

Optimum Health Institute Newsletter



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This Summer Bask in the Warmth of the OHI Community

'Love your neighbor as yourself.' — Matthew 22:39

Sunny summer greetings to you, our OHI community.

We've heard this verse so many times that it has become rote, yet it is so important, it is the very core of Jesus' teachings. And, its message is what drives the philosophy behind our community here at OHI.

We've all witnessed, as I wrote to you in our last Spring article, the healing power of the OHI Community, "Planting Hope

and Transforming Lives." In this issue we'll explore how our OHI founders with so much *foresight* created our community and how our 21 day program reinforces that community.

I see that people have become more isolated than ever. We can receive just about everything we need without ever leaving the house. People work at home, shop online, get their entertainment from the internet and cable television, and their questions answered by Siri, Alexa, and Google. Unfortunately this aloneness is making people polarized, intolerant, closeminded, and worse... *unhealthy*.

Community is Etched into Our DNA

Community, however, is so important to human beings that it is in our DNA. Our need to belong, to be a part of a group dates back to our caveman days. Our acceptance in the clan - our inclusion by the group - made the very difference between life and death. Our survival depended on this close-knit community. And, when it comes to our needs for bonding and support, nothing has changed in all the millennia since then.

The History of OHI is Steeped in Community

In the mid-1970s, my parents met Raychel Solomon through my uncle the Reverend Russell Nees. As they got to know each other, they discovered among them a *shared vision* - a common goal. Raychel had learned about the healing benefits of a raw plant-based diet from Ann Wigmore at the Hippocrates Institute in Massachusetts, and she made it her mission to let the world in on the secret. When she told my parents about it, my mother Pam Nees whose medical background as a registered nurse enabled her to recognize the value immediately. My father Bob Nees, Sr. with his background in organizational structure felt he could help bring the vision to life. They say, two people can become partners, but it takes a minimum of three people to form a community. As my folks and Raychel came together, united in their goal to teach people about the life-changing effects of a raw

plant-based diet, they formed the first community which would become OHI.

Our three founders, Raychel Solomon and my parents, Bob and Pam Nees, were united in their shared vision that the body, mind and spirit needed to be healed in unison, and they would provide an avenue of healing for anyone who arrived at OHI if they were committed to the program. Folks came from all walks of life, and all reinforced each other--- as they say "our *vibe* attracts our tribe."

Mom provided the unconditional emotional support necessary for every guest to feel a deep lasting connection to the broad OHI community. Dad furnished the structure of cooperation and communication essential to any community.

Raychel was known as a "sparkplug" because she was ready to ignite the world with her vision. She provided the discipline for the fledgling community to stay the course, often patrolling the local bars and pizzerias to catch wayfaring guests and "motivating" them back to campus. She was overflowing with energy, and my parents were able to help guide this vigor with an organized approach towards the program.





The Volunteer-Run OHI Was Given a Clever Nick-Name by Our Guests

The three opened our first God-centered holistic healing facility in San Diego that would go on to become the Optimum Health Institute. That facility was completely operated by volunteers. Our earliest guests nick-named it *Camp Cleanse*. These first guests were not only taking classes, they worked side-by-side with our staff in the garden raising our wheatgrass, and in the kitchen cooking meals. This setting of cooperation created the foundation of community that still exists today.

Guests have told Dan Strobhar, who has been with us since 1987, that what they like the most are the people they meet here. He says, "It's as big a draw as the program. Our guests form life-long friendships. They enjoy meeting courageous people who are willing to try new things, get out of their *comfort zones*, and change their thinking."

Dan also recalls how my father helped create a community among the staff. He says Dad modeled the core philosophy of healing, love and new life by giving lots of hugs and a willingness to always listen to complaints. He was open and welcoming, and encouraged people to express themselves. In turn, Dan recalls, the employees became like family and would pick up after each other and help each other out. And, that legacy continues today.

Cheryl Green who joined OHI in 2002 got to know my mother shortly after my father passed away. She says, "Pam always represented dedication to me. I was struck by *her graciousness* during a time of grief and personal loss, and how she remained dedicated to body, mind and spirit, and continuing the dream. She always had an insight to share, and a twinkle in her eye. She inspired me as a role model."

'And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'— Colossians 3:14

Powerful Tools Build Community Now as it Did in the Beginning

From the onset and to this day our classes create community involvement. We have over 42 classes and activities that fall into three categories: Physical, Mental (or Emotional) and Spiritual. Many of our classes overlap in category-by-design-, such as our class on digestion which also includes a "Spiritual" element because we discuss how *blessing* our food serves to relax the body and make the digestive system work more

efficiently. Guests participate in classes and activities that are structured to naturally open us up to each other, and to trust being ourselves as vulnerable, unfettered and authentic people.

Peg Harvey, currently facilitator and former San Diego Program Director and a community member since 2010, says "Community is a group of people who accept you, love you, support you and to whom you don't have to explain yourself." She sees the beauty of the OHI community in that everyone is supportive of each other. She calls it a "tsunami of love." Peg explains that there are two classes in particular that create community.

Classes that Create Community

You Validation is a class that I love to drop in on Wednesday night. Peg says that we've been conditioned to reject compliments. She cites chiropractor and author, Dr. Joe Dispenza, who says, "Our minds are like Teflon to compliments and Velcro to criticism." During this class, a guest will come up to the Love Seat and listen as other guests give them compliments. Guests in the Love Seat are only allowed to say, "Thank you," or simply nod. They are not allowed to reject the compliment. Afterward people linger, they find that they do not want to leave. It's because they've never experienced anything like this before. They are overwhelmed by unconditional love and support. This is the beginning for many people in developing a positive mental attitude. During You Validation, guests receive their *Love Note*, a summary of their testimony. And as author Robert Evans Wilson, Jr. writes in Psychology Today, "Even the least bit of praise can be powerfully motivating. So, don't keep it in - use your power!"



Testimonials is another class designed to encourage others. Peg notes that it has the Roger Bannister Effect (the man to first break the four minute mile as a runner); because people will think, "If he/she can do it, then I can do it, too." Once we know something is possible, it is a benefit to everyone because we know it can be done and by us. Bringing people together, by framing positive beliefs about themselves, shows the strength and influence of community.

"Everything is possible for one who believes." — Mark 9:23

Continuing to Create Community at Home

It is important for all our guests to establish a supportive community at home. Maintaining the lessons learned and the lifestyle changes you've achieved will be more successful if you do it with others. Building a community at home will come a lot easier with the training and the support you received here at OHI.

When it's time for guests to head home, you'll still be feeling the glow of going through an intense yet fruitful healing journey. That's why it's important to maintain contact with all the supportive friends and OHI community members you made relationships with here.

Here's How to Create an OHI Support Community at Home for Yourself

Stay Connected with your cohort, share contact info before you leave:

Join OHI Facebook pages for San Diego and Austin.

- Start a Facebook Group Page for you cohort and share.
- Recipes and photos of food that you're making back home.
- Your personal Daily Gratitude practice.
- Make your commitments with one or two of your "Buddies" in supporting one another, with FaceTime or the like. You can even cook "together" remotely.

As your transformation grows arrange to return to OHI with your friends from your cohort.

Community is the Key to Keeping Your Commitment

You have begun the process of transformation and healing. You are forming lifestyle habits that will continue to transform your life. Go live the life our founders envisioned for you. Stay encouraged. Ask: "What will I do for my body? My mind? My spirit?"

Raychel always kept a positive mental attitude, so let this be the driving force that enables you to maintain the daily discipline.

Mom's emotional support was always dedicated to our program, let her be an inspiration to you as you apply the "5 P's" to your life each week.

And Dad, who brought cooperation and encouragement to everyone he met, let him be your guide as you build a community of support around yourself as you maintain ties to the community that helped you begin the healing process, they will be there to help you stay the course. Reach out and participate in and build your extended community every day.

Your daily commitment to yourself will be easier to continue when you are supported by a community.

Treasure this summer and transform.

Yours in prayer,

Robert P. Nees, Jr.,

Optimum Health Institute of San Diego and Austin

Senior Pastor and Chairman

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Staff Spotlight

Meet Chef Jessica Rhomberg, Kitchen Manager at OHI San Diego



OHI's Body-Mind-Spirit program works to cleanse your body, quiet your mind, and renew your spirit. The overall goal of cleansing and nourishing the body is selfhealing. Because food begins to lose essential nutrients and

enzymes when heated above 105°F, Chef Jessica and her staff create healthy meals *using food in its purest form*—fresh, certified-organic and raw. Let's get to know Chef Jessica a little, and learn more about the healing food at OHI!

How did you first hear about OHI?

I was looking to make a change from the restaurant industry, and seeking an organization that was a *better fit* for me. I came across OHI online, and here I am today!

When did you "go green," or were you always a raw food aficionado?

I was classically trained at the Culinary Institute of America in New York. I started out in traditional restaurants. In 2009, I became the Kitchen Manager of a cooking school, and we began to see the rise in vegan, vegetarian, and raw foods. A few years after that, I became a personal chef and catered to the specific dietary needs of my clients. It was then that I really saw what a clean diet can do for a person's body.

How have you put your own special twist on the OHI 21-day food plan?

Since I joined OHI, I have made some slight changes to the recipes and plating. I love texture and color, so I try to incorporate as much variety on the plate as possible. I have also *expanded our condiment selection* to include many more fresh-grown herbs. I also review all of the guest surveys at the end of each week, and work to create suggested entrees that stay within our hypo detox menu.

How often do guests ask you for recipes for the dishes you create?

All the time! I'm always happy to share recipes so guests can recreate that dish when they go home. From the very first meal, I strive to set the expectation that the food I prepare for guests will not only nourish the body but also pull toxins out of the body. That can be a little overwhelming for guests that are coming to OHI for the first time. I try to work with each guest individually, and let them know that after 3 weeks on this diet their taste buds will treat that cherry tomato like it's candy.

What is the biggest new trend in raw food that you've noticed?

Outside of the OHI community, I see friends and family really getting into sprouting. Once someone feels the amazing benefits of eating *truly living foods*, I see them incorporating sprouts into as many meals as possible.

Do you have a favorite vegetable or fruit you love to work with?

I absolutely love broccoli and bell peppers. They really fill out a composed salad, and they're delicious with hummus or slightly steamed with chili flakes and lemon. Mmmm!



Science Validates the Supportive, Healing Power of Community



Science is finally validating OHI's conviction in the supportive, healing power of community. We believe friendships are absolutely ESSENTIAL to a long and healthy life, and could help individuals fight illness and depression, speed recovery, slow aging, and prolong life.

What does science have to say?

- A 10-year Australian study found that older people with a large circle of friends were 22% less likely to die during the study period than those with fewer friends. (1)
- Last year, Harvard University researchers reported that strong social ties could promote brain health as we age. (1)
- A 6-year study of 736 middle-aged Swedish men, having friendships appeared to decrease the risk of heart attack and fatal coronary heart disease. Only smoking was as important a risk factor as lack of social support. (1)
- The World Health Organization identifies social networks as a primary determinant of health. (2)

So how do you help people build friendships?

Researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, conducted a study based on a survey of 1,006 randomly selected adults in San Diego County. They identified "high mental resiliency" as predictive of a person's self-reported compassion, which is a building block of friendship. But can you "teach" mental resiliency?

Study co-author Dilip Jeste, MD, Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Neurosciences, said, "Mental resiliency can be developed through meditation, mindfulness, and stress reduction practices. We can also teach people that the silver lining to adversity is an opportunity for personal growth." (2)

"Researchers found that both social support AND hugging provided a 'stressbuffering effect' on health."

Maybe one way to make friends is to just be a happy person. Could happiness be "contagious"? The Framingham Happiness Study investigated just that. This study tracked 4,739 people between 1983 and 2003, and found that the health and well-being of one person DID influence others. Since happiness and optimism are linked to better health and improved longevity, contagious happiness could indeed have a beneficial effect on the health of an entire community. Interestingly, the study found that unhappiness does NOT spread across social networks. Picture emotions as the "flu" and happiness as "immunity." That means immunity could spread, but the virus itself could not. (3) WOW!





So friendships may help you stay healthy, but wouldn't hugging your friends increase your exposure to germs? New research out of Carnegie Mellon University indicates that feeling connected to others, especially through physical touch, actually *protects us* from stress-induced sickness. (4)

You read that right! To begin, the researchers measured the level of social support each participant felt. Then, they conducted interviews every night for two weeks to find out how often participants experienced conflict with others, and how often they received hugs. Finally, the researchers infected participants with a common cold virus, and observed what happened. (4)

"The silver lining to adversity is an opportunity for personal growth."

The researchers found that both social support AND hugging provided a "stress-buffering effect" on health. High levels of stress can weaken an immune system, yet regardless of how much conflict they endured, participants with a strong sense of *social support* developed less severe cold symptoms than those who felt socially deprived. Likewise, the more often people hugged, the less likely they were to get sick, even among

individuals who frequently had tense interactions. In other words, BOTH social support AND hugging prevented against illness. (4)

All of these findings verify the benefits of OHI's "safe and sacred space." Our Release Ceremony helps you connect with others, and let go of barriers to your health. Our You Validation class bonds participants, and affirms each person's positive gifts. Our Friday Night Live show *brings everyone together* to celebrate each individual's personal gifts. And as for hugs, we have always asserted that there is immense healing power in receiving 12 hugs a day.

So indeed, the road to optimum health starts with our community, and the hugs of shared fellowship. Cheers to the healing power of friendship!

- 1. NY Times "What Are Friends For? A Longer Life" by Tara Parker-Pope "Friends make your life better"
- 2. UC San Diego Health 4-17-2014, *The Ilk of Human Kindness*: Older Women with gumption score high on compassion "Compassionate behaviors are associated with better health and well-being"
- 3. Harvard University Medical School, Harvard Health Publishing. <u>Social networks and health</u>. Communicable but not infectious "Humans are social beings, and the health and well-being of a person influences others"
- 4. Scientific American, Mind, 5-17-2015, "A Hug a Day Keeps the Doctor Away" by Kasley Killam

Ordinary OHI Guests Doing Extraordinary Things Shannon Hensley, MD, MPH



Introducing OHI guest, Dr. Shannon Hensley, MD MPH. She practiced clinical medicine for years, but eventually chose to follow a different life path and left her traditional medical practice a decade ago. She is currently training in Energy Medicine techniques, and about to complete Level I 'Healing Touch' training and Master Level Reiki training.

Was there a singular moment that spurred you to embrace a plant-based organic diet?

Five years ago, I was struggling with muscle pain, twitching, brain fog, and anxiety that seemed to appear out of nowhere. I was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Fortunately that didn't prove to be correct, so I took my health into my own hands and eliminated grains, dairy, and sugar from my diet, and increased raw greens, cruciferous veggies, fermented foods, herbs and a variety of supplements.

How did your healing journey evolve from there?

Three years ago, my husband and I did a week long cleanse. It was intense and transformational for both of us. We gained so much clarity and insight! It was a true "re-set," and I felt my body healing in ways that I had never seen before.

What was the first breakthrough you made at OHI?

I made a major breakthrough about the root of my illness just by sharing a bit of my story with another guest. My son had been very ill the year before I got sick. He had almost died. I hadn't considered the possibility that the emotional trauma had led to my own illness. It was truly profound!

Is there a particular OHI class that really resonated with you?

The Vocal Toning class was another pivotal moment for me. When we reached the crown chakra, 7th energy center, I had an experience of my body merging with an endless wave of love. It's difficult to describe, but probably the most "real" thing I've ever experienced in my life.

Have you returned to OHI since that first visit a year ago?

I went back to OHI in March, and the magic was still there! The rawness of getting clean and clear made way for big spiritual healing for me.

You practiced clinical medicine, but stepped away from it 10 years ago. What do you do now, and how does OHI impact your choices?

I have organized women's gatherings that focus on spiritual support for our shared life journey. Just like OHI's "You Validation" class, the connection and validation we can offer to each other in our gathering is so important.

What has OHI taught you that you continue to use at home?

I do a five to 10 minute energy routine that includes tracing my meridians; energy pathways with daily affirmations.

As someone with an MD who practiced clinical medicine, do you think others Western medicine practitioners would be open to the diet and classes taught at OHI?

My clinical training had very minimal focus on nutrition and generally spoke to the food lobbyist sponsored USDA food pyramid and AHA "Heart Healthy" diet as the ideal. I see the OHI approach to body/mind/spirit balance for healing as a component for medical school training of the future.



Scholarship Recipient Pays It Forward to OHI Community

When avid church-goer Sam Piner discovered he was dealing with a multi-layered health opportunity, he gave it all over

to God. Stage Four prostate cancer had metastasized into his bones, liver and kidney, and his doctors placed a stent in his kidney to try to save it. One of his fellow parishioners learned about Sam's condition, and strongly suggested he head right to OHI San Diego.

Sam told me it was a life-changing decision for him. He admits it took a bit of adjusting to transition from being a big eater -- his words -- to a plant-based organic juicer, but he quickly warmed to the healthy change.

Because of his eclectic background -- he's been in irrigation and landscaping for 30 years, a police officer, an EMT, a well driller and even his city's youngest fire chief -- Sam easily made friends and quickly became a popular member of the OHI community.

Sam said he had never encountered a community as loving and compassionate as the one he discovered at OHI. He also

said it was such a God-centered setting that he didn't even think about his own health opportunity the entire time he was

there. He told me he just stayed in a high

spiritual place and focused on nurturing everyone else the same way they were nurturing him. I was moved when he said he felt like all the members of the tight-knit OHI community were healing each other, body, mind and spirit.

When we informed him he had been gifted with two additional weeks of the holistic healing program through the OHI Scholarship Fund, he was so appreciative he vowed he wanted to give back to the OHI community. He applied to

the OHI missionary program and looks forward to sharing all the love and support others shared so freely with him.

Larry Taylor,

Executive Director,

Optimum Health Institute of San Diego

The Greatest Gift of Love is Giving the Gift of Healing

Thanks to your support last year, we were able to provide **94 scholarships**. Our overarching **goal for 2018 is to raise \$500,000** in scholarship funds.

You can give the gift of healing for those who are ill and in need by supporting the OHI Scholarship Fund by making a:

- One-Time Donation
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Three Ways to Give

1. Donate by mail: Use the newsletter donation envelope

2. Donate online: www.optimumhealth.org

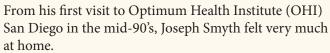
3. Donate by phone: Call (800) 993-4325

The OHI Scholarship
Fund was established
to help those who
have a life threatening
health opportunity
and require financial
assistance. The OHI
community relies on
acts of kindness and
generosity to support
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Optimum Health Institute is a non-profit, religious organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

Missionary "Leaves the Garden" to Grow Community Noted Architect Tends to OHI's Gardens





"I grew up in South Texas on a large family ranch west of San Antonio in Uvalde County with a lot of cows - and eating lots of steak and potatoes." But all that began to *change* when Joseph met Dr. Ann Wigmore, in 1983 who schooled him in the health benefits of a living foods lifestyle. Raychel Solomon, was also a student of Dr. Ann's in Boston. His first visit to OHI was in the mid 90's. Since Joseph had already made major changes in his diet after meeting Dr. Wigmore in the 1980's, he immediately took to the live, raw, organic plant-based meals served up by the OHI kitchen. During his *first visit* he met Bob Nees, Sr. and immediately was drawn to the strong feeling of a loving community, in a beautiful garden centered setting.

After a number of visits in the late 1990's and early 2000's Joseph decided to become a missionary in 2010 for the first time. He met Pam Nees who at the time was still very much involved in the management of OHI along with Bob Nees Jr.. Even though Pam was busy she always made time to visit with guests as well as the missionaries. "Pam was a great listener, she had the ability to be very present with each person she spoke with. Many times I heard Pam say in a firm yet kind way, staying on the diet can be challenging when you return home."



When Joseph was a missionary for the first time in 2010 he said: "I spent the entire time working in the organic garden and loved every minute of it". Under Dan Strobhar's management and with a wonderful missionary named Salty, they built the gazebo and the two wooden raised box beds. Joseph met Peg Harvey, who at the time was a fellow missionary. Peg was *diagnosed* with stage 4 cancer, and over the course of a number of months stuck to the program and became cancer free! "What a powerful woman she is."



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With the warmth of the sun on his back, and the rich soil of the OHI garden under his feet Joseph shared how much he loves getting his exercise working in the garden, and at the same time, he now had a new love of working with lots of the guests.

Joseph shared an example of how uplifting it was to work with one young guest, a meeting that came out of the blue.

"One day down near the pool, I met a young man who said he was terrified of water,"

Joseph asked him if he would like to learn how to swim? The young man said; "Yes but, I'm terrified of the water."

Joseph said: "I tell you what, you just sit by the side of the pool and I want to show you something." So the young man did. Joseph got into the pool and waded out to the middle and said the whole pool is shallow with no place where he could be in over his head. With a little more coaching the young man agreed to wade out the middle with Joseph. Then Joseph show him how to hold his breath which showed him that he could float. He made it the short distance to the other side, and all of a

sudden the young man stood up from doing so and said with an excited look on his face: "Joseph, you just showed me how to swim in less then, (15 minutes!)" He then waded up to the steps and walked over to Joseph and said with tears in his eyes said; "I'm no longer afraid of the water! Joseph you have changed my life forever"

It's the strong connection with the OHI community that will have Joseph returning to be a

missionary in the years to come. "I love being of service to so many wonderful and interesting people."

Footnote: When Joseph is not at OHI, he is a noted urban landscape architect reclaiming "lost plots in urban-blighted areas." which become productive spots for the homeless.

Come Back for your Optimum Summer Retreat

OHI's 21 day integrated program, *now designed specifically* to heal during 3 weeks of summer. Stay in some of our largest and nicest rooms - rooms are limited!

OHI San Diego:

- You pay only \$4,950 for a 3 week-stay in select single-occupancy rooms. \$900 Savings.
- You each pay just \$3,950 for a 3 week-stay in select double-occupancy rooms. Save over \$750.

OHI Austin:

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- You each pay just \$3,950 for a 3 week-stay in select double-occupancy rooms. Save over \$900.

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OPTIMUM HEALTH INSTITUTE





A Mission of The Free Sacred Trinity Church

The Free Sacred Trinity Church and its subordinate religious missions, the Optimum Health Institute of San Diego and the Optimum Health Institute of Austin, are not-for-profit organizations exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Support OHI's Mission

We are a non-profit religious organization and your donation is tax deductible. On behalf of all those who benefit from the OHI Scholarship Fund, we offer our gratitude!

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SMR18

VISIT WITH US: SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE

Visit our weekly Open House every Sunday starting at 4:00 p.m. in San Diego and Austin. The OHI Program offers visitors, guests and adherents a personal tour of the facility, lecture, prayer circle and an all raw vegan meal. A \$3 donation is appreciated, but not required.

CONTACT US: (800) 993-4325

We'd love to hear from you. To receive special offers and updates, email us at newsletter@optimumhealth.org or call us at (800) 993-4325. For more information about the OHI Program, please visit our website at www.optimumhealth.org

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See inside on Page 10 for details-

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Our Mission

We serve as a change agent for holistic healing by creating a safe and sacred space.

Core Values

Holism, Generosity, Relationship, Life-Long Learning, Stewardship and Service.

Guiding Principles

Trustworthiness, Respect, Empowerment and alignment