds potlucks, publishes a restaurant list, and more. And all of this is making the people of Sun City healthier day by day. If readers want to see club photos or learn more, they can be viewed here: www.Twitter.com/EatSmartClub/media or contact us at: EatSmartLiveLonger@gmail.com.

This article was written by J. Lanning Smith, a blogger at www.wfpbguy.com and freelance writer on eating a whole-foods, plant-based diet. He holds a certificate in plant-based nutrition from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies as well as a certificate in *Forks Over Knives* Plant-Based Cooking from Rouxbe Online Cooking School. When not writing or cooking up delicious plant-based meals, he can be found pursuing his hobby in photography or travel. He lost over 150 pounds and got off all prescription medications after joining the club and stays active through regular walking, bicycling, yoga and pickleball. 



Pictured from left to right: Mary Lou Beavers, Leslie Haas, and Karen Heitman.