

Healing with Nature: Lory Explores Roots of Medicine

by Carla Occaso

ORANGE — When thinking of medicine, health and healing, you might first think of hospitals. Or you might think of doctors, pills and pharmacies. But some people who practice the art of healing swear by the power of mother nature.

Sandra Lory of Orange has embarked on studying and using a grassroots healing system that involves herbalism and the ancient art of cupping to bring people back to a sense of wellness. “I am a traditional cupping therapist and a folk herbalist and a food justice educator,” Lory said during a recent telephone interview. Her website, www.mandalabotanicalsvt.com, explains further: “My practice combines traditional cupping therapy and topical use of aromatic plants for physical healing and spirit cleansing. The combination of these two techniques unblocks stagnant energy and balances overstimulated pathways in the body. The opportunity awaits for you to enter sanctuary and deepen your relationship with nature, as plants are an integral part of every service I offer.”

Cupping therapy is an very old healing technique that dates back to the ancient Egyptians, Chinese and Indians. Lory describes it as one of the oldest and most globally practiced healing arts that, while still popular in some spots, is making a comeback in the United States. Sort of the inverse of massage therapy, that relies on pressure, cupping applies suction creating a negative pressure on a muscle or muscle group.

Lory uses cups made of hand blown glass while traditionally healers used whatever material was available to them. If they were in a nomadic tribe, they might use the horns of an animal. If they lived among bamboo, they might use that. “(Cupping) was practised with local resources,” Lory said. Nowadays people even use plastic suction cups. “It is a really effective practical therapy that originates from the shamanic sucking tradition,” she said.

Cupping can be used to alleviate a number of conditions, including sciatica, TMJ (tight jaw), persistent cough, sports injuries, edema (swelling) and water retention, abdominal issues, wounds that are slow to heal, neck pain, chronic pain, and even blocked creative energy. “Cups help to move stagnant pathways of the body and overstimulated pathways of the body. It is most commonly used today through martial arts. It is an efficient way of helping an injured muscle to heal,” Lory said. She is a member of the International Cupping Therapy Association, but she adds a twist to her practice by using aromatic plants to enhance the treatment. She transforms plants into salves, oils, ointments and liniments, but she is happiest just using them freshly picked from the dirt.

Many factors go into how she chooses which plants to use, but she is most strongly guided by the seasons. For example, in winter she uses soft evergreens such as white pine and cedar. In summer, she tends to use basil, spearmint, lemon balm, verbena and bee balm. These plants work well with cupping because they resonate quickly with the body and increase the benefits of the treatment. “It smells great, disinfects the air and refreshes the spirit,” Lory said.

And for Lory, getting into the ancient healing arts isn’t just some new-age fad. She is following in the footsteps of her foremothers. Although they came from different parts of

Herbal cupping therapy at Mandala Botanicals.



the world, both of her grandmothers were cuppers and one was an herbalist as well. One grandmother was from Slovakia/Hungary while the other is from India. In fact, Lory has travelled all over the world, from her grandmother’s ancestral homes to Haiti, Palestine and beyond.

Herbalism has become a central part of her practice. Lory has trained as an apprentice herbalist with Rosemary Gladstar and others, and she completed a clinical herbalism training with Guido Mase in 2003-2004. She describes herbalism as the use of plants for healing purposes and for preventative care of the body mind and spirit. They can even be used in first aid. “I feel plants can treat many ailments of the human body,” she said. “I believe each person is an ecological expression. We are part of nature. We need nature, and in this rapidly changing global climate, we need to attune to the practices of our ancestry and the foods and medicines of the bio region where we live.”

This leads to Lory’s third interest, one that is interconnected with health and healing: Food justice education. Food justice incorporates cooking, nutrition and gardening all together. It also involves politics, ecology, food access and food knowledge. “Access to food knowledge is more complexly layered than someone just going to a store or marketplace to buy something. It is a very politicized system that has become quite industrial and corporate,” she said. She has been involved with the Good Food Good Medicine program of Foodworks, a farming cooperative that dissolved in 2013. But the education program has carried on at the food justice system in Barre. The idea is to focus on a seasonal approach to food through community gardening, cooking, affordable nutrition, family health, food preservation and leadership. However, Lory said she is taking a year off from education in order to get her farm established in Orange (a town just outside Barre), build a house and do some writing about her international herbal and folk healing experiences. She likes to be outside among the trees and plants.

Winter Health and Fitness Indoors and Out

by Carla Occaso

CENTRAL VERMONT — Speed Tracs, Aqua Zumba, core training and more kinds of indoor fitness are speeding up the heart rates of central Vermonters. People who prefer the outdoors can find plenty to do as well.

Kellyne Witte, assistant manager at Snap Fitness in Berlin, reports on the latest in fitness at her center out on the Barre-Montpelier Road. A brand new equipment system arrived Jan. 20 called Speed Tracs. Witte said a trainer from Snap Training is working with some of the area schools to train gym teachers on this new equipment that is meant to improve athletic performance.

“Montpelier High School has Speed Tracs now. The (Snap Fitness) trainer Ian is going around to schools to train gym teachers how to use Speed Tracs. We got Speed Tracs here as well,” Witte said. Other programs offered at Snap Fitness includes Grit, a small personal training program that involves total transformation.

For Grit, four instructors take in about 26-30 people into the 8-week program. The program uses diet, strength training and cardio. There is a meal plan and a Facebook forum where everyone communicates.

As for something new and different for Witte, she is going to a training in Cambridge, Massachusetts in early February. “In February I will be a CX instructor,” Witte said. CX-Worx is a 30-minute core class that comes from an Australian company called Les Mills.

Over at First in Fitness in Berlin and Montpelier, exercise classes are still popular. Employee Elaine Caplis, who has worked at First in Fitness for 20 years, said she enjoys the Pilates classes and weight training. Cross training is also a favorite among fitness buffs. In addition, new classes formed this winter for Zumba and Aqua Zumba up at the Berlin facility.

Yoga, though nothing new in town, has become a fitness staple in Montpelier. Those who are interested can check out the Fusion Studio on Main Street, or check out the website at www.fusionstudio.org. Yoga can also be found at Yoga Mountain on Main Street, Grateful Yoga on State Street and Geezum Crow Yoga on Elm.

The Montpelier Recreation Department also offers fitness and outdoor education. The Rec Department staffs the Central Vermont Civic Center on Gallison Hill Road. Their website is www.montpelierrec.org. Ice skating is now happening on the Montpelier pool!

And talk about skating! The B.O.R. Ice Arena in Barre has been a center of family fitness for generations. Part of the Barre Civic Center, the arena hosts hockey, figure skating and more. According to their website, “The B.O.R. underwent renovations in 2002 and this complex has accessible restrooms, a lift for access, an enclosed and heated concession area and a large third floor meeting room/training space.”

Other winter fitness pursuits, such as skiing (downhill and cross country), walking, running and fat tire bike riding are all plentiful and accessible in our area, which is perhaps why Vermont is always near the top of those “healthiest state” rankings each year.

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