

## **Holistic Alternatives for Traditional Medicine**

by Jane Wheeler in collaboration with Patti Newton

Prescription medications are intended to help people get relief from symptoms that negatively impact daily life. Prescription medications are effective when used as prescribed, but misuse of medication is a growing problem. Our society has normalized the use of medication to feel better. However, there is another way to feel better while replacing or reducing the need for prescription medication. There are holistic/alternate approaches. Examples of alternate approaches are massage, acupuncture, nutrition counseling, meditation, yoga, and breath-work.

Personally, I became better acquainted with alternate approaches last year, when I was struggling to manage painful, swollen knees. I came across the *Holistic Health Referral, Services, and Information Center*, established by Patti Newton at her store, Silver Moon Adornments, located in Brattleboro. The center helps to connect the public with practitioners and services, in support of effective solutions to health-related issues. Visitors are encouraged to ask questions and browse the collection of information binders, information files, brochures, business cards, event posters, and book exchanges. By becoming acquainted with these materials, individuals can make informed choices about services and practitioners that fit their specific needs. The aim is to help people balance and integrate their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and environmental well-being.

Holistic/alternative services have been available in the Brattleboro area for decades. However, unlike traditional medical practices, they are not located under one roof. The Center provides location of offices, phone numbers and directions to individual practitioners and health centers. Interested visitors can also have a confidential conversation with someone who is familiar with the gathered information and able to provide guidance to appropriate services.

Living day to day with the pain affected my ability to make decisions. The thought of starting to explore alternatives to pain medication overwhelmed me. When I visited The Center, Patti took the time to sit and explore options with me. I knew the benefits of massage. Massage helped me to recover from a shoulder injury. When the shoulder injury was healed, I continued with massage as a way of relaxation. After spending time talking with Patti and my medical provider, my solution was a combination of traditional Western approaches, along with massage, acupuncture and herbal medication. The combination helped me to manage the pain. Once the knee pain and swelling improved I continued with massage and herbal medication. Knowing that I need to maintain my improvement, I added exercise in order to build up the muscles around my knee and to lose weight.

Using alternative methods created other benefits. By avoiding use of prescribed medication, I achieved long term relief with out side effects and associated possible risks

of misuse, abuse and addiction. I gained personal awareness of my body's needs, rather than reliance on medications that masks the symptoms. Sometimes people assume that 'paying out of pocket" for alternative methods is too costly. The benefits may outweigh the cost, however, and learning about options is definitely worth the effort. It doesn't hurt to be curious about all your choices.

More medical providers are moving toward making referrals to holistic/alternative practitioners in conjunction or in place of potentially addictive medication. Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition has established an Rx Misuse Action Team with a medical/clinical workgroup which is working on several strategies, including making holistic/alternative resources more accessible to medical providers. The Rx Misuse Action Team is creating and implementing strategies to address prescription drug misuse. The three workgroups represent medical/clinical providers, law enforcement, and youth influencers (i.e. parents, school staff, youth workers). The Rx Misuse Action Team workgroups meet monthly. For more information about the Rx Misuse Action Team or if you are interesting in being involved, please contact Cassandra Holloway at 802-257-2175 or [cassandrabapc@yahoo.com](mailto:cassandrabapc@yahoo.com).

The Holistic Health Referral, Services, and Information Center is located at Silver Moon Adornments, 29 High Street, Brattleboro VT; (802)254-9600. Visit their website at [www.silvermoonvt.com](http://www.silvermoonvt.com). Hours are 10:30 a.m.–6 p.m., Tuesday–Saturday. Patti Newton is a Certified Life Coach (CLC).

*Jane Wheeler, MA, is a Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor with a private counseling practice serving the Brattleboro area and a member of the Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition's Rx Misuse Action Team (medical/clinical perspective. Jane can be reached (802)-451-8275 or [jfwheeler3@gmail.com](mailto:jfwheeler3@gmail.com). BAPC is local nonprofit that organizes community efforts involved in the ongoing prevention and reduction of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in the Windham Southeast area. Learn more about BAPC's prevention initiatives via [www.BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org](http://www.BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org)*