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Herbalist works to strengthen others' health

by Christian Brown | Staff Writer

Elizabeth Bartlett said that combining her love of green, growing things and healing people inspired her to become a nutritional herbalist.

As a young person, she loved to garden and has grown her own herbs for years. After obtaining a Master of Science degree in herbal medicine from the Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel in 2006, she opened up a practice in New Market as a clinical herbalist. This will be her third year in private practice, she said.

She said that treating illness and promoting healthier living through the use of herbs makes sense, because humanity and plants evolved together on this planet.

"Down to the cellular level, our bodies respond to plants," she said.

Bartlett sees clients on an individual and group basis. In an individual session, she asks for a personal medical history and the medical history of a client's parents and grandparents. She said that this gives her a sense of what herbs will have a positive effect on the client, and what might affect the client negatively.

She said she also examines the client's dietary and exercise habits to determine what herbs she will suggest to treat various ailments. Bartlett is also a licensed dietician, and often recommends that people remove dairy products or other items she deems might be detrimental to clients' health from their diet.

"Everything's connected – food intolerance, joint issues – the mind and the gut are very connected," she said. "It's amazing what eating the wrong thing does to feeling well emotionally."

Bartlett said that about 80 percent of the world's population relies predominantly on herbal medicine.

While she takes herbs herself, she is careful about what she recommends her clients take, and she checks that it will not conflict with other medications they may be taking or preexisting conditions.

"Anyone can react to anything that you put on or in your body," she said.

Brenda Senseney, who took one of Bartlett's detoxification seminars in the fall of last year, said that "it was great." Senseney said that she became interested in homeopathy and holistic health because of her sister, who practices both and lives in North Carolina. "She pushed me to find a

local nutritionist because she did not like the medications I had been on," Senseney wrote in an e-mail to The Gazette. "She thought I was a good candidate for a detox program."

She had been getting sick of her medication, which treated high blood pressure and acid reflux, and she was exercising three times a week and riding her horses in 25 to 100-mile trail competitions every weekend, but still she felt fatigued.

Senseney found Bartlett's Web site, and called for an appointment. "Liz was very thorough," she wrote. "I filled out a new client survey form and we went over everything with emphasis on certain items."

After Bartlett gave her guidelines on proteins, whole foods vitamin and mineral supplements, Senseney said she signed up for a six-week detox program. " ... and [I] was so happy to find that after the program was over, I was able to wean myself off both medications," Senseney wrote. "I have been able to maintain good blood pressure for about eight months now (my doctor was surprised) with nutrition and exercise."

Senseney said that Bartlett's seminar taught her the importance of taking care of her whole body. She was able to treat her own acid reflux by taking a diary of how she felt after removing certain foods from her diet and then adding them back in.

"Now I know what triggers the acid reflex for me and can avoid those foods," she wrote, adding that she was surprised that a lemon slice in a glass of water will curb her reflux. "Guess that's why restaurants do this – it is a digestive aid."

Marilyn Herbert, who also took the seminar about 18 months ago, said that the seminar helped her to learn about common food allergies, mindful eating habit, and to eliminate processed foods. "I enjoy cooking and have never used what I considered convenience foods, but the seminar really helped me tune in to the unhealthy ingredients in foods I'd assumed healthful," she wrote in an e-mail to The Gazette.

Bartlett said she considers it an honor to be able to help her clients improve their health.

"I've learned a lot from my clients, and hopefully they've learned to be better observers of themselves," Bartlett said. "We have a pretty diseased society right now. A lot of us are trying to make changes to that."

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