

Wellness Weeks



Tai Chi returns to BRVSC

LUDLOW, Vt. – Tai Chi is coming to the Black River Valley Senior Center for the spring. This beginner level class is based on Dr. Paul Lam's "Balance and Fall Prevention" techniques.

Tai Chi is a steady, rhythmic series of motions that use the whole body. Movements can be modified to meet students' individual needs and chairs are provided for mobility challenged.

Anyone with the desire to strengthen body, mind, and spirit may participate. Side effects may include increased energy and inner peace.

This eight-week class starts Monday, March 30 at 10 a.m. and lasts one hour. Class is free and limited to 10 participants. Registration required at Black River Senior Center, 10 High St., in Ludlow. Call 802-228-7421.

Acupuncture offers great benefits and continues to gain acceptance

BY SHARON HUNTLEY
The Vermont Journal & The Shopper

LUDLOW, Vt. – Acupuncture is an ancient system of healing attributed to the ancient Chinese culture and predating recorded history. The basis of modern acupuncture was established during the Ming Dynasty with the publication of "The Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion," but used in the West since the 17th century.

For those not familiar with the practice, acupuncture uses thin needles, placed on

the body along what are called meridians, which are pathways that energy travels in the body. This energy, known as 'Chi' or 'Qi,' is considered the essence of all life in Chinese medicine. If Chi is disrupted in some way, either blocked or overactive, the body suffers. The goal of the acupuncturist is to restore healthy flow of the energy, restoring balance to the body and promoting healing and symptom relief. A skilled acupuncturist knows what points along the meridians correspond to organs and systems in the body that need attention and determine where to place the nee-

des. For practitioners like Ludlow acupuncturist Susan McNulty, who has been practicing for nearly 40 years, part of her skill is as a health investigator; looking for clues, symptoms, and signs objectively and subjectively to determine how best to treat her patient. All patients are a blank canvas according to McNulty, and there are no pat treatments. She takes pulses, looks at tongues, evaluates skin, hair, and nail quality, and asks questions about patterns, habits, and history.



Experience the benefits of acupuncture. STOCK PHOTO

"All the organs work together, and most people have multiple things going on at once. I like a holistic approach...if someone has a headache, it may not be about their head...could be all kinds of things," she said. McNulty has learned over her many years of practice to never underestimate what acupuncture can do for a person. "The body is always looking to find its own homeostasis," she said.

Whatever the body is telling her patients, that helps her to know where the imbalances lie. That's how she decides where to place the needles with a goal of trying to unblock stagnation, strengthen weaknesses, and disperse excesses to return the body to a state of balance, of Yin and Yang; a Chinese concept of relationship, balance, and duality.

Treatment is an unhurried, relaxing, and thoroughly enjoyable affair. After the lengthy and completely confidential

consultation, a patient changes into a flannel robe, leaving undergarments in place. Patients lie on a comfortable treatment table in a warm room with low lighting, facing up to start.

The needles themselves are thin, disposable one-time use stainless needles with plastic handles. When they are inserted, there is little or no sensation of placement. McNulty chose six points in a recent session, which equates to 12 needles since she treats everything on both sides of the body. Then the patient is left to relax, doze, or nap. Music is a personal option. After about 20 minutes, she returns and removes the needles. The patient then turns over and another set of needles is placed along the meridian near the spine to reinforce the treatment points and left for several minutes.

Acupuncture has a well-earned reputation for pain relief, help with addiction, and many other ailments. McNulty has seen many illnesses, conditions, and issues treated over the years. Some results are immediate, and some build over time.

She is happy to finally see acupuncture becoming more available, noting that treatments were now being done at the VA. However, insurance companies still often don't cover treatment.

Thankfully, the medical community is embracing acupuncture more and more. In 1997, the National Institutes of Health, after mounting evidence from clinical trials, formally acknowledged acupuncture for its value in relieving pain, nausea after surgery or chemotherapy, and morning sickness; and effectiveness in treating conditions, such as headaches, asthma, stroke rehabilitation, and fibromyalgia. The NIH also recommended that acupuncture be taught in medical schools.

According to National Center for Biotechnology information website, "Acupuncture occupies a unique place in modern medicine. Research on acupuncture has taken place in many universities and research institutions around the world, increasing our understanding of how the human body works. Knowledge has been greatly increased especially in the areas of physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, kinesiology, neurology, and neuroanatomy. By integrating Eastern and Western medicines, both disciplines can be complementary to each other for the benefit of patients."

The benefits are nothing new to McNulty. "Nothing makes me happier than to make somebody feel better and help relieve suffering," she said.

For more information, go to www.susanmcnultyacupuncture.com.

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