

New Live Oak center integrates Western, Eastern medicine

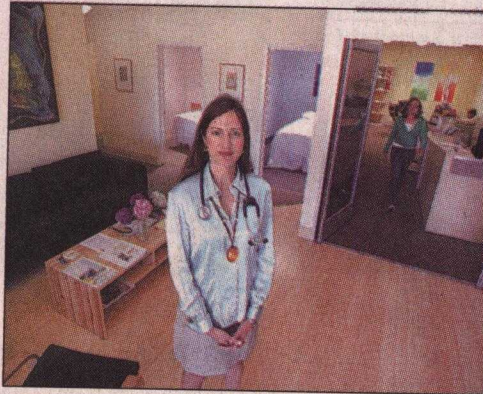
By JONDI GUMZ
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Heal It 8 2308

LIVE OAK — For those frustrated by modern medicine, Dr. Rachel Carlton Abrams offers an intriguing option. She has teamed up with acupuncturist and qigong master Lee Holden to open the Santa Cruz Integrative Medicine and Chi Center on East Cliff Drive.

"This is my dream — what I've been put on the Earth to do," said Abrams, 41, who sees benefits to integrating the best of Western and Eastern medicine. "I use regular medicine every day but it's incomplete when people aren't thriving. They need more than drugs."

Abrams is the mother of three and co-author with her husband of three books on sexuality. She said studies show that combining conventional



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Dr. Rachel Carlton Abrams is the co-founder of the Santa Cruz Integrative Medicine and Chi Center in the East Cliff Village Shopping Center.

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The East Cliff Drive shopping center that was once set to be demolished is now seeing a revival.

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medicine with bodywork, nutrition, movement, meditation and psychotherapy "is substantially more effective than Western medicine approaches for chronic conditions such as chronic fatigue."

Holden, who has been commuting to his practice in Los Gatos from Santa Cruz, found the space at the East Cliff Village Shopping Center.

The suite gives visitors a feeling of relaxation not often found in a doctor's office. A small Buddha statue sits on the table in the waiting room, and natural light streams from tubular skylights to the gentle sound of New Age music. The pastel paint on the walls is nontoxic, and the carpet is made of environmentally safe materials.

"There's no separation between healing ourselves and healing the earth," Abrams

said.

She has assembled a group of trusted colleagues, a naturopath, a chiropractor and massage therapists, who rent space in nine private rooms and work together to treat patients.

Visitors can buy Holden's books, DVDs and herbal supplements or take classes in qigong, tai chi, yoga and dance in a large open room with a smooth bamboo floor.

Abrams worked in a large group practice, the Santa Cruz Medical Foundation, for seven years, then started her own practice, Redwood Circle in Capitola, a year ago.

She likes to spend a half hour or an hour with each patient, asking about diet, workplace and family in addition to medical symptoms. She limits her hours to three days a week, to make time for teaching at Esalen Institute and UC Santa Cruz.

"She's very motivating," said Valerie Perman, a training assistant at UCSC who has

adopted healthier eating habits since attending an Abrams workshop.

Rather than hassle with insurers, Abrams charges \$125 for a half-hour visit, \$90 for those under 18 or over 65, and expects payment up front. Those with insurance can submit the receipt for reimbursement at non-preferred provider rates.

The practitioners in the complex use each other as resources. When Holden noticed a client with a medical issue, he called on Abrams for a consultation.

Clients need make only one call to coordinator Ella Pickens for appointments. There's only one set of forms, said Misha Palin, center administrator and personal coach.

David King, 57, appreciates the holistic approach.

"As you get older, your maintenance plan gets bigger," he said. "There should be integration of Eastern and Western medicine. But it's really hard to find."

Santa Cruz County leads the

If You Go

WHAT: Grand opening of Santa Cruz Integrative Medicine & Chi Center.

WHEN: 3-7 p.m. today.

WHERE: East Cliff Village Shopping Center, 21511 E. Cliff Drive, Live Oak.

INFORMATION: 465-0988 or www.santacruzintegrativemedicine.net.

state in acupuncturists per 100,000 people, a UC San Francisco report found, but only a handful of medical doctors here are open to Eastern medicine. Peggy Chen, Lonna Larsh and Gary Dolowich offer acupuncture. Byung-Gook Park teaches at Five Branches University in Santa Cruz, a graduate school of traditional Chinese medicine. Randy Baker is affiliated with an acupuncturist and Dawn Motyka advocates functional medicine, which embraces acupuncture.

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