

# southSOUND

# Woman

THE MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO WOMEN WHO MAKE THE SOUTH SOUND THEIR HOME

Margaret Starbird

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Photo by Aaron Barna

# THE BODY SPEAKS TRADITION

## A Glance Inside A Local Clinic

By Heather Sparkman

**E**very body has a story and at the Center for Traditional Medicine (CTM) in Olympia, the body's story is given a voice. The Center addresses the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of a person's life through functional medicine, which combines ancient and traditional medicinal practices with a multi-cultural approach in order to offer a holistic approach to healing. "We listen to the distress of the body. The body continues to cry out. We listen and respond to its language," says Dr. Leslie Korn, CTM founder and practitioner.

Korn, a woman with compassionate eyes and a gentle voice, spent 20 years living in the jungles of Mexico, learning traditional medicinal practices from the native women. Once back in the states, she returned to school to learn more about the science behind the healing she experienced. Her work with indigenous peoples helped her forge an understanding of the connection between health and the stories our bodies can tell.

As I spoke with Dr. Korn, she described a woman she worked with in Brazil who was experiencing neck spasms. As Korn began touching the woman's pain, her story began to emerge. The patient began to remember an incident that occurred 50 years prior. As a young girl, the woman had lived in a convent and the nuns would put a broomstick on her neck to force her to stand up straight. The memory had been stored in the body for 50 years and the work Korn was doing was unleashing the memory and the pain.

This type of therapy is called polarity therapy and is just one of the many techniques used at the Center for Traditional Medicine. "We are often the stop of last resort for people," says Korn. Many people come to CTM with chronic pain or illnesses after trying more conventional treatments to no avail. "We have a holistic program with multiple disciplines," Korn says. Rather than simply treating the symptoms of a problem, a comprehensive assessment factors in things such as nutrition, ethnic background, patient history,

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previous trauma, spiritual affiliation and mental health, offering patients an integrated treatment plan.

Because of this holistic program, each treatment plan is unique and might include biofeedback, massage, hypnotherapy, talk therapy, herbal remedies, full spectrum light therapy and education surrounding traditional foods based on ethnic background. There is also music table therapy and many other treatment options.

“We speak the language of the person,” says Korn. “Biofeedback, for example, allows patients to see their brainwaves change in response to stimuli. This approach might work well for someone with a very scientific logical mind.”

The Center has multiple practitioners who work together as a team, allowing these various disciplines to work towards the overall health and wellness of CTM clients. In addition to Korn, the clinical staff includes a licensed massage therapist, a biofeedback and Neuro-feedback practitioner, a family counselor specializing in sexual abuse, and Saba, the center’s therapy dog.

One unique focus at CTM is the genetic make-up of the patient. “We help people make important connections with where they are from,” Korn notes, “and we work with people to honor their cultural heritage.” Korn goes on to say, “Where we come from defines who we are mentally, physically and spiritually.”

CTM is also unique in its approach to mental health treatment. “We offer a particular emphasis on mental illnesses,” says Korn, “and there are few places on the Western seaboard that focus on a holistic approach to mental health.” CTM offers relief for people struggling with chronic mental health issues such as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). “PTSD is a very complicated illness,” states Korn. Often people will see one practitioner for one symptom and a separate practitioner for another symptom. The CTM’s team approach, however, allows the care of the patient to be coordinated and the multiple symptoms of PTSD can be addressed as a whole rather than separately.

Dr. Leslie Korn demonstrating polarity therapy with employee Susan Belgarde and the therapy dog, Saba.





LEFT: Rudolph C. Ryser, Ph.D. (left) works on editing a video with Gene Hamilton. The video is about the sharp decline of the oolichan fish.

BELOW: Employee, Susan Belgarde speaking with Dr. Korn.



Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are also treated at CTM. “We do a lot of work with parents and their children who have been diagnosed with ADD and ADHD. We offer treatments that do not rely on medicating the child,” says Korn.

## “WHERE WE COME FROM DEFINES WHO WE ARE MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.”

Instead, CTM uses alternative methods such as nutrition, biofeedback and education to help families dealing with these disorders.

“We want to empower the patient to make changes that are preventative,” says Korn. She also notes that many people feel disconnected to community,

to their bodies and to the earth. CTM helps forge those vital connections and helps clients with the recreation of their lives. “We teach people to be healthy,” says Korn. CTM is a resource for the community and works to engage people in good nutrition, building a sense of family, self and connection.

In addition to the clinical work, CTM engages in research, education and public policy. An accredited Master’s degree is available through CTM’s educational program and

research and includes work funded by The National Institute of Health. Korn hopes the scientific research will lead to a greater influence on public policy. “We see our methods work in the lives of our patients, and now we are providing the scientific evidence to support that.”

Visit CTM’s website at [www.centerfortraditionalmedicine.org](http://www.centerfortraditionalmedicine.org) to learn more about the multi-faceted work of Dr. Korn, her colleagues and the therapies mentioned in this article.