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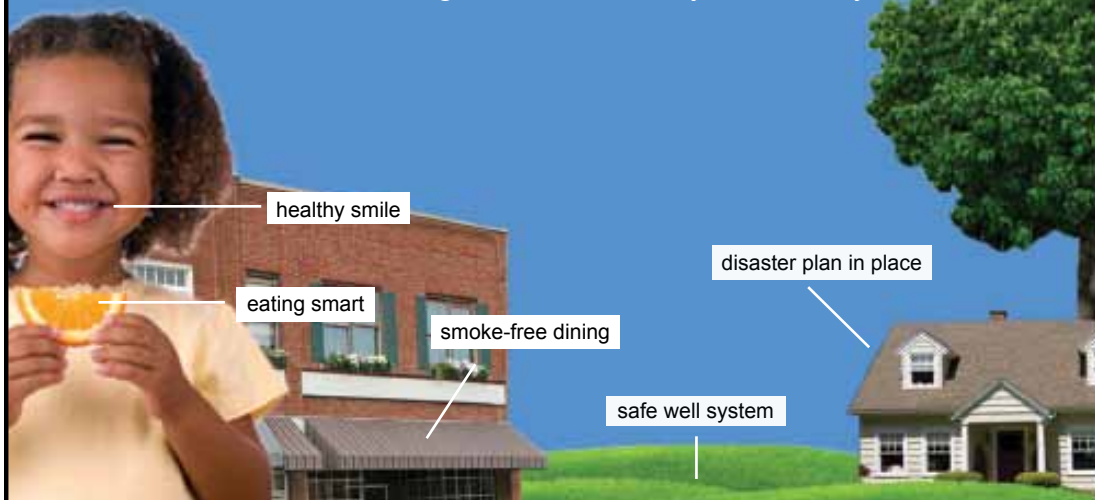
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# well

BETTER LIVING, BETTER HEALTH



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Better Living, Better Health

## Local docs love Carrboro

BY CAROLYN F. EVANS  
*Contributing Writer*

Time was, Carrboro residents seeking medical care had few options in town. But not any more. As the local population has grown, so too has demand for close-to-home medical care. Today, several medical practices are based here – as are the health care providers who run them.

Matt Vizithum moved from Michigan to take part in the Carrboro lifestyle. He joined Carrboro Family Vision in 1999 and became the sole owner in 2007. Jason Chow became a partner in 2009.



**Dr. Matt Vizithum**

PHOTO BY SUSAN DICKSON

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## MOVING TO BETTER HEALTH

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*Co-author of: Omgaan met lymfoedeem (2009)*

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## HOUSE Calls

HOUSE Calls is a weekly column by Dr. Adam Goldstein, Dr. Cristy Page and Dr. Adam Zolotor on behalf of Your Health and the UNC Department of Family Medicine.  
**Read it every Thursday in the Citizen!**



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"The people are very friendly and interesting," Vizithum notes. "I can have a vegetable garden and I can walk or bike to work, the grocery store and to my kids' school." He and his family use only local health care providers.

But it's not just the way of life that appeals to Vizithum.

"Community health is a big interest of mine, and Carrboro is very focused on community health," he says. As a doctor, he has access to a strong local referral network without having to send patients to specialists for fairly routine maladies. This creates better continuity of care and a stronger sense of well-being for patients.

Case in point: a perfectly healthy 7-year-old boy who

had a right ear infection and then developed persistent headaches over his right eye. A neurologist in Raleigh diagnosed him as having migraines. His parents brought

ailments and diagnosed the condition as Gradenigo's syndrome, a rare condition. A tube was placed in the boy's ear the next day, and his month-long headache was

"I love what I do because every day is interesting," Vizithum says.

Lawrence concurs: "I truly enjoy what I do, and a lot of that is because I love my patient population and the challenges they bring me."

Lawrence first came to the area in 1998 to do a residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at UNC Hospitals and knew

she wanted to return to live and work here. She moved to Carrboro in 2004.

"My husband and I both frequently find ourselves thinking and then saying out loud how much we love living in Carrboro," she says. "It feels special to live in a town where the neighbors are all proud to live as well."

*"I truly enjoy what I do, and a lot of that is because I love my patient population and the challenges they bring me."*

— DR. KERITH LAWRENCE

him to Kerith Lawrence, a physician at Carrboro Pediatrics and Family Medicine for further treatment.

"The strangeness of having both a persistent ear infection and headache on the same side bothered me," Lawrence says. So she referred the family to Vizithum for an eye exam. Vizithum researched the connection between the

resolved immediately.

"A Carrboro triumph," Lawrence says.

Not all cases are so dramatic. Vizithum has treated a bridegroom who hit himself in the eye with a cork while opening a bottle of champagne at his wedding reception and a woman who suffered a corneal laceration from cutting her hair while driving.

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## Alternative medicine popular in Carrboro

BY MARGOT C. LESTER  
*Contributing Writer*

It's possible Carrboro is some kind of terminal vortex for alternative health providers. Though no data exists, it certainly seems as though we have more massage therapists, healers and acupuncturists per capita than almost any other locality. This provides a nice counterpoint to the high-tech gee-whiz health care developed by companies out in RTP and the traditional medicine taught and practiced at UNC.

But why are we blessed with a bumper crop of alternative-therapy providers?

"It's possibly related to the fact that there are several massage schools situated in the Piedmont," surmises Alma Vinjê-Harrewijn, owner of Moving to Better Health. She provides physical therapy and services to people with lymphedema, which is caused by a compromised lymphatic system. She came to the area when her husband got a job at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. "I happen to know several therapists and healers that moved to this area recently because of all the different alternative treatment providers that are living and working here," she said.

But that's only part of the reason. "Carrboro is very small-business friendly – and the complementary- and alternative-medicine business is as small as they come," says massage therapist Ruth Newnam, owner of Carrboro Massage Therapy. "We need

a community, as well as a municipal government, that respects our status as small-business owners, as opposed to this career choice being a small-time, part-time way to earn extra income."

All this is good news for people interested in receiving complementary or alternative treatments.

"The businesses that locate here to provide the services do because they know that the population that lives in and around Carrboro is highly educated and values good physical and mental health," says James Harris, Carrboro's community and economic-development director. "The proximity to major hospitals helps, and it does not hurt that we have access to natural and organic products at Weaver Street [Market], in the local grocery stores and at the farmers' market."

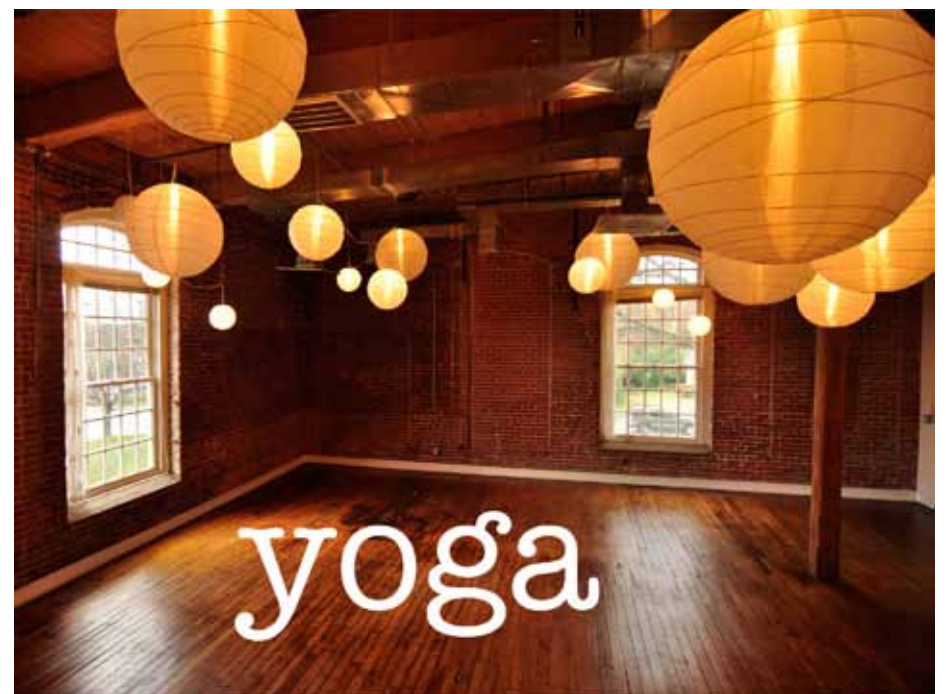
Bill Stone, owner of Healing Connections, uses a combination of conventional and complementary techniques to help his clients. That includes qigong, a centuries-old Chinese approach to strengthening the body's vital energy.

"Carrboro is the home of a high proportion of independent thinkers who have the means to look beyond the standard offerings of conventional therapy," Stone says. "With intelligence and informed intuition, they are able to seek out treatments and practices that contribute to high level wellness, not just treating or preventing disease."



Ruth Newnam

PHOTO BY SUSAN DICKSON



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## Piedmont Health celebrates 40 years

BY CAROLYN F. EVANS  
*Contributing Writer*

The rapidly growing un- and under-insured population is a national crisis. One agency addressing this growing need is Carrboro-based Piedmont Health Services (PHS). The nonprofit, which operates six health centers in four area counties, celebrates its 40th birthday this year.

"We believe that quality health care in our community is a fundamental right, and it's our mission to ensure this right," says Marni Holder, PHS program development director.

Holder says access to primary care is one of the big-

gest health care issues in our area, so the Carrboro center offers comprehensive health care services including medical and dental care and pharmaceutical and nutritional services. In 2009, PHS treated more than 37,000 individuals, 6,600 of them at the Carrboro center. Charges for services are on a sliding scale.

Keeping all segments of the population healthy is central to the PHS mission, and Holder believes much of PHS' success is due to its ability to adapt its changing patient population.

"We offer a really high-quality source of health care for the entire community," she says.

In addition to offering bilingual services to the growing Latino population, PHS offers a special program for local seniors: Piedmont Health SeniorCare, launched in 2008. The comprehensive community-based home health care program serves adults ages 55 and older.

To address the growing needs of local business owners, PHS and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce developed the Small Business Health Service. The program enables members of the chamber and their families to access negotiated, discounted rates on primary health care, health services

and prescription medications at PHS sites. Members who use the service for a regular doctor's visit are charged \$60. Similar services might cost as much as \$225 at a private practice. Prescriptions filled at the PHS pharmacy are \$10.

"We're seeing that we need a primary-care system that can absorb new patients [even] with health care reform," Holder says. "Our mission is to be part of the safety net. We accept all insurances, and we are committed to long-term primary care."

For more information on PHS and its services, visit [piedmonthealth.org](http://piedmonthealth.org)



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# HOUSE Calls

Practicing family physicians from the UNC Department of Family Medicine have teamed up with *The Carrboro Citizen* to bring you a weekly feature responding to your questions about health and medicine. Send your questions or comments to [yourhealth@unc.edu](mailto:yourhealth@unc.edu)

This week we respond to questions about antibiotics and sodium in medicines.

## Dear HOUSE Calls,

*I went to my doctor yesterday with a cough, hoarse throat and aching. I asked for an antibiotic, but I was told it was a virus and would get better without one. I got hoarser throughout the day and called back for an antibiotic, but the doctor advised me to return for another visit. Why won't doctors give us what we know our bodies need?*

From what you tell us, it sounds like you probably had a viral infection. However, this should be a two-way conversation. We usually talk with patients about the fact that viral infections do not respond to antibiotics

and that antibiotics can cause common nuisance side effects (yeast infections and diarrhea), skin rashes and even life-threatening reactions. We had a patient in the hospital recently who, even after one dose of the antibiotic Septra, nearly died and had to go on a ventilator. It is also important to understand that excessive antibiotic use leads to antibiotic resistance in the community and in the person taking the antibiotics. It is possible that your infection is bacterial. However, such infections are viral 95 percent to 99 percent of the time. Most authorities recommend waiting for seven days or more to see if you recover. We should not tell people, "You don't need an antibiotic, the end." Rather, we should discuss what else

you *can* do to feel better. Most doctors say for you to call back if you are not better in five to seven days.

## Dear HOUSE Calls,

*I'm taking medication that has a high sodium content (1,500 mg/dose). To avoid getting too much sodium, I've tried to cut almost all sodium out of my diet. My blood pressure is OK right now, but high blood pressure runs in my family, so I'm worried about taking this medication long term. Can you recommend any foods, supplements or life-style changes that can counteract the negative affects of the sodium?*

This is a great question. We would start with asking what the medicine is and why you are taking it. How important

is it, and is there a suitable substitute? Some medicines – such as some laxatives, antacids and common anti-inflammatory medicines – have a large amount of sodium. You're doing the right thing to try to cut down on sodium. More sodium intake increases your chance of developing high blood pressure. To answer your question, start with the simple things. Get rid of the salt shaker in your home and don't use it when you go out to eat. Speaking of going out to eat, many restaurants cook with a lot of sodium. Many processed and canned foods also have a lot of sodium. Look for low-sodium alternatives and read the labels. You may also want to review with your doctor alternatives to the high-sodium medicine you are taking.

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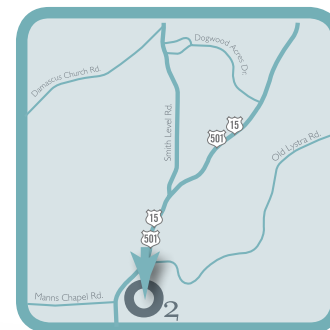
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