

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.

Lin Silvan Eugene Veg Education Network Eugene, OR

For whatever reasons—tradition, habit, convenience—I never made the connection between the food I ate and the animals I loved. In fact, the meat-and-potatoes diet I was raised on continued until I was over 40. When I began to inquire (finally!) about where the food came from that I had unwittingly consumed for decades, it set me back on my heels. There was gross cruelty at every level. I was outraged! Why had no one told me? More importantly, why had I never asked? I felt guilty, horrified, and complicit, and I knew I could not be part of it anymore.

We all know that any undertaking is easier with the right information and tools at hand. Armed with first-rate evidence from renowned sources like Dr. John McDougall, John Robbins, Jay Dinshah, and Dr. Neal Barnard and with wisdom from many authors and others at the National Health Association like Mark Huberman, Dr. Frank Sabatino, and Dr. Alan Goldhamer, I began using veganism and ahimsa philosophy to wield power over the sadly uninformed, misinformed, dark-ages parts of my life. These inspiring mentors were examples of letting their light shine so brightly that others could see their way out of the dark, as the saying goes.

The year 1991 became a pivotal point in my life and “going veg” was a

major part of the process. Thich Nhat Hanh said that awareness is like the sun, and when it shines on things, they are transformed. Well, my life had been transformed!

Once one has new awareness, doing what you've always done is no longer a sensible option. All of my new insights exerted profound leverage over every future meal I ate and, eventually, over every decision I made. I thrived by living in accordance with revitalized values of compassion and nonviolence. These values would stay with me, teach me, and guide me, and they continue to do so even now, well into my seventies.

As an educator with decades of experience in corporate America, I was very fortunate to be able to retire early. That gave me the time, energy, and breadth I dearly desired to be able to read and explore this bolt-of-lightning new focus. I viewed my newfound freedom of choice as more of a responsibility than merely a right, because, after all, intelligent choice must be rooted in ethical values.

It was good fortune to have my husband jump on board to join me in this exhilarating endeavor. His enthusiasm ensured the success of our life-changing new worldview, because now we shared the same single-mindedness.

Both Robert and I had an ardent desire to give back and be a voice for the voiceless. When we reflected on why we had changed, we saw that learning the facts had made a strong impression on us and allowed us to redirect our lives toward a greater purpose. As a result, we established a vegan education and outreach nonprofit in 2005, providing free support to anyone wishing to make this meaningful life change. The Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN) was born!

Since then, with a focus on compassion, nonviolence, and sustainability, EVEN has been educating thousands about the benefits of a plant-based diet. Books, nutritional information, recipes, and more are



Lin updates the EVEN website.

all offered free to the public. Some of EVEN's activities include ongoing tabling and leafleting, publishing e-newsletters, sponsoring guest lecturers, conducting exclusive and inspiring interviews with prominent vegans, assisting college and high school students with projects on veganism, designing meal plans for families, answering hundreds of emails and phone inquiries each week, maintaining an informative vegan news blog and a comprehensive website, and hosting a vegan Peaceful Potluck every Thanksgiving. EVEN has also held vegan fairs and successfully secured a Eugene mayoral proclamation declaring 2016 Vegan Awareness Year! EVEN's multifaceted outreach has earned it an Essentials for Life award from United Way and the 24 Carrot Award from Vegetarians in Paradise.

Having seen the animal atrocities resulting from the standard American diet, it didn't take us long to appreciate veganism's impact on human health and on the planet, as well. Observing the wholistic interconnectedness of those three components was magical, powerful, and unrelenting. It added a magnificent spiritual component to our journey. Imagine that! A path that actually seemed to touch divinity by its ability to benefit all—animals, people, our earth—in wondrous harmony. What a glorious new worldview with which to be gifted!

Lin can be reached via email at: eugvegedunet@comcast.net, or visit the EVEN website at www.eugeneveg.org.



Lin promotes the Eugene Veg Education Network at a recent conference.

Karen and Dennis Skoworodko

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Think of the humble onion. The onion was one of the reasons that

Our Farm was born. But I am getting ahead of myself.

My husband, Dennis, and I started Our Farm in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, after we had some health issues. We began searching for answers, and it became very apparent that what we eat is the single most important thing we do that impacts our health and the environment around us. Then we realized that many of the vegetables we could get at our local stores did not taste good at all. We had memories of eating fresh, flavorful tomatoes and carrots out of our parents' gardens, but the veggies of today taste not much better than the cardboard they were shipped in! We started wanting healthy, nutritious, and delicious food—food without chemical sprays and chemical fertilizers, food that is non-GMO. Out of this desire, Our Farm was born in the heart of the Saskatchewan prairies.

First, we transitioned to a more plant-based diet and saw improvements in our health: lower cholesterol numbers, better blood pressures, a drop in weight, and more vitality and strength overall. Still, we wanted to do more, something meaningful and important. So, after 14 years of selling wholesale textiles followed by 14 years in active real estate careers, we took an entirely different tactic and went into farming.

But why an organic farm? In our quest for answers, we discovered how broken our food system is. It wasn't about good flavor or good nutrition. Instead, it was about what will survive

trucking and storage for longer than food should be stored, or what will keep on the shelf the longest—in other words, what is good for the seller but not good for the consumer.

We started growing veggies, and we developed our overriding principle: we believed that if the soil is healthy, healthy plants will grow; that healthy plants make tasty veggies; and that tasty veggies are the most nutritious. We also believed that our bodies do not deal well



with toxic chemicals, so we chose never to use agrochemicals of any kind—no herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers. We went through the multiyear process of inspections, production plans, records, and tests to get certified organic so that our customers could be confident that the produce we grew for them was healthy and safe and complied with the Canada Organic Regime. But most of all, we wanted the veggies to be delicious!

And that brings me back to the lovely, versatile onion and how it made a huge difference on how we grow. Even for us, we often wondered if the organically grown produce was worth the sometimes-extra price and effort to find,

because organically grown and conventionally grown might look exactly the same. Part of what convinced us to avoid chemicals was this example of the problems in our food system. As we were doing research on growing onions, we saw the Saskatchewan agricultural department's recommendation for growers to spray maleic hydrazide (a toxic growth inhibitor) on onions to limit sprouting in storage. It's designed to be sprayed on the growing plant at least two weeks before harvest, so the plant can absorb it into the onion bulb—*right into the part we eat*. This cannot be washed off. We've often heard that we must wash our produce well to remove any chemical residues, but washing cannot get rid of all types of agrochemicals. This was a surprise to us. Our bodies can't be healthy if we're ingesting toxic chemicals! Then we discovered that the same process was recommended for potatoes—wow! As we researched, we found so many problems with our industrialized food system that it was hard to believe.

But how do we manage Our Farm without the use of agrochemicals? One technique is using compost. Compost is the key to our soil health. We also practice crop rotation to avoid disease and pests, intensive weeding, mulching for weed control and water savings, and fertilizing with the organic matter that comes from our compost. Another method we use to avoid chemicals is using a textile barrier to keep pests away from





Aerial view of Our Farm

plants. The cabbage family of plants (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and kale) are subject to the some of the same pests that attack canola, and because we have so much canola being grown in our local area, there are many pests. We can offer fresh, local cabbage-family veggies without chemical sprays by using a technique called row cover that keeps out pests but lets in light and water. It's a lot of extra effort, but it's an effective way to protect without chemicals.

We try to be as environmentally friendly as we can, using as little packaging as possible, and our produce definitely has low food miles, as Our Farm is just 2 kilometers (1.24 miles) outside the Saskatoon city limits. Since we do not have to pick seeds based on whether they will withstand shipping over long distances, we can plant veggie varieties with taste as the major consideration. Our produce is delicious food that has

been grown with care for the environment in the most sustainable ways possible and with the least energy use possible.

That is how Our Farm started and how the onion helped us get to where we are today, providing safe, local, tasty, organic veggies to a tiny little slice of happy customers here in Saskatoon.

We discovered the National Health Association in our research into healthier food. The education that they offer is the foundational truth about good health and is backed by solid research and a great deal of experience. It is very much in line with all that we were learning about the basis of true health and what causes most diseases. Becoming members of the NHA seemed like the most natural step, and we are so happy we joined. Our hats are off to the organization; they do a stellar job!

Finally, we've come to the question "What can you do to place healthier food on your plate?" First off, our mothers and grandmothers were not wrong—you should be eating your vegetables! Support your local farmers. Check out farmers markets and CSAs (community shared agriculture programs) in your area. You will get the best, freshest food from your local community, and more and more options are popping up every-

where. Buying local will help to ensure that we all have a stronger and healthier food supply chain. We all can do better than food that has traveled further than many of us will travel in a lifetime; old carrots are still old carrots. Good flavor is a big deal! Fresh is a big deal! Shop local!

I would like to close with a quote from one of the greatest agricultural writers of our time, Wendell Berry: "In order to make ecological good sense for the planet, you must make ecological good sense locally. You can't act locally by thinking globally. If you want to keep your local acts from destroying the globe, you must think locally."

Visit www.ourfarmyxe.ca to learn more. 



Dave proudly displays the seedlings in the greenhouse.

letters & notes

Much Appreciated Letters to the Editor

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fine. We just received the summer issue and I would like to compliment you on the contents. You have really surpassed our expectations!

JON AND DOROTHÉE BERGSMA
EPE, NETHERLANDS

Hi Mark & Wanda,

I so enjoyed this past issue. I was so appreciative of the extra effort you took to get it to me. I was grateful for the feeling of "connectivity" it gave me, I always enjoy your interviews, and the articles were of great value.

HONEY LEVEEN
FT. MYERS, FL

Hi Mark & Wanda,

We enjoy every issue of *Health Science*. We

cook almost daily and look forward to the recipes. The Summer Taco Lettuce Wraps are now a household favorite! Thanks to the NHA and all its member support for making this great magazine happen. We are excited to be the newest Life Members of the NHA!

WENDY & TODD FINCHAM
STOW, OH
(LIFE MEMBERS)

Hi Mark,

Great work once again with the Summer edition of *Health Science*. The articles by Drs. Miriam Maisel and Frank Sabatino are of particular relevance in these challenging times, their advice and comments invaluable.

I wonder when the general population and leaders will wake up to the zoonotic origins of the pandemics of recent times.

PHILIP ROSS
VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

We'd love to hear from you, too!

Send your letter or email today!

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