

Optimum Health Institute Newsletter

Connecting the OHI Community | FALL 2024



Strengthening Community Bonds during the Holidays

"Getting together and enjoying fellowship is the heart and soul of creating events that unite people."

— Bob Nees, Jr., p1

OHI San Diego Guests: Kirsten Burris, Barbara Yanari, and Lanie Burris



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CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

BOB NEES, JR., SENIOR PASTOR

Greetings OHI community. Mmm... the season is changing - can you feel it in the air? The rich colors, warm sweaters, harvest fruits and vegetables. The heat of summer is waning as the cooler temps beckon us to walk among the autumn leaves and gather around a backyard fire pit with friends and family. And, before we know it, the holidays will be here.

Strengthening Community Bonds during the Holidays

You may recall from our summer newsletter, I continued our theme of Unity and wrote about the supportive culture that is woven throughout our OHI for Life Body-Mind-Spirit program, and how our classes and activities create a powerful sense of belonging in the OHI community. We looked at how Unity fosters cooperation among people and develops a sense of responsibility and commitment to one another that enables the resolution of challenges and opportunities. In this issue I will focus on how holidays and celebration unite people and strengthen the bonds between them.

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." **Romans 12:10**

I offer this verse because the last four years of Covid derailed the momentum of holiday festivities and family traditions. The lockdown discouraged gatherings, leading to disconnection and a loss of the joy in coming together. Warm hugs and handshakes were replaced by cautious fist bumps, lacking genuine affection. The pandemic affected our holiday get-togethers. Thanksgiving and Christmas used to unite us, and now it is time for us to bring that back. Let's explore how we can restore these traditions and their importance.

How the Holidays Help to Unify Us

Celebration is universal across all cultures. Getting together and enjoying fellowship is the heart and soul of creating events that unite people. Look around the world, there are many well known events that attract thousands to revel, dance, socialize, eat, drink, and be merry.

In Thailand there's the Yi Peng Lantern Festival which fills the night sky with floating glowing objects. The Holi Festival in India is a vibrant celebration where people joyfully throw colored powders at each other to welcome the arrival of spring. Carnival is in Venice, Italy and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There's Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany and the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, Spain. And in the US, we celebrate Mardi Gras, Austin City Limits, and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. These are just a handful of celebrations that take place across the globe.

Each of these celebrations reflect the celebrants' values and plays an important part in the local culture. Many

of these cultural traditions center on the family or the community. And, we love to celebrate them with each other because we all share the common heritage of a deep human need for connection and belonging.

"Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." **1 Corinthians 5:8**

The United States has been called the "Melting Pot" because we have people from many different backgrounds and cultures; and yet despite all our variety there are still American traditions and customs that unite us as human beings. There is Independence Day, Labor Day, and of course Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is not just about gathering for a meal. It is one of our most important holidays because it focuses on expressing our appreciation. Research has shown that regularly practicing gratitude increases our happiness and promotes good mental health. Gathering with family and friends stimulates positive emotions, and heightens self-esteem. But when we focus on appreciating the people in our lives, and letting them know how important they are to us, it improves our relationship with them.

Holiday Celebrations & Travel Improve Mental Health

According to clinical psychologist Crystal Schiller, PhD. at the University of North Carolina, "Research shows that connecting with other people and performing rituals and traditions can be hugely beneficial for your mental health. The key is to think about what brings you the most joy and meaning during the holiday season and prioritize those things."

Today's hectic lifestyles need an occasional break. Holidays that include travel have many mental health benefits. Research shows that vacationing during the holidays increases our mental acuity and perceptiveness. When we are doing things we enjoy it decreases stress because we are no longer thinking about all the obligations and responsibilities we have in our day-to-day lives. According to Family Holiday Charity, "Scientists from the Icahn School of Medicine, University of California and Harvard found that just six days away triggers genetic changes which dampens stress, boosts the immune system and lowers levels of proteins linked to dementia and depression."

Holiday travel also boosts our ingenuity and stimulates personal growth. Whenever you experience something new it opens new neural pathways - the electrical connections - between the brain cells. In other words, you have expanded your thinking ability and your store of knowledge - both of which empower you to be more creative. With OHI's 42 classes and activities, you are sure to stimulate your mind.

Spend the Holidays at OHI

A retreat at OHI for the holidays will allow you to relax, refresh, and restore. The moment you make your reservations you'll begin to enjoy the mental benefits because the excitement of looking forward to a vacation stimulates the process of resetting your state of consciousness. And those feelings continue long after your visit especially when you keep in touch with the friends you make. Many of the relationships made at OHI have been known to last a lifetime.

"Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."
Hebrews 13:1-2

"Come and recharge your unity batteries with us. Celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year at OHI with our community of caring people who truly understand you and your health goals. Our table is always open."

We Are Celebrating Our 48th Anniversary

In the mid-1970s, my parents, Bob and Pam Nees, were introduced to Raychel Solomon by my uncle, Reverend Russell Nees. They discovered a shared passion for the healing power of a raw plant-based diet, which Raychel learned from Ann Wigmore at the Hippocrates Institute. My mother, a registered nurse, recognized its potential, while my father offered his organizational expertise to help realize that vision. This September 19th marks 48 years since they united to establish the Optimum Health Institute, believing in the interconnected healing of body, mind, and spirit. Join us in celebrating this milestone and experience the welcoming community that brings many back to OHI year after year.

What's New at OHI

This past year, we have been busy making enhancements to our program and facilities in both of our locations. We have introduced pricing programs for guests who stay three or more weeks, as well as a rewards program for guests who refer their friends.

In Austin, we have re-roofed the main building, replaced windows, refinished bathtubs, and restored the hardwood floors in our guestrooms. Also, our beloved facilitators, Sheryl Haupt and Danielle Demko, will return on a regular basis to teach classes.

In San Diego, we have refurbished the furniture, spa, and decks in the Courtyard, painted building exteriors, installed new planters and irrigations systems in our organic garden, and refurbished the Courtyard guestrooms. Additionally, Danielle Demko has returned to OHI San Diego on a permanent basis and Sheryl Haupt and Peg Harvey will return periodically to teach classes.

These are just a few of the exciting improvements we've made at OHI, and we can't wait for you to come and experience them firsthand!

Come to OHI this Fall

Find your bliss and rejuvenate this fall in the peaceful relaxed atmosphere at one of our campuses. Our classes and activities are here to help you reset and revitalize your body, mind, and spirit. Schedule today, and experience for yourself the unifying culture at OHI.

Inside this edition: Read further about the science behind celebration and seven tips for a healthier spine. Get to know staff member, Jaylan Ali; OHI San Diego missionary, Robin Turk; OHI three generations of guests, Lanie Burris, Kirsten Burris, and Barbara Yanari; and how an OHI Scholarship helped Glenn Birchall find hope at OHI. We remain humbled and grateful to all those who contribute and help people like Glenn. Please also consider contributing to the OHI Scholarship Fund which helps OHI community members in need. And finally, be sure to turn to page 10 for details on your Thanksgiving Savings.

Here's wishing you health and wellness in this fall season.

Yours in prayer,



Robert P. Nees, Jr.
Senior Pastor and Chairman
Optimum Health Institute of San Diego and Austin



Stay Connected with OHI

Stay connected with the OHI Community on our social medial platforms!

- Facebook: **OptimumHealthInstitute**
- Instagram: **@optimumhealthinstitute**
- YouTube: **@OptimumHealthInst**

How Celebrations Enhance Our Lives!



Celebrating is far more than just a momentary indulgence; it is a powerful practice with significant psychological, physiological, and social benefits.

In a world often dominated by stress, deadlines, and the relentless march of daily routines, the act of celebrating might seem like a mere frivolity. Yet, celebrating — whether it's a personal achievement, a communal milestone, or even a simple moment of joy — plays a crucial role in our well-being. The act of celebrating isn't just about reveling in success; it has profound psychological, physiological, and social benefits. Let's delve into the science behind why celebrating is so powerful and how it impacts our lives.

The Psychological Impact of Celebrating

Celebrations are more than just festive activities; they are powerful psychological tools that contribute to positive mental health. One of the most significant psychological benefits of celebrating is its ability to reinforce positive behavior and achievements. According to behavioral psychology, acknowledging and celebrating achievements, no matter how small, strengthens the connection between positive behavior and reward. This process is known as positive reinforcement, which helps to create a cycle of motivation and satisfaction.

When we celebrate, our brain releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. Dopamine helps to cement the experience of achievement in our memory, making it more likely that we will repeat the behavior in the future. This is why celebrating personal milestones, whether it's completing a project or reaching a personal goal, can be so effective in encouraging continued effort and perseverance.

Additionally, celebrating can help to counteract negative

emotions and stress. The act of celebrating creates a mental space for joy and relaxation, helping to shift focus away from worries and anxieties. This shift in focus is crucial, as it helps to reduce the effects of chronic stress on our mental health. Regular celebrations, even of minor achievements, can act as a buffer against burnout and depression, promoting a more positive outlook on life.

The Physiological Benefits of Celebrating

The physical effects of celebrating are just as significant as the psychological ones. When we engage in celebratory activities, our body responds with a range of physiological changes that contribute to overall well-being. One of the key physiological responses is the release of endorphins and serotonin, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain, while serotonin is a neurotransmitter that will elevate your mood. Endorphins are often released during activities that bring us joy and laughter, such as dancing, laughing with friends, or participating in festive events.

Endorphins not only help to alleviate pain, they also promote a sense of euphoria which decreases the effect of stress hormones and that is particularly beneficial in counteracting the physical effects of stress. Chronic stress is known to contribute to a range of health issues, including cardiovascular problems and weakened immune function. The scientific benefits of stress reduction are well-documented, and include improved cognitive performance, better physical health, and reduced burnout. By celebrating

and engaging in joyful activities, we can help mitigate the negative effects of stress, boost the immune system, and promote better overall health.

The Social Significance of Celebrating

Celebratory activities frequently involve social interactions. From family gatherings to public festivals, community celebrations provide opportunities for individuals to connect, share experiences, and build relationships. These social interactions are vital for emotional support and can help to create a sense of belonging and community.

Socializing with others can lead to the release of oxytocin, sometimes called the “love hormone.” Oxytocin is associated with feelings of bonding and trust, and its release can enhance our sense of connection and emotional security. This social bonding is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships and fostering a supportive social network, which in turn contributes to overall well-being.

In communal settings, celebrations can serve as a unifying force, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to share in a common experience. This sense of unity can promote social cohesion and contribute to a more harmonious and supportive society. Additionally, celebrating collectively can reinforce cultural traditions and values, helping to preserve and pass on cultural heritage.

The social benefits of celebrating extend to individual relationships as well. Sharing in celebrations with friends and family can strengthen personal bonds and create lasting memories. These shared experiences help to build trust and intimacy, which are essential for maintaining healthy and fulfilling relationships.

The Role of Celebrating in Personal Growth and Development

Celebrating is not just about enjoying the moment; it also plays a role in personal growth and development. Recognizing and celebrating achievements helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem. When we acknowledge our successes, it increases our resilience and reaffirms our capabilities and reinforces our belief in our ability to achieve future goals.

Celebrating milestones also encourages reflection and self-assessment. By taking time to celebrate our achievements, we can evaluate our progress, recognize areas for improvement, and set new goals. This reflective process is essential for personal growth and helps to ensure that we continue to strive for success and self-improvement.

Celebrations can also provide valuable opportunities for learning and development. For example, organizing and participating in celebratory events often involves planning, coordination, and problem-solving. These skills are transferable and can contribute to personal and professional growth. Additionally, the feedback and support received during celebrations can provide valuable insights and motivation for future endeavors.



Practical Tips for Incorporating Celebrations into Daily Life

Given the numerous benefits of celebrating, it's important to find ways to incorporate celebrations into our daily lives. Here are some practical tips for making celebration a regular part of your routine:

1. **Celebrate Small Wins:** Don't wait for major achievements to celebrate. Recognize and celebrate small accomplishments along the way.
2. **Create Personal Rituals:** Develop personal rituals or traditions that mark special moments or achievements. Whether it's a special meal, a favorite activity, or a simple pause for reflection, personal rituals can add meaning and significance to your celebrations.
3. **Involve Others:** Share your celebrations with friends, family, or colleagues. Celebrating with others enhances the social benefits and strengthens relationships.
4. **Be Mindful:** Take time to be present and fully engage in the celebration. Mindfulness can enhance the emotional and psychological benefits of the experience.
5. **Express Gratitude:** Use celebrations as an opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation. Acknowledging the support and contributions of others can strengthen relationships and enhance your sense of community.

Celebrations Make Life BETTER!

Celebrating is far more than just a momentary indulgence; it is a powerful practice with significant psychological, physiological, and social benefits. From reinforcing positive behavior and reducing stress to enhancing social bonds and promoting personal growth, the act of celebrating plays a crucial role in our well-being. At OHI, there are many opportunities to celebrate. Our You Validation class celebrates everyone's intrinsic human value. Our Friday Morning Testimonials is a heartwarming gathering where guests share the personal revelations they experienced at OHI. And our most lively celebration, Friday Night Live, gives everyone the chance to let go and sing, dance, laugh, and experience the simple joy of being among friends.

One of the best ways to foster a sense of joy and celebration is with a wellness retreat at OHI. Our wellness retreats give you the time and education you need to implement meaningful change in your life. **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**

7 Tips for a Healthier Spine

The spine is a marvel of biological engineering, supporting the entire body and facilitating movement. Comprised of 33 vertebrae, intervertebral discs, muscles, and ligaments, the spine is crucial for maintaining posture, enabling flexibility, and protecting the spinal cord. Let's explore why spinal health is important, the benefits maintaining good spinal health, and 7 tips to achieve a healthier spine.

Why Spinal Health Matters

Everyone wants to enjoy a life of long-term strength and mobility, and a healthy spine is an essential contributor to that:

- **Support and Stability:** The spine is the body's central support structure, bearing the weight of the head, torso, and upper limbs. It maintains balance and stability, allowing us to move efficiently.
- **Nerve Protection:** The spinal cord is a conduit for nerve signals between the brain and the rest of the body. Healthy vertebrae and discs protect the spinal cord from injury and ensure smooth transmission of nerve impulses.
- **Pain Prevention:** Regular exercise and good posture can prevent and alleviate back pain or conditions like herniated discs or sciatica.
- **Movement and Flexibility:** The spine enable a wide range of movement. Flexibility and strength in the spinal column are crucial for performing daily activities and avoiding injury.
- **Posture and Alignment:** Good spinal health contributes to proper posture. Poor posture can lead to back pain, spinal deformities, or problems with internal organs due to compressed space.
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** A healthy spine allows for more freedom of movement, reduces the risk of chronic pain, and supports overall physical health.

7 Tips to Maintain a Healthy Spine

Maintaining bone health and strengthening the muscles around your spine is key to preventing chronic pain, injuries, and conditions like osteoporosis and degenerative disc disease:

1. **Exercise Regularly:** Incorporate exercise that strengthen the core muscles, which support the spine — planks, bridges, and abdominal crunches. Swimming, yoga, and Pilates also enhance flexibility and strengthen spinal support.
2. **Practice Good Posture:** Maintain a neutral spine position when sitting, standing, or sleeping. Avoid slouching, and keep your head aligned over your pelvis



with your shoulders back. When sitting, ensure your back is well-supported, and your feet are flat on the floor.

3. **Lift Properly:** Use your legs, not your back, when lifting heavy objects. Bend at the knees, keep the object close to your body, and lift with your legs while keeping your back straight. Avoid twisting while lifting.
4. **Stay Hydrated and Eat Well:** Foods rich in calcium (dairy and leafy greens) and vitamin D (fatty fish) are crucial for bone health. Drinking water helps maintain the hydration of intervertebral discs, which can prevent disc degeneration.
5. **Use Ergonomic Furniture:** Invest in ergonomic chairs and workstations to support proper posture and reduce strain on the spine.
6. **Avoid Prolonged Sitting:** Take regular breaks from sitting. Stand up, stretch, and walk around periodically to reduce spinal pressure and promote circulation.
7. **Manage Stress:** Stress can lead to muscle tension, particularly in the back and neck. Practice stress-relief techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation to reduce spinal tension.

The spine is literally the backbone of good health, long-term strength, and mobility. Maintaining bone health and strengthening the muscles around your spine is key to preventing chronic pain, injuries, and conditions like osteoporosis and degenerative disc disease. OHI offers several classes that contribute to a healthy spine: Lymphatic Exercise (contributes to the healing process), Stretch (increases circulation and improves flexibility), and Vocal Toning (reestablishes a natural flow of energy through your body). By prioritizing spine health, you can enhance your overall quality of life, prevent pain and injuries, and maintain mobility and independence as you age.

Nurture your body, mind, and spirit with kindness with a wellness retreat at OHI San Diego or OHI Austin – **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**



Lanie Burris,
Kirsten Burris,
and Barbara
Yanari

It's a Family Affair — 3 Generations Visit OHI!

When someone in her family has a health opportunity, Barbara Yanari knows OHI is the place to turn to. “Over the last 30 years, OHI has been a resource I can trust,” said Barbara. “30 years ago, my mother had terrible eczema, and doctors couldn’t get it under control. I can’t remember who told me about OHI, but we were at our wits end, so I brought her there. The staff made poultices out of wheatgrass and applied them all over her body. That completely cured her eczema, and my mother was so grateful for the relief. 25 years ago, I found lumps in my neck and was diagnosed with stage 4 non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. I went straight to OHI. The detox was helpful, but what really set me on the path to recovery was the guided meditation. I did that 3x a day, and within three months the lumps were gone. So, when my granddaughter, Lanie, started having severe digestive issues, I suggested a trip to OHI. My daughter, Kirsten, also wanted to come and support Lanie, so the three of us booked a 1-week stay.”

“I had serious IBS issues,” said Lanie Burris (granddaughter). “Rose, the colonics tech, was the one who told me that my health opportunity stemmed from a complete lack of digestive enzymes in my gut. My diet was already pretty healthy, so she told me to start taking probiotics for better gut health, and my IBS has completely resolved. I learned so much from the Food Pairings class, and that has helped with my digestion and gut health, as well. And my stay at OHI helped break me of my addiction to carbonated drinks, which has also tremendously improved my gut health. I quit smoking a year ago, and the carbonated drinks helped break my nicotine addiction, but it was the detox cleanse that showed me how bad the carbonation was for my body. The detox was hard, but it was worth it.”

“Not many 82-year-old grandmothers would fast for two days just to support their granddaughter,” laughed Lanie. “My mom and grandmother are great! I’m lucky to have them, and I’m lucky OHI helped get me on the path to better health. Thank you OHI!”

“When the three of us decided to go to OHI, I thought about what my intention was going to be for the stay,” said Kirsten Burris (mother). “My daughter had a health opportunity she was focusing on. My mother was there as our guide since she’d been to OHI twice before. I didn’t have a health opportunity I was focusing on, but I did have an emotional trauma I wanted to heal. I had been very close with my mother-in-law, but two years before she passed, she and I had a falling out. I wanted to come to peace with the loss of that relationship and find it in my heart to forgive her. I went to the Mental Detox class, and we did a guided meditation. The facilitator, had us connect with our inner child and reach out to find a belief that was holding us back. I could suddenly see myself going back and picking up a piece of my soul that I had left behind. I realized that I was holding onto a belief that if I said something people didn’t agree with, then they would reject and abandon me. As I came out of the meditation, I was so emotional. I spoke with the facilitator afterward and explained that I had once expressed concerns to my mother-in-law, and she wouldn’t address them. That left me feeling rejected and abandoned by her. It took that guided meditation for me to understand that I had been holding on to the pain of that rejection for years. Afterward, I went to the chapel and wrote my mother-in-law a letter forgiving her, and it felt like a weight was lifted from my shoulders. It was a profound moment of healing for me, and I am so grateful to OHI for leading me to it.”

Beyond their personal moments of healing, this grandmother/mother/daughter were grateful for the memories of their stay. “We went in the hot tub together every day,” said Barbara (grandmother). “We had the best talks and a lot of laughs. It was wonderful to get to spend time together with just the three of us.”

“I’ve recommended OHI to so many friends,” said Kirsten (mother). “I’ll admit that it’s not easy to detox, but it became a bonding experience for us! And we are overjoyed that Lanie has been able to see such a tremendous improvement in her gut health. She put in the hard work to get herself better, but it was OHI that pointed her toward a solution that really worked.”

Get to Know OHI Missionary, Robin Turk

Over the years, Robin Turk has found OHI San Diego to feel like a second home to her. “I first learned about OHI when I was 21 years old,” said Robin. “I was having a lot of health issues, and I learned about OHI’s raw vegan program through my macrobiotic studies. Over the years I have returned to OHI several times, and I even brought my daughter, mother, and grandmother with me for several trips. My most recent stay was at the end of 2023. I was having health issues related to the high stress of my career that was taxing my immune system and adrenals. My doctor wanted to manage my health through pharmaceuticals, but I knew that wasn’t the right path for me. I went to OHI for a 2-week stay for a mind-body reset, and then applied to the missionary program. I spent three months at OHI, and it was exactly what I needed. I have stopped taking all medications, and my neuropathy is virtually gone. I feel 30-years younger, and I know I’ve reset this next chapter of my life to be more vibrant. I always knew the power of the raw vegan diet, but three months of clean eating showed me how completely my body can heal when given the right fuel. It was amazing.”

Robin Turk



Robin found the missionary program changed her approach to her own healing. “When you go to OHI as a guest, you set your intention for your stay,” said Robin. “Whether that intention is to heal your body, heal from an emotional trauma, or deepen your spiritual connection to God, most people come to OHI with expectations. When I started working as a missionary, suddenly my focus wasn’t on myself. I needed to devote my time in service to others. Just being present for guests helped me heal in so many ways, because it forced me to let go of my own agenda and fears. By flipping my priorities and making others the focus, this beautiful feeling of calm came over me. And that’s when I realized that the calm was there all along. I just had to be open to it. At age 61, I know the next chapter of my life is going to be all about service to others.”

Robin took the opportunity to dive deeper into her education while a missionary. “I have taken some classes at least ten or fifteen times,” said Robin. “I always leave the Vocal Toning class feeling like a new person. And the Digestion and Elimination classes are packed with great information. No matter how many times I take them, I always learn something new about how the body works and

how it reacts to food. I look at food totally differently now. I can honestly feel the energy of the food I eat. It makes such a difference to infuse my body with active nutrition from live food. And just knowing where the food is grown and how its handled has entirely changed the way I eat. Now

I only eat what is locally grown and in season. I used to avoid sprouts, but now my body craves them. When I’m traveling, I will only eat raw hummus, sprouts, beans, and organic produce. Overall, I eat a lot less, and my body feels better for it. During my missionary

program I lost 35 pounds, and without all the inflammation and toxins in my body, I now have naturally high energy. I’ve learned so much during my time as a missionary, but I know I still have so much more to learn.”

Robin had such a profound experience as a missionary, that she is planning to do it again soon. “Over the years I have always gone to the San Diego campus as a guest as well as a missionary,” said Robin. “Next, I would like to spend three months as a missionary at Austin and then another three months as a missionary at San Diego. I think six months as a missionary would give me an even greater opportunity to work in service to others. Not only would I like to connect with guests, but I would also like to tackle big projects. I would like to rebuild the herb and veggie gardens at San Diego. I enjoy gardening, and I think many other guests would find it healing to work in the garden as part of their stay.”

Thinking about applying for OHI’s Missionary Program? **Call us today (800) 993-4325.**

OHI Scholarship Recipient, Glenn Birchall, Made the Trip from Australia to Visit OHI

Glenn Birchall was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma in November 2023. "I did radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy, but by April 2024 my cancer had metastasized throughout my body as Stage 4," said Glenn. "My oncologist gave me a 10% chance to live. My cousin, Josie Gillan, had been to OHI during her breast cancer journey, and she told me about the scholarship program. I was fortunate to be awarded a scholarship, and an 18+ hour flight later, here I am. I was a wreck when I arrived, but Josie helped me through the first week. What's really impressed me about OHI is the sense of community here. The staff, the missionaries, and the guests are all so giving and supportive. The personal stories that people share, and the love they receive in return, is quite powerful. This is what I traveled halfway around the world to be a part of."

Prior to arriving at OHI, Glenn had put in the hard work to change his thinking. "After my Stage 4 diagnosis, I had about five days of total depression," said Glenn. "Then I worked diligently with a therapist to get myself into a space of love and acceptance. I now understand how my thoughts and underlying attitude play a pivotal role in my wellbeing. I've let go of all my cynicism and arrogance. I'm thankful I had developed enough self-awareness to grasp the OHI program and immediately embrace it whole-heartedly."

While the power of wheatgrass is undeniable, Glenn has

found the hugs given out at OHI to be just as powerful. "The hugs that I have received from people I don't even know have created such a strong emotional bond in me," said Glenn. "The love that fills this community has opened my heart even more than it already was. I want to thank OHI for the scholarship. It has been truly life changing. I hope other scholarship recipients find the program to be as meaningful as I have. And I also want to thank my cousin, Josie. She has been my support and my advocate, and I am just so grateful for her presence in my life."



Glenn Birchall

Share the Love, Share the Feeling, Share the Gift of Healing

Please consider contributing to the OHI Scholarship Fund to help those in need experience the benefits of the OHI for Life program. Over the course of our 48 years, OHI has provided scholarships to individuals who could not afford to otherwise attend. In most years, we have been able to fulfill all requests for assistance through the generosity of our community. OHI invites you to join with us in celebrating our healing mission with a tax-deductible gift. Your contribution will help to make our community stronger, healthier, and more vibrant. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Provide the Gift of Healing today by supporting the OHI Scholarship Fund with a **tax-deductible one-time donation, or sustainable monthly contribution.**

Optimum Health Institute is a non-profit, religious organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

Share the Gift of Healing



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Meet OHI San Diego Staff Member, Jaylan Ali

Jaylan Ali wanted a change in her career, and OHI seemed like the new beginning she was looking for. “I had worked as a restaurant general manager for years,” said Jaylan. “It was unfulfilling. The customers were always angry, and the staff would come and go. I wanted more for myself, where I could build relationships with guests and co-workers. I have found all of that and more here at OHI.”

Jaylan started as the Assistant Kitchen Manager in February 2023. “As Assistant Kitchen Manager, I help supervise the staff (6 people) and missionaries (9 people),” said Jaylan. “We prepare the raw, vegan food for guests, as well as the wheatgrass juice detox. I consider myself to be a bit shy, but when I started talking to the guests about the food, the programming, and the experience of OHI, I really came out of my shell. I like the connection I feel here. It’s so peaceful. Everyone comes to OHI with different expectations and various health opportunities, but at the end of the day everyone wants to heal their body, mind, and spirit. It’s that connection that I build with guests that heals my soul.”

In 2024, Jaylan has taken on three additional roles at OHI, in addition to her role as Assistant Kitchen Manager. “I took on the responsibility of Greenhouse Manager,” said Jaylan. “I had never grown wheatgrass or sprouts before, but I have gardened my whole life, so I took to it very quickly. I plant, cut, and harvest the wheatgrass and sprouts for our guests. I also took on the role of Facilitator for our food classes. I teach Fermented Food, Dehydrated Food, Sprouting, and Growing Wheatgrass. I love teaching all of them, but my favorite is teaching the Growing Wheatgrass class. It’s the opportunity for guests to get their hands dirty and learn how to nurture a plant. Guests are surprised to find how easy it is to grow their own wheatgrass even without a greenhouse. They are always so proud when they can juice the wheatgrass they grew themselves. They feel a real sense of accomplishment. And my other role is Night Manager, where I respond to any guest requests from 9p – 7a. I live in the apartments that house our missionary staff, so I’m right on campus and am available to assist guests whenever needed. Living on the OHI campus is such a wonderful experience. It’s so quiet and peaceful here, and it’s exactly the tone I want to set in my life.”

Jaylan finds her many roles provide her life with a welcome balance. “My role in the kitchen builds on my lifelong experience in the restaurant industry,” said Jaylan. “My role as facilitator gives me meaningful opportunities to interact with guests, and I really appreciate that connection. And the time spent in the greenhouse is just pure relaxation for me. It is so satisfying to harvest the wheatgrass and sprouts as I soak up all the sunshine in the lovely quiet. Working in the greenhouse and going to the beach are really my own private ways of connecting with spirit. I also journal a lot. That has really helped me forge a more spiritual life for myself as an adult.”

Jaylan loves coffee and was curious if a wheatgrass detox could help with her caffeine addiction. “I had never been able to break my caffeine addiction because I would get a migraine every time I stopped drinking coffee,” said Jaylan. “I drank wheatgrass juice every morning and



Jaylan Ali

afternoon for a week and was able to maintain high energy without any headaches. I am a true believer in the power of wheatgrass!”

“I love my job, I love my co-workers, and I love the guests here. I am a better person for coming to OHI, and you will be, too.”

The days at OHI go by quickly for Jaylan, but each week she most looks forward to meeting new guests. “It’s so interesting to learn what brings them to OHI, and what their goals are for their stay,” said Jaylan. “And the changes you see in them as they go through detox are amazing. As their bodies release toxins, you can see a calm come over them. It’s really beautiful.”

Jaylan has simple advice for guests coming to OHI for the first time. “Have faith in yourself and in the program,” said Jaylan. “Just take it day by day. You will be amazed to see how your body improves and how calm and open-minded you will feel. To follow my own advice, I had the word ‘Faith’ tattooed on my arm because I always want to remember to have faith in myself. I had faith that applying to work at OHI would be a good choice for me, and it has literally changed my life.”

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Fall 2024



Visit Us: Sunday Open House

Visit our weekly Open House every Sunday starting at 4:00 p.m. in San Diego and Austin. The OHI Program offers visitors, guests and adherents a personal tour of the facility, lecture, prayer circle and an all-raw plant-based meal. A \$5 donation at OHI San Diego and \$7 donation at OHI Austin is appreciated, but not required.

Contact Us: (800) 993-4325

We'd love to hear from you. To receive special offers and updates, email us at newsletter@optimumhealth.org or call us at (800) 993-4325. For more information about the OHI for Life Body-Mind-Spirit Program, please visit our website at www.optimumhealth.org

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Spend Thanksgiving at OHI

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Our Mission

We serve as a change agent for holistic healing by creating a safe and sacred space.

Core Values

Holism, Generosity, Relationship, Life-Long Learning, Stewardship, and Service.

Guiding Principles

Trustworthiness, Respect, Empowerment, and Alignment.