



# Healthy Lives Healthy Communities

by **Rebecca Goldfine**

Anastasia Agrafiotis, produce manager at Fare Share Market in Norway

Place is a vital component of health. The Oxford Hills region, with its tight-knit communities nestled among lakes, streams, fields and graceful landscapes, provides a strong foundation for healthy living. To further bolster the wellbeing of residents and visitors alike, the region offers a variety of health-related services, from farmers who grow fresh organic food, to a variety of specialists trained in alternative healing practices.

If one wants to live here, spend a summer, or just visit for a day, it is possible to cook with local vegetables, meat and bread, bring the body into balance, gain greater spiritual perspective, and generally develop a deeper sense of life.

## Towards a Local Sustainable Agriculture

The **Fare Share Market** in Norway, a food cooperative started in the 1970s, is still providing the community with organic and sustainably produced whole foods, with a renewed emphasis on local production. “My job is to provide the community with a good selection of local organic produce to assist people with their quest for health,” explains Anastasia Agrafiotis, the store’s produce manager. Customers sometimes come in under orders from their health care provider to improve their basic nutrition or to seek a new diet to help fight diseases like cancer and diabetes.

Agrafiotis says she is trying to stock the shelves with more locally grown foods, and is in close contact with nearby farmers, gardeners, bakers and other food producers. “What we are trying to do is develop a strong network of local growers who can provide as wide a range of local produce as possible,” she said. “That could be someone growing acres of sweet corn or the ‘farmer’ next door with a back yard garden specializing in culinary herbs.”



And the farmers who are growing organic salad mix, purple carrots, wild cherry tomatoes, garlic, peppers, summer squash, Italian heirloom eggplants, basil, beets, cabbage, raspberries and yellow beans, are not only helping feed the community with wholesome food, but are also helping to conserve the land.

## Growing Food, Building Community, Conserving Land

“I know from experience and observation that the food that nourishes our bodies and our souls and spirits—if it’s tasty and colorful, can feed all these dimensions of ourselves at the same time that we care for and build up the earth. Fundamentally that means soil.” said Mark Heidmann, owner of **Maple Springs Farm** in Harrison, which grows many varieties of vegetables, berries and flowers.

Jeanette Baldrige says she and her husband Donnie started a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program at their LolliePapa Farm in West Paris, not only to give people access to their organically grown vegetables, but also to foster connections between neighbors. She said the program, in which customers buy a share of the farm in the spring to reap fresh produce all season, brings people together at her farm in the shared experience of appreciating the land and its bounty.

Patricia and Paul Verrill’s farm, **Harvest Moon Produce**, in West Paris, has also recently started a CSA program. Many other local farms provide fresh produce at their own stands, at area farmers’ markets, and through the Fare Share Market. Look for **Carter’s Farm Market** on Route 26 in Oxford, and **Smedberg’s**, also on Route 26 a little further north, as well as seasonal farm stands throughout the region specializing in everything from fruits and vegetables to goat cheese and maple syrup.

Also caring for the land, both agricultural and wild, is the local land trust movement. “Nature is part of health,” argues Lee Dassler, director of the **Western Foothills Land Trust** that works to protect native ecosystems and watersheds, as



(Above) Images from Harrison Farmers’ Market  
(Below) Anne Carter of Carter’s Farm Market at the Norway Farmers’ Market

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McLaughlin Garden in South Paris



Beginning a yoga class at the Center for Movement and Meditation with Eliza Beghè



Kathryn Gardner of Good Health Massage at the Center for Movement and Meditation



Tai Chi is offered by Betsey Foster at Stephens Memorial Hospital.

well as farm and forest lands for future generations. The trust was founded in 1987 and currently protects over 1,200 acres in the region through conservation easements and fee ownership for public benefit.

### A Calming Beauty

At a modest 4.5 acres in size, **McLaughlin Garden** in South Paris, a public garden and historic residence, also promises something for the immune system as visitors find calmness and serenity just off the beaten path. Also, as Director Michael Desplaines points out, gardens have always been fundamental to health. “Medicines are based on plants. Homeopathic remedies are all based in nature,” he said. “The garden is such a healing place. We have lost touch with that in our modern society.”

### Meditation, Movement and Massage

At the **Center for Movement and Meditation** in Norway, four practitioners of yoga and massage offer a different kind of healing through public classes and private sessions. The center has a large, open room overlooking Main Street for yoga and a small studio for massage. “We have the room for people to step into their own space,” says the Center’s founder and yoga instructor Eliza Beghè, who teaches a gentle form of Hatha yoga focusing on breathing and subtle movement.

Astanga yoga, offered at the Center by Chris Harris, is a highly energetic form of yoga that brings “clarity to the energy system, increases relaxation and reduces stress,” Harris states, adding “The benefits of yoga are pervasive, affecting every aspect of one’s life.”

Kathryn Gardner, a licensed massage therapist specializing in Swedish, sports and neuromuscular techniques, works at the center along with Lee Dassler, who practices Thai-Shiatsu massage when she isn’t managing the local land trust. “People who get regular massage get sick less and recover more quickly,” Gardner explains. “It increases circulation and helps the body receive nutrients more easily, while it wakes up the immune system, and removes waste from the soft tissue.” Dassler says her work helps keep vitality in the body, preventing it from shutting down and locking up its self-healing capacities. “It is an opportunity for us to listen to our body, and that is where the true healing is.”

In Norway at **Stephens Memorial Hospital** and in Paris at the **Northeast Academy of Dance**, Betsey Foster teaches weekly classes in another form of movement called Tai Chi, a slow, methodical Chinese movement art. Often regarded as a form of moving meditation, the art has been maintaining the physical and mental health of practitioners for centuries. Patients come recovering from brain trauma, muscular-skeletal injuries and heart disease.

“Tai Chi is gentle and works both sides of you equally,” Foster says. “It focuses on your joints, the bones, ligaments and tendons, and it utilizes the major muscle groups in your body... and in terms of cardiac rehabilitation, it’s been shown to lower blood pressure and increase respiratory capacity.” Tai Chi can improve strength, flexibility, balance, and help prevent falls, “And where it is a meditation, it also has a benefit to the immune response,” Foster adds.

### Beyond the Physical Body

To delve deeper into a philosophical and metaphysical sense of what health means, the **HOPE Center** in Paris offers a therapeutic experience for people who are struggling, often with life-threatening illnesses. The center is the vision of Dr. Ken Hamilton, a former surgeon at Stephens Memorial Hospital. In “guiding groups,” Hamilton poses questions to his clients such as “What do you dream of doing?” and “Where do you want your life to go?”

“It is focused on the soft side of an individual, her person—not her kidneys, her brains, her heart. This is what Hope does,” Hamilton said, “and in that way, it complements everything on the hard side, the scientific side of medicine.” Also offered at the center are acupuncture, massage, reiki and hypnotherapy.

Paula and Christopher Easton, of **Breathe In & Beyond** in Waterford, offer an exercise they call “breath work and intuitive healing.” “What the breath does is create openings for people to receive what they really desire in their life,” Paula Easton said. “It works on many levels,” Chris added. “It helps release emotions that you need to move, and works on a physical level to relieve stress.”

### Healthy People, Healthy Communities

Whether we are seeking out fresh nutritious food grown by our neighbors, slowing down to contemplate the natural beauty of our place, or seeking out restorative therapies and practices, all of this focus on self ripples outwards into the community and the environment itself.

“The natural world needs restoration, revitalization. We’ve cut down trees, put chemicals in the land. When we’re living here and being in balance ourselves, it helps all of it. Being whole ourselves helps us restore all of that,” Lee Dassler said. “Redirecting that out into the world, it’s got to start with each person.” Beghè affirmed. ■



Pennesseewassee Stream in Norway (both)

## HEALTH CARE DIRECTORY

### Assisted & Long Term Care

Ledgeview Living Center  
141 Bethel Road, West Paris, 207-674-2250

Maine Veterans’ Home  
477 High Street, South Paris, 207-743-6300

Market Square Health Care Center  
3 Market Square, South Paris, 207-743-7086

Norway Rehabilitation & Living Center  
24 Marion Avenue, Norway, 207-743-2632

### Child Health Care

Child Health Center  
199 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-7035

### Chiropractic

Knopp Chiropractic  
39 Paris Street, Norway, 207-743-2866

### Dentistry

Crossway Family Dental  
10 Market Square, South Paris, 207-743-8701

Oxford Hills Dental Associates  
232 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-8002

### Education/Community Service

American Red Cross  
524 Forest Avenue, Portland, 207-775-2367

American Cancer Society  
One Main Street, Topsham, 207-373-3700

Healthy Oxford Hills  
181 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-5933

### General Health

Western Maine Healthcare  
181 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-1562

### Health and Fitness Centers

Curves For Women  
179 Main Street, South Paris, 207-998-5589

Personal Best Health Club  
141 Western Avenue, South Paris, 207-739-2378

### Hearing Aids

Beltone Hearing Aid Care Center  
66 Paris Street, Norway, 207-743-8747

### Holistic & Complementary Health Care

Two Spirits Healing  
1122 Main Street, Sumner, 207-388-2741

### Home Health Care

Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice  
15 Strawberry Avenue, Lewiston, 800-244-9285

### Hospitals

Stephens Memorial Hospital  
181 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-5933

### Massage Therapy

Crescent Healing  
15 Crescent Street, Norway, 207-743-9159

Good Health Massage  
48 Hill Street, South Paris 207-890-7823

LisAnna’s Hair & Bodywork Studio  
7 Cottage Street, Norway, 207-743-2450

### Mental Health

Crooked River Counseling, PA  
28 Winter Street, Norway, 207-743-1677

Julie Ann Peterson, PA  
28 Winter Street, Norway, 207-890-8779

Medical Care Development  
PO Box 109, Norway, 207-743-6899

Richardson Hollow Associates, Inc.  
445 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-2756

Tri-County Mental Health Services  
143 Pottle Road, Otisfield, 207-743-7911

### Natural Foods & Supplements

Fare Share Market  
443 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-9044

### Optometry

Larry Farmer Optometrist  
PO Box 701, Norway, 207-743-7751

Tere Porter PA  
47 Paris Street, Norway, 207-743-6271

### Pharmacies

Hannaford Pharmacy  
1603 Main Street, Oxford, 207-743-2522

Ketner Pharmacy  
54 Fair Street, Norway, 207-743-8121

Wal-Mart Pharmacy  
1240 Main Street, Oxford, 207-743-0882

### Physical Therapy

Richard Bader  
374 Main Street, Norway, 207-743-5493

### Physicians

Oxford Hills Family Practice  
34 Winter Street, Norway, 207-743-8031

Oxford Hills Internal Medicine Group  
193 Main St., Ste. 1, Norway, 207-743-7721

### Support Services

HOPE, Healing of Persons Exceptional  
PO Box 276, South Paris, 207-743-9373

### Wellness Products

Integrated Wellness  
1 Churchill Road, West Paris, 207-674-2689

Reliv  
1 Chipman Avenue, South Paris, 207-743-6715

### Women’s Health/Midwifery

Blue Moon Midwives  
176 Main Street, Norway, 207-739-2800