



## Redefining Patriotism

By Adeena Reitberger

It's the week after July 4th, but by walking through the streets in the Washington, DC Metro area you would have no idea just what had taken place — the parades are over, our stomachs have recovered from their fill at barbecues and picnics, and the embers of fireworks have disintegrated into the dust. Instead of reading news stories about the celebration of our independence we are back to our regularly scheduled programming — the Iraq War, Bush vs. Kerry, the USA PATRIOT Act, and the White House-backed Constitutional amendment to bar same-sex marriages. July 4th has passed, and it's a few months before the November elections, and now, instead of focusing on our commonalities we grab fiercely onto the reins of our ideologies and race forward hoping that we, as individual emissaries, prevail.

It's hard to remember that just a week ago Americans of every political denomination and every ideology were sitting side by side on the Mall in Washington, or on the hill at the Takoma Park Middle School celebrating what holds them all together, their patriotism.

What does it mean, patriotism, this word that has the ability to unite people of all denominations and beliefs?

### Different Voices, Different Views

In the bulk section of the Takoma Park store, Ama Ahatsi explains her definition of patriotism as "belief in a country, what it is, what it does."

Shopper Kt Moore focuses more on the support of a country's values. "Patriotism is supporting the ideals of a country," Kt says. "With an emphasis on the ideals and not actions."

George James takes a personal spin on patriotism, stating, "Patriotism is standing up for what

I know to be right, regardless of what the media or anyone else is telling me."

In the bulk section Misun Dokko explains that she values patriotism as "the ability to be critical of a nation in order to make it better. It's acknowledging good things and problems."

Shopper James Reichard defines patriotism as "blind nationalism." When I ask him what he means, he clarifies that that is how he thinks some Americans act. He goes on to explain, "I think patriotism is expressing solidarity with every person." And Reichard doesn't mean only people in the United States, but people all around the world.

And there are still other people, like Nathan Graves, who sits with me on the ledge of the grab-n-go to discuss patriotism, who are even more bothered by the word. In explaining his view of patriotism Graves quotes Samuel Johnson, stating, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." When I ask Graves what he means, he continues, "If there is no principle or morality behind [patriotism] we should be damned."

### Patriotism in Practice

So what does this all mean, or more importantly, how do all these forms of patriotism fit into people's lives?

When I ask Ahatsi if she was patriotic, she looks at me with confidence and says, "Yes. I love this country. I was born in it and I am pleased with the president. I support the men and women at war and I pray for them every day. I pray for the president and pray for the country." Ahatsi is the only person I encounter

who seems completely satisfied with patriotism and the government.

Reichard, on the other hand, voices a concern similar to many other people I interview, saying, "The word *patriotism* now has connotations in this country. For example, the 'you are with us or you are against us' mob mentality." When I ask him if he was patriotic Reichard answers, "I wouldn't use that word, no, because of all the connotations it has."

The Marston family — mother Julia and children Grace and Peirce — all have a lot to say about patriotism. When asked to define patriotism, Julia explains, "I think its pride in the ideals of your country." And when asked if she was patriotic, Julia explains, "Yes, but not at the exclusion of other countries. I don't feel like the United States is better than anyone else."

Julia stresses that she is pro-American ideals, but that she feels the country's actions don't always reflect them. She states, "It's embarrassing to be an American when the government makes poor global decisions. We didn't take global opinions into consideration [with the Iraq war]. We basically told the world, 'f\*\*k you, we are going to do whatever we want.'"

Grace and Peirce both feel removed from patriotism. "I don't make an effort to be patriotic or pro-America," Grace explains as she stands attentively next to her mother in a black bathing suit and blue jean shorts. "I am not interested in government and politics but more in local stuff." Peirce nods along in agreement and adds, "I don't think it's that interesting or important."

TPSS employee Nathaniel Zeigler also expresses his concern with patriotism, "I feel pride in the tenets of our country," he explains. "But, not in relation to many things going on in this

country, like the separation of church and state and the Iraq war."

Freddie Rohner, a cashier at TPSS agrees, "I'm patriotic in ways that I believe that everyone should be free and participate in their government. But I don't agree with the way things are going now, and the way the people at the top of the government are making decisions for us."

Just as Rohner finishes his sentence, an unidentified man walks by and quickly adds, "I second that."

The only person who I encounter who feels absolutely no semblance of patriotism at this moment is Graves. When I ask him to explain, he looked me in the eye and said in a stern voice, "We f\*\*ked the Afghans so royally. Iraq had nothing to do with anything. We've wasted billions of dollars, killed people. The Muslim world hates us. Let's hope they all don't hate us. Today patriotism is imperialism, political and cultural." Graves pauses for a moment before concluding, "I am very upset with the present administration."

Every individual has their own definition of patriotism, and likewise, patriotism fits into individual's lives in different ways. As I walk through the store, I can't find anyone besides Ama Ahatsi who has absolutely no doubts about their patriotism and the current status of the United States. Perhaps I'm not looking hard enough, or maybe it is because Maryland is a Democratic state, or as young Grace Marston put it, "Takoma Park always votes Democratic."

### A Common Thread

So as we look into the future, a few months shy of Election Day and every moment farther into our lives as Americans, what kinds of advice do our less-than-über-patriotic Americans have to offer?

George James looked at me and explains, "America has a destiny, whether we like it or not, to make sure this world is balanced and everyone is having their needs met."

As Janet Jackson scans the supplements, she takes a similar approach, "We need to care for others in spite of what's going on," she said. "Stand up for the founding ideals of our country."

Freddie Rohner agrees and takes it one step further, "We need to get back to the roots of our government and get back to the idealistic view that everyone does make a difference."

Rogan Hersh, a professor at Syracuse University and a temporary D.C. resident, suggests a similar initiative, saying, "Individuals need to participate in their own governments, which means beginning to understand where you think the government is out of line with the country's ideals."

With all these definitions of patriotism, mixed feelings, and different approaches to action, what do all these Americans have in common?

Whether or not they like this classification, Steve Marusich, a Beltsville, MD resident and Alabama native has the answer. According to Marusich, "Patriotism is standing up for this country. It can be through military service, or the person protesting the government." In other words, by Marusich's terms, all of these people — satisfied, happy, angry, concerned, embarrassed or just plain pissed — are, by definition "patriotic." ●



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## REPORT

## 2004 Consumer Cooperative Management Association Conference

By Larry Haller, Board President

Three TPSS co-op board members attended the 48th annual Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota on June 10 through 12. The CCMA conference gathers food co-op staff, board members, and others interested in the cooperative model of running businesses from across North America to attend workshops, exchange ideas, and network with like-minded people. More than 500 people attended this year's conference, about 150 more than have ever attended previously.

The conference started with bus tours of co-ops in the Twin Cities area, home to more food co-ops than any other area in the country. The tours covered a wide variety of co-ops, ranging in size from very small (similar in size to our Silver Spring store) to stores much larger than our Takoma Park store. One tour even

featured a wine-making cooperative owned by grape producers! The retail stores were all very impressive, clean and well stocked. But none that I saw were able to generate nearly the same amount of sales per square foot that we are able to do in our stores. Hats off to our management and staff for making the most of the space that we have!

The conference offered workshops in seven tracks, including five for co-op managers and staff and two tracks for board members. Since the TPSS members who attended are all board members, we primarily focused our participation on the board tracks. We attended sessions that taught us about joint problem solving for directors, evaluating the general manager, assuring board effectiveness, orienting new board members, and moving beyond expectations for board effectiveness.

While the workshop sessions were very worthwhile and informative, perhaps the most valuable thing the conference provided was the opportunity to meet and talk to people from all areas of the country who are facing the same issues as we are here at TPSS. Because the Washington, DC, area is large but contains only a handful of food co-ops, it's easy to think that we are a unique organization. But being able to talk to people from Oregon to Maine who share the idea that running a food store as a cooperative gives us access to many more ways to address our common problems but, more importantly, the inspiration to feel that we part of a much larger community of people and we are not going it alone. And it was also good to see that we are comparatively doing well as a business, even though we face stiffer competition than many other co-ops across the country. ●

### ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★ Celebrating July Fourth on the Fifth

## Takoma Park Shows its Colors on Independence Day!

by Lisa Ripkin, Membership Coordinator

Having Takoma Park's 115th annual Independence Day parade on July 5th turned out to be an extra good decision by the Takoma Park Committee. The parade took place in sunny, beautiful weather rather than the heavy downpours of the day before. Hot, yes. But it has been steamier in previous years!

High school students led the Co-op's float making efforts by cutting cardboard into shapes of giant fruits and vegetables and having "painting fiestas" with other children downstairs in the Co-op's conference room. The students, Alia Richardson, Becca Horgan, and Helen Tefera, along with Kimberly and Julie Egocheaga, brought it all together Monday morning by tying on all the painted shapes to the shopping carts. Some carts were doubled up and pushed as a unit this year showing our cooperative spirit! Putting our youth in charge of seeing through on a project like this is a great way to learn responsibility and still have fun!

### The Co-op Joins the Parade

The parade began at 10 am. We had more children and parents join us for the parade, as we met in our usual spot along Carroll Avenue. Our group was near the steel drum band group, the Marching Band (a group of obedient dogs dressed with American flag bandannas and owners with T-shirts saying "I Love My Dog"), and the Takoma Park Cooperative Nursery Schools' pre-schoolers, who made individual floats on wagons.

We watched the balloon man pass us by with purple, orange, yellow, green, and blue balloons decorated with polka dots and stripes. Moms and dads walked with their children for the Co-op and passed out coupon booklets to the parade watchers. We gave out free Co-op T-shirts and plenty of cold water donated by Drink More for the participants. And we all had to dodge the horse manure on the route down Carroll Avenue!

When we came past the judges, we had baby Elijah Ripkin in the shopping cart laughing with the teenagers. It was a joyous moment where we all were unified and strong and smiling. And it won us first place in our division!

### The Festivities Continue

After the parade ended at noon, we wrapped up the day sitting at the picnic tables outside the Co-op eating frozen strawberry bars to cool down! And we smelled the good grilling of Gina and Sherri outside, working hard during and after the Parade to serve all the folks standing and sitting by the Co-op catching the great view of the starting of the Parade at the junction of Carroll and Ethan Allen Avenue!

That night the city had fireworks at Takoma Park Middle School on Piney Branch Road. And it was another fun year of July Fourth festivities! We thank all of the participants and everyone who cheered us on! Everyone is always welcome in the future.

Let's do it again next year! ●

## UPCOMING EVENTS

● ● ●  
**September 12**  
27th Annual Takoma Park Folk Festival

●  
**October 3**  
Takoma Park Street Fest

●  
**October 24**  
Bi-Annual Membership Meeting

●  
**December 6**  
Staff, Volunteer, and Board Holiday Party

●  
**December 25**  
BOTH STORES CLOSED

●  
**January 1**  
BOTH STORES CLOSED

●  
**All April**  
Membership Drive Month, Takoma Park and Silver Spring

●  
**April 23**  
6th Annual Takoma Park Earth Day Celebration

●  
**May 21**  
Cookout, food sampling, and general fun in Silver Spring

●  
**June 22**  
Bi-Annual Membership Meeting



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TPSS Co-op, Inc., is a not-for-profit cooperative natural food store.

Submissions to the newsletter and letters-to-the-editor are welcome.

Please provide your name and contact information, and note that submissions may be copyedited or reduced for space purposes.

Classified ads (up to 50 words) are free for TPSS owners and \$10 for non-owners. Hand deliver or email all copy (electronic format preferred) and ads to Paul Lagasse at the Takoma Park store or to editor@tpss.coop.

*The content of this newsletter represents the views of individual writers and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of TPSS Co-op, Inc.*

### Next Issue:

October/November, 2004  
Editorial Deadline: September 6, 2004

#### Address Changes...

Lisa Ripkin, 301-891-2667  
libarip@yahoo.com

# Silver Spring Community Day

By Lisa Ripkin, Membership Coordinator

We are in the beginning stages of planning a Community Day event for Saturday, October 9th at the Rock Creek Shopping Center, sponsored by Silver Spring Co-op along with most of the local businesses of that center, including Rock Creek Fitness Center, The Bicycle Place, Rock Creek Valet, the Sherwin-Williams paint store, the Parkway Deli, and Red Dog Cafe. Sometime in August the Red Dog Cafe will be hosting a brainstorming meeting with Salli Bennison, the landlady of the shopping center, herself joining in with ideas and support. Check the bulletin boards and your receipts regularly for more information.

## → What's Happening at Rock Creek?

We plan to have music, food, community tables, fitness demonstrations, activities for kids, representatives of charity organizations from our in-store donation programs, and — of course — raffles. We are hoping to appeal to all ages and to reach out to the surrounding neighborhoods, apartments, condos, schools, fire and police departments, churches, synagogues and senior citizen centers.

The Community Day will be during part of the celebrations of National Cooperative Month, the arrival of autumn, and Halloween. We hope to have arts and crafts for children, pumpkin decorating, games, and more. The plan is for lots of good food, information, and conversation. And even some dancing, if the beat grabs you. And of course a chance for building a sense of community with our neighbors and businesses!

## → Ideas Wanted!

Look for further details on your receipts when you shop or the bulletin boards at either store location. All ideas are welcome! Also, if anyone is interested in volunteering help to get the word out or to help with a Community Day event, please let me know! I can be emailed at: [libarip@yahoo.com](mailto:libarip@yahoo.com) or called at 301-891-1050.

## Share Your News with the News!

Do you have...  
**STORIES**  
**POEMS**  
**ARTWORK**  
**EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
 or any **FUN STUFF**  
 ...that you would like to share?

Then send it to the  
 TPSS Co-operative Effort News!  
 We're always looking  
 for contributions  
 from our readers,  
 Co-op members,  
 and shoppers.

Contact the editor today at:  
**editor@tpss.coop**  
 and spread your good news!

# UPDATE... Hemp Legislation

By Paul Lagasse

THE HEMP INDUSTRY IS WAITING TO SEE IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL APPEAL A RECENT CIRCUIT COURT DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE HEMP FOOD INDUSTRY. The circuit court has set a deadline of September 26 by which the government may appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

On June 28, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit denied the DEA's petition for a rehearing of the court's February decision to permit the legal selling of hemp-based food products. The February decision effectively states that the DEA cannot treat hemp-based foods as controlled substances.

In considering the petition, a three-judge panel concluded that the DEA had ignored a clause in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) that exempts hemp fiber, seed and oil from treatment as a controlled substance. The court pointed out that the trace amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in hemp seed are "insignificant and irrelevant," in the same way that the trace amounts of opiates in poppy seeds are also harmless.

According to the Hemp Industry Association (HIA), failure to appeal will ensure that sales of hemp foods in the United States will be permanently protected by law. Should the government decide to appeal, industry advo-

cates believe that the government will not win its case.

"The public and the media should question the DEA's waste of tax dollars in trying to crush the legitimate hemp food industry," says Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp ([www.votehemp.org](http://www.votehemp.org)). "Appealing the decision is a last-ditch effort to save face at the expense of taxpayers and limited law enforcement resources."

## A Popular and Healthy Product

The protein in hemp seed meat supplies all essential amino acids in an easily digestible form. Hemp seeds and oil contain high concentrations of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids that doctors recommend as part of a healthy, balanced diet. Hemp nut and oil are widely used in breads, frozen waffles, cereals, nutrition bars, meatless burgers, pretzels and salad dressings.

According to Vote Hemp, "the recently-revived global hemp market is a thriving commercial success. Unfortunately, because of their paranoia, the DEA has confused non-psychoactive industrial hemp varieties of cannabis with psychoactive varieties, and thus the U.S. is the only major industrialized nation to effectively prohibit the growing of industrial hemp."

## ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼ Tell the Post Office: We Want Our Newsletter On Time! ▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

Many of you receive the  
 TPSS Co-operative Effort News weeks late.  
 As a result, you miss timely and important stories  
 and news of interest to the TPSS Co-op community.

We apologize for this major annoyance.  
 The delay is caused by the Silver Spring Post Office.  
 Basically, we've been told that the newsletter is delivered  
 whenever the mail carrier feels like carrying them!

When did "Neither Rain, nor Snow, nor Dark of Night..."  
 become "Whenever We Feel Like It?"

Please take a minute to call the  
**Silver Spring Post Office** at  
 (800) 275-8777 and insist on getting  
 your TPSS Co-operative Effort News  
**ON TIME!**

Note: this is a general number  
 for the whole USPS.  
 Choose Option #7  
 and ask to speak to someone  
 about late mail deliveries.)



In the meantime, you can always find the latest issue online,  
 as soon as it goes to press, at the TPSS Co-op website at:  
<http://www.tpss.coop>.

## Comment Corner



By Bob Atwood,  
General Manager

As this hot and rainy Summer draws to a close, it's time once again for me to respond to some of the many suggestions, questions, and comments we receive from members and shoppers. Thank you for taking the time to write in and share your thoughts and concerns! We always enjoy hearing from our members and shoppers, and we try to answer everyone's comments in a timely manner. I encourage you to take a moment the next time you are in the store to read some of the questions and comments, as well as their responses.

Comment Corner is an opportunity for members and shoppers to learn about how the Co-op goes about the business of serving you. I try to answer your specific questions while at the same time using those answers to illuminate some aspect of our decision-making processes. That way, you will hopefully learn something new about the many complex considerations that we address every day.

The customer comment boxes, located in the front of both stores, are an effective way for members and shoppers to make their voices heard. We regularly sort the comment cards that we receive and distribute them to the appropriate managers, and they write their responses to each of them. Then the managers file the cards, with their responses, in the customer comment logs in the front of both stores. These logs are always available for your review. They are an effective way for you to monitor how well we are addressing your needs.

Please feel free to contact me, or any department manager, at the Takoma Park store at 301-891-2667 (COOP) or at the Silver Spring store at 240-247-2667 (COOP), if you need more information or if you are seeking a more detailed answer to your questions. Or you can always e-mail me directly at bobatwood@tpss.coop. Remember, if you want a direct response to your concerns, please include contact information (name, phone number, e-mail address, etc.) on your comment cards.

—“Thank you for having OG Darjeeling tea in bulk! Please consider light-proof containers. Tea is very light sensitive. Thank you.”

We'll look into the possibility of new light-proof jars for our bulk teas. If we can find some that are relatively inexpensive, we will be happy to purchase them. We've recently increased the number of bulk teas that we carry, and as we've added more, they've been selling better and better. Most of the 24 bulk teas that we carry are organic. As tea drinkers know, tea is sensitive to light and the environment. When we receive tea in bulk, it comes in foil bags that allow protection from air and light, so that helps a lot to keep the tea fresh. Once it's in the bulk aisle, the teas' own popularity helps protect it from excessive exposure! Most teas sell at a rate of about a half-pound a week, and the jars are constantly refreshed.

—“The bulk aisle for peanut butter and nuts is too narrow. If I am getting my bulk items I need time to bag, tie, and label. Since there is only room for one person/cart at a time, I am always rushed. Also, the ties, tape, and pen are on the other side, further slowing down the process. Thank you!”

As you know, space in the Takoma Park store is at a premium. Unfortunately, there are only so many ways we can adjust the space to fit everything in. We've tried to arrange the bulk section as efficiently as possible, and in fact we recently rearranged the section to provide a more efficient traffic pattern. When the store is able to expand into the adjacent parking lot within a few years, the amount of available space will increase, and the bulk section will benefit along with the rest of the

store. But in the meantime — please don't feel rushed by other shoppers! Every shopper knows that space is tight, and hopefully everyone is willing, like you, to take turns.

—“Would love to see Lake Champlain brand chocolate bars. Thanks!”

—“Please stock Authentic Foods Home-style Bread and Cinnamon Bread mixes!”

Thanks for these requests. We will look into them. Before we carry a product, we try to make sure that it is 100% natural and that it is made without preservatives or harmful additives. That's the Co-op's standard for all food products. Regarding the chocolate bars, Lake Champlain is a fairly expensive brand, but hopefully the demand will be high enough for us to purchase it regularly. As for the Authentic Foods brand, we're not familiar with it but we'll look into it as well.

Any additional information that you might have about the product, please let Abdou know. It will help him find the manufacturer and distributor more easily. The same request goes for any product suggestions — the more information you can provide to our staff, the easier it is for them to find the product you're looking for!

—“Make the ‘basics’ list available to the people as a take-home sheet or even better, post it on the website. Thanks!”

Thanks for your suggestion. We've distributed the basics list in the past, and it proved to be a popular and useful service. It was hard to maintain in paper form because the prices change fast, so your suggestion of a Web version is particularly attractive. We'll look into it and try to get a copy of the basics list up on the TPSS website ([www.tpss.coop](http://www.tpss.coop)) soon. An additional option might be to include the list

in the TPSS Co-operative Effort News. Any other suggestions from members and shoppers?

—“Put a sign up with the guidelines for the bulletin board. I.e. how long stuff is allowed to stay up there.”

I will make sure that we post the bulletin board guidelines. They are simple: everything comes off the board at the first of the month. And that means *everything!* So if you're planning on posting something, my advice is to not wait and put it up on the 31st! Otherwise, it will disappear faster than a cold bottle of fruit juice on a sweltering August Sunday.

—“The eco-fish products are really good! I am so happy to have this solution to the ‘eat fish once a week’ recommendation.”

Thanks for mentioning it. We're glad you like them. We've received a lot of requests to carry them, and we are pleased with the range of products that are available. Be sure to let us know if there are any specific products you'd like us to carry.

—“Thanks for the great improvement in fruit and vegetables. I come in on Thursday mornings to shop and it's like a whole new world!!! Thank you!!!”

Glad you like what we've been doing! Like you, we're happy with what we're doing in that department. It's good to know that people think we're doing a good job. The store is always in a state of evolution and change, and the changes are driven in large part by feedback from our members and shoppers. So keep the comments coming, and please let us know when we're doing good! A pat on the back every now and then is appreciated — we're working hard every day for you, and we want you to know that no matter what, we're always trying our best to *do* the best! ●

## A Body of Art

By Marney Makridakis

*Editor's Note: Marney publishes Artella: The Waltz of Words and Art, a wonderful blend of the visual and written arts. I first read this article as a subscriber to Marney's regular “Articulation” e-newsletter, and felt that the issues she raises would be of interest to readers of the TPSS Co-operative Effort News. Hope you enjoy!* —Paul

If you are in an Artella e-course or have been communicating with me personally over the past few months, you know that I've had lots of dental and oral surgery issues, one right after another. I was talking with someone about this experience and I jokingly said that the experience has been kind of like when one light bulb goes out in your home and then all of them seem to need changing at the same time. But joking aside, the analogy of dead light bulbs is a good one for talking about paying attention to our bodies. It's simple: when we burn out, we have to make repairs, or else stay in the dark.

The problem is, it's realllllly disruptive to stop creating and change light bulbs . . . and it can be completely maddening to put creative ideas and projects on hold to engage in more extensive maintenance or bodily repair. To stay sane, most writers and artists have to learn a bit about separating parts of the whole. We learn to distance ourselves from the characters we're writing about, step back from a painting to get perspective, separate ourselves from harsh criticism, protect ourselves from rejection, and hibernate during creative lulls.

We acquire these skills, to the degree to which they help us. But because we thrive in our minds and imaginations, I think that it's often all too easy to separate our creativity from our bodies, and ignore our bodies altogether except when the “light bulb needs changing.”

For the past year, I have been participating in an art journal round robin, organized by my good friend and an amazing artist, Melissa Chapin. The topic of the round robin was



emBODYment, and for a year, we have passed the art journals around, adding different artistic interpretations of the body experience to each journal.

Today, I just received the final journal I'll work in for this project, and I felt very sad as I realized I wouldn't have this outlet in place any longer. It has been a wonderful privilege to see all of the different ways that the artists in my group have interpreted emBODYment, and it's been a satisfying personal challenge for me to express my own reflections on this topic in art. Each month, I've challenged myself to go deeper into the topic, making the meaning behind my journaling spreads more important than the art techniques I was using.

Last month was the most significant for me of all, as I depicted on my pages the ways in which I escaped from my body as a child growing up with multiple genetic health issues.

What the round robin has taught me is that there are always more levels to explore in art, and more levels to explore in understanding the body experience, too. This project stretched me to use art to express my experi-

ence of body. Perhaps the next step is to use my body as a way to express art?

It's an interesting inquiry: how can I make writing and art become more physical experiences? Can I integrate my body more when I write and create art, so I see more clearly see its role in my creativity? And if I succeeded in doing so, would I have a new respect for my body and all it does?

After all, I think that sometimes I treat my fine paint brushes — or even my beloved wireless computer keyboard — better than I've treated my body! If we could respect our bodies themselves as the ultimate in “fine art supplies,” rather than just these nuisance vessels that get attention when aches and pains crop up, maybe better art AND better health will result.

To alter a popular phrase, perhaps we are not merely human bodies having a creative experience, but creative beings having a body experience. I see the final journal in this project not as an end, but a beginning to the continuing dialogue between my body and imagination. I have the feeling that both parties have much more to say.

“Good for the body is the work of the body, good for the soul the work of the soul, and good for either the work of the other.” — Henry David Thoreau ●

*Marney K. Makridakis is the Founder and Editor of Artella, a magazine and support network for writers, artists, and creative spirits. Explore the waltz of words and art at [www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com](http://www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com)*

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## Mini-Musings

By Marney Makridakis

✳ If your physical body could speak to you, what would it have to say about you?

✳ If your physical body took the form of a piece of artwork, what would it look like? What symbolism would be inherent in the piece?

✳ Is there a part of your physical body that needs attention? If so, pretend that you depend on this particular body part to write, create art, or do anything else you enjoy. Does anything shift in terms of what you need to do for this body part?

# Stop the War

By Ami Ra Bevel

I have begun to realize that the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op truly lives up to its name and I've come to understand the value and the importance of the Co-op being posted in our communities. For this Co-op serves as not only a storage house but also a community center. Here families have the opportunity to come together, plan and participate in providing food for their families. Every time I step into the TPSS Co-op I feel so much joy as I exchange hugs and smiles with the employees and customers that are apart of my community. It's a rare experience and a sign that the co-op is a womb for community development.

I testify that it wasn't until I became an employee at the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op did I become acquainted with individuals that resonate with my spirit. I was

always a loner and never really had much of a social life, nor did I ever have a sense of social belonging. However, in a kind of miraculous way, with ease I found a spot in which I fitted in; A place that seemed to have been carved just for me. And just like that I was apart of community. And it all started at the TPSS Co-op.

Because I became caught up in personality and emotions, it took a while to really see the blessings that came from me working at the TPSS Co-op. Of course it was time for me to evolve from the living situation I was in and also time for me to set my priorities straight for the benefit of my future and the future of my son. However, the way I went about it was wrong and harsh. I became ungrateful, disrespectful and violent, inflicting pain on another.

There is no way to turn back the hands of time. Even though I wish there were. However, one thing I've learned in my life is until we go past our shame and guilt and be honest about the aspects of ourselves, which is against unity in our communities, community development in our lives will remain halted. Because the truth of the matter remains, until I correct my wrongs, my mission and my growth will be stunted. And I will continue to harbor guilt, shame and regrets, wondering why can't I make a big difference in the world.

I am sure that we all have done things to others and ourselves that we regretfully consider to be wrong. It's probably harder for those of us who have great social statues to admit their wrong. For example, imagine being the president and having made the biggest mistake in history in regards to the direction of the nation. How can you possibly confess even though the confession is the catalyst of correction. What would you do? Would you pro-

tect your ego and cover up your wrong or would you protect your nation and uncover your wrong? The only way to know the answer of that question is to examine all the uncorrected wrong things we've done, that are so minute compared to the wrong the president and all of those people who govern the nations of the world may ever possibly do.

Therefore, in pondering this, I feel that the best thing I can do for this nation is to correct my wrong as if the growth and development of this nation depends on it. Because, whether we know it or not, we all play a part in the direction our world is turning. I have identified violence within me and I've recognized the ways I have contributed to the war. My contribution range from the way I've treated my neighbors to me merely riding around in a gas-powered car. It may take a while to evolve from of the patterns of today. However, I have started by pointing out my wrongs. Forgive me dear nation, for my contribution to the war. ●

## Featured Employees



### Abdou Diagne

If you are looking for Abdou Diagne at the Co-op, you are likely to spot him in the aisles talking with the regulars. "Interacting with the customers and staff is what I love most about my job." Throughout our interview, this was a point that Abdou made again and again. The many stories that he shared about the people he's met at both stores reflect that this is a community Abdou cares for deeply.

Three years ago, with over seven years of experience in the natural foods industry, Abdou was hired as the Takoma Park Co-op's grocery general manager. These days, he also spends time at the Silver Spring store. "After working at Whole Foods, I was anxious to escape the whole corporate thing," Abdou says. "At the chain grocery stores, the employees don't know their customers or what foods they like best. At the Co-op, I know the people who walk through the doors, and they know me too. If someone requests that we stock a special item, I will do the research, and as long as it's an all natural product I will order it and have it on the shelves within the week. Chain stores cannot provide service like this."

Since coming to the Co-op, Abdou has seen many new features implemented at the stores. "The new CAP program is something that I

am excited about." He explained that twenty-six co-ops have banded together to maximize their collective buying power. First, the group identifies the items it wants to put on sale. A collective representative records each co-op's order and takes this number to the distributor to arrange for a group discount rate.

Abdou credits the community for the TPSS Co-op's success. "We are the only co-op I know of that has 15 Whole Food Markets competing nearby. On top of that there is also Trader Joe's and My Organic Market (M.O.M's). We are able to stay in business because our customers understand that we offer something different than those other stores." Abdou cites examples of the Co-op's special qualities. "At big grocery store chains you don't know where your money goes. Here, your dollars stay in the community. The Co-op is a non-profit and donates money to many local charities through the chip program and the dollar round up. Also, unlike other stores, all of our stock is 100% natural. This means, that when you shop here you don't need to worry about reading labels for preservatives. They aren't in there. The point is, our customers and members can trust us, and they want us to succeed, which is only possible because of their support."

Not only does Abdou enjoy his work at the Co-op, he likes the products he sells there as well. Asked to name his favorite co-op item he answered, "everything!" As for Abdou's hobbies and extracurricular interests, he admits that when he's not at work, he is often thinking about work. "I am lucky, because I love what I do, so it doesn't feel like work at all. When I have free time, I enjoy spending it with my family." Before moving to this area, Abdou lived in New York, and prior to that Dakar, Senegal, where he was born.

When asked if anything about working at the Co-op has surprised him, Abdou's answer was an interesting one. "I work here on Sundays, which is the busiest day at the Co-op. The aisles fill with people and I often wonder, why don't they come on Saturday and avoid all of the crowds? But I think I understand. When people come in on Sundays, they know they aren't just going to shop for

groceries. They know that they will see friends and neighbors here too. They like to catch up with each other, and the Co-op is a comfortable place to do that. This is something special that doesn't happen at large stores." I would add, commitment like Abdou's is something quite special too.

### Rebecca Pickens

Rebecca, the new editor of the *TPSS Co-operative Effort News*, has lived in Takoma Park for nearly three years. Before moving to the area, she and her husband taught English in Japan to junior high school students. "In Japan I began to articulate my ideas about healthy eating and food politics. Prior to that, I'd been a vegetarian for 15 years, and it had become a habit so natural to me that I barely considered it anymore. In Japan, my curious, sometimes skeptical students peppered me with difficult questions about everything, including the food my husband and I liked to eat. 'I thought all Americans liked hamburgers and coca-cola,' they'd insisted. I seized the opportunity to challenge these stereotypes, which led to talk of issues such as agribusiness, junk food, diminishing natural resources and fair trade. This resulted in some interesting English lessons, and also caused me to revisit and revise some of my own thoughts on these matters."

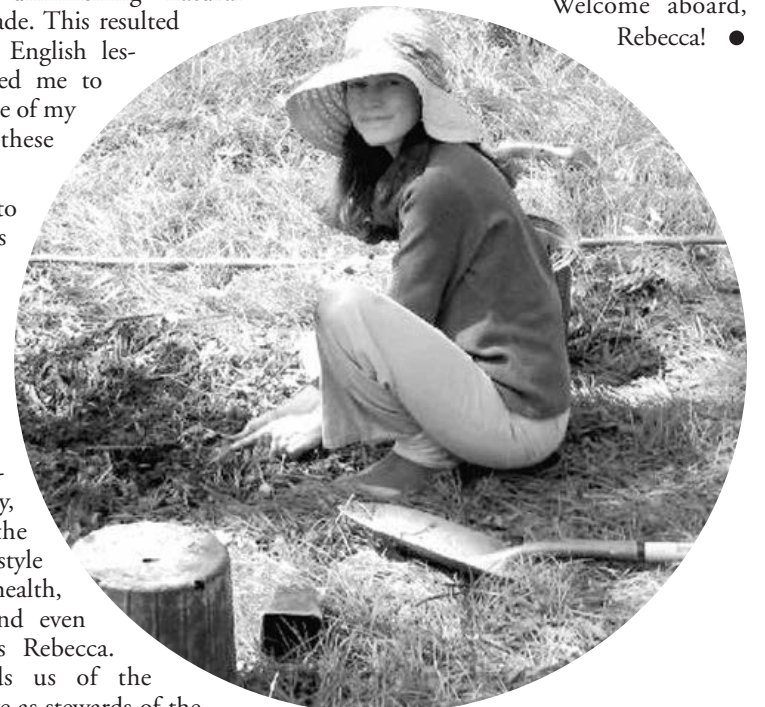
When she returned to the U.S., Rebecca's interest in sustainable agriculture deepened. She is currently studying herbalism and plans to one day start her own herb farm. "Herbalism encourages us to walk lightly, and to consider the impact that our lifestyle choices have on our health, the environment, and even the economy." Says Rebecca. "Herbalism reminds us of the responsibility we have as stewards of the

planet, and in turn of the ways this planet takes care of us. It makes sense, and equally important, it's fun!"

Rebecca explains her interest further: "Our society moves so quickly and in so many different directions. In keeping up with this frenetic pace, we are losing our connection with the plants, animals and the soil that feeds us. I believe that institutions such as the Co-op, and the community that governs it, are critical. Both seek to inform us about the food on our plates, and remind us that indeed the choices we make have impact. Every dollar we spend is a vote. Supporting the co-op is a vote for the small scale, local farmer and his/her organic products and practices."

Rebecca brings to the newsletter the same passion and dedication that she feels for her interests, and sees the newsletter as both a natural extension and outlet. As newsletter editor, Rebecca wants to cultivate a space for important dialogue about these subjects and more. She looks forward to hearing from new writers, and to working with seasoned newsletter contributors.

Welcome aboard,  
Rebecca! ●



# Looking Ahead

By Judith Sylvane



Two friends of my mother's generation — ages 90 and 96 — are nearly blind. One has age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the other has both AMD and glaucoma. They now are dependent on low-vision aids and other people. Of our five senses, the one that most of us least want to lose is our sight. Yet the longer we live, the more possible it becomes that we'll experience major changes in our eyes, from the almost-universal presbyopia to cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, or even AMD.

## Looking at the Problems

The most common age-related problem is presbyopia. Are you over 40? Are you having trouble reading small print? Your eye is losing its power to focus on close objects; however, your sight isn't endangered. Reading glasses and magnifiers easily correct this difficulty.

Like presbyopia, cataracts are more common among Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation than among Gen X'ers. When a lens in your eye becomes cloudy and less transparent, you may experience light sensitivity and blurry vision. Cataract surgery, which replaces the clouded lens with a permanent contact lens, is generally quite successful.

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when high levels of sugar damage the tiny blood vessels in the retina. Your vision becomes blurry, and it isn't easy to see well at night. Laser surgery can prove useful in shrinking blood vessels in the early stages of this disease.

Do any close relatives have glaucoma? If so, you could be at higher risk for this disorder. Glaucoma damages nerve cells in the back of the eye. Eye drops, as well as laser and conventional surgery, may help slow the damage.

AMD, the most dangerous threat to sight, is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans over 65. Cells in the macula deteriorate and eventually an area of blindness appears in the center of the eye. The exact cause isn't known, and there's no permanently effective treatment or cure.

## Looking for Answers

You can't change some things in your life — your age, your sex, your race, and your family tree, for instance. You can change your life *style*, however.

Start by shielding your eyes from exposure to sun and smoke. Cells in the macula are sensitive to sunlight, and people with light-col-

ored eyes may be more at risk than people with dark-colored eyes. Sunglasses, particularly UV-blocking ones, and broad-brimmed hats will help protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Tobacco smoke reduces the protective antioxidants in the eye. Smokers are much more likely to develop AMD, for example, than non-smokers. So if you smoke, quit. If you don't smoke, don't start. (Yes, yes, this advice isn't new, is it?)

Wear safety goggles or other protective gear when playing sports or working with dangerous materials. Injuries could result in detached retinas, for example.

See your doctors regularly. Keep an "eye" on your blood pressure and sugar levels. Call an ophthalmologist if you have an infection, pain, blurred vision, a marked increase in floaters, or flashes of light.

## Looking at Food

Never underestimate the power of nutrition. Recent studies show that a diet rich in antioxidants and low in saturated fats and cholesterol helps protect your eyes from those pesky oxygen-charged molecules we call free radicals. Although recent studies usually focus on only one eye problem, they all seem to conclude that eating right is good for your eyes. For example:

■ *Ophthalmology* (Oct. 2002) reported that people with AMD had much lower levels of two carotenoids—lutein

and zeaxanthin than individuals with no signs of AMD. Low levels of these two nutrients may increase the risk for AMD.

■ The Blue Mountains (Australia) Eye Study looked at the impact of past dietary habits on the formation of cataracts and found that eating foods packed with antioxidants seemed to reduce that risk. (The one food that appeared to be associated with cataract prevention was spinach, possibly because it's very high in lutein.)

What are the best foods to eat for good eye health? Try spinach, for starters; kale and collard greens are the only two vegetables with levels of lutein and zeaxanthin higher than spinach. The yellow pigment in these two carotenoids may protect the eyes by blocking blue light from the retina's sensitive tissues. Other good vegetable choices include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, green peas, and leaf lettuce. Dark-colored berries such as blueberries, cranberries, and bilberries, which are full of bioflavonoids, are also beneficial. They strengthen the capillaries that carry nutrients to the eyes (and many people think they're tastier than kale and collard greens).

What shouldn't we eat or drink, except occasionally? Saturated fats, cholesterol, trans fats, and alcohol.

## Looking at Supplements

A number of companies have developed combinations of nutrients designed to support the health of your eyes. Products available at the Co-op include Vision and Bilberry + Grapeskin Polyphenols (both from Jarrow Formulas), OptiAll (from NaturalCare); and Bilberry-Ginkgo-Eyebright Complex + Lutein (from Solgar). Supplements of fish oil, vitamin C, and vitamin E also may help protect the retina.

Now, let's see what you can do. ●



It is my contention that civil disobediences are nothing but the latest form of voluntary association, and that they are thus quite in tune with the oldest traditions of the country.

**Hannah Arendt**

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By choosing the electronic option, you will be helping the Co-op save valuable \$\$\$ on printing and mailing.

Contact Lisa Ripkin ([libarip@yahoo.com](mailto:libarip@yahoo.com)) or Bob Atwood ([bobatwood@tpss.coop](mailto:bobatwood@tpss.coop)), or call the Takoma Park store at 301-891-2667 to exempt your address from mailed newsletter copies.

Suggestions and comments for improving the newsletter's online services are always welcome!

Contact Editor

Paul Lagasse at [editor@tpss.coop](mailto:editor@tpss.coop)

## Health Concerns:

## We're All Ticking Time Bombs

By Michael Tabor

*My former wife's death from three forms of cancer this winter has been weighing heavily on my mind. And as I've spoken with friends about it, stories of otherwise healthy people suddenly coming down with cancer surface regularly. Recently, at a potluck dinner meeting of the local Sierra Club, I raised the issue and one by one, individuals related their own sad stories about friends and relatives. "We're all ticking time bombs," offered the person seating next to me, who as it turned out, was a teacher of environmental health. No one out there, no matter how healthy, is immune. But, we all ask ourselves, where and how does it happen?*

My visit this winter with my son at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, was a real eye-opener. I attended one of his classes which covered environmental health issues and then later in the week, a lecture in Seattle, by Jane Houlihan of the DC-based Environmental Working Group (EWG). The recommendations coming out of the sessions included eating low on the food chain (fewer fatty foods, more grain and veggies), as well as consuming more locally-grown, sustainably-produced foods plus, of course, keeping in good shape through regular exercise and having a trim figure.

**Toxic Chemicals in Our Bodies**

The questions that the presentations raised were troubling. The first is: *How and why are our bodies contaminated with approximately 100 chemicals, including PCBs, dioxins, cadmium, chromium, arsenic and lead?* What about the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration); weren't these the governmental gatekeepers that are supposed to protect the public from eating, touching, drinking, or breathing known carcinogens? Then there's the "chemical body burden", the capacity of our body to carry long and short-term industrial chemicals. How many of these contaminants can our body keep neutralized before cancer or some other disease surfaces?

According to the EWG, since World War II, over 70,000 individual industrial chemicals have been registered. Not only that, but each day, EPA approves an average of 7 new chemicals — all minimally or not tested at all. So where and how do we routinely come in contact and absorb these contaminants? Think about household cleansers, carpets, Gore-tex(r), fire retardants on clothing, computers, plastics, car interiors, Teflon(r)-coated utensils, deodorants, shampoos, gels, can linings, DVDs, plywood, paint, eyeglass lenses; all those "better living through chemistry" products we've developed over the past 60 years.

Women and children are the most susceptible. Some of the chemicals, particularly PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers), are stored in our bodies, where they accumulate rather than get excreted through our kidneys. Breast milk is particularly contaminated. Women have more fat tissue and, it seems, are capable of storing more toxins. Children are at risk because of their size and the fact that many of the carcinogens they're exposed to today may not show up as a cancer for another 30–40 years. So, you've got to wonder about how an otherwise healthy person, out

of the blue it seems, gets pancreatic cancer and is dead in 2 months' time.

**Toxic Wastes in Our Food**

Then, there's the question of: What is in the food we eat? For years now, mainstream agriculture has spent a lot of money trying to convince us that our food is safe. That's why I found my son's Evergreen College class reading-Pulitzer Prize finalist Duff Wilson's book *Fateful Harvest* (Perennial Paperback, Harper Collins Publishing)-so relevant and connected to the EWG findings.

The book documents a 30-year history of how American industries have been converting toxic waste onto farmers fields and home gardens and labeling it "fertilizer", and how the States and federal government allows loopholes and non-regulation of heavy metals and low-level radioactive waste which gets re-classified as a marketable commodity once it's sold as fertilizer.

So, regularly it seems, chimney ash, loaded with lead, chromium and zinc, which are classified as dangerous waste, gets bagged up and sold under names like "Lime Plus" and "Nutrilime(r)" and gets spread on gardens and farmland to raise the pH level and "sweeten" the soil. Uranium processing plants routinely got rid of their waste by labeling it with a name like "raffinate" and get it registered and approved by state and Federal agencies-and then shake their heads when 124 cases of cancer and birth defects were found near a community where it was applied. "No proof," they say! And the next time you use a deicing agent on your sidewalk, know that there's no law requiring the company to list hazardous waste on their label.

The case document in the book is the story of a few farmers, a courageous mayor, and an investigative reporter who uncover a 30-year history of the dumping of toxic waste onto their land, air and water. I'd recommend reading *Fateful Harvest*, especially if you work for an agency like the EPA, which, during the Clinton administration, appeared to turn its back on the problem.

**How Safe is Our Food?**

The book raised the question of: How safe is the food supply? Don't forget, unless you're eating local sustainably-raised food you have no idea of what's in the soil of the food (and thus in the food) shipped over from California, and the Northwest. The book documents that the zinc used by some Washington and Oregon fruit growers was contaminated by heavy metals and hazardous waste by-products. And the powerful California and national fertilizer industries have been blocking the listing of ingredients in their commercial fertilizers. Plus, farmers have been routinely using industrial chimney fly ash and heavy metal contaminated soil to grow their crops for over 30 years now. What's the long term impact? We don't know. But at least we do know a possible source of where all those heavy metals found in our bodies by the EWG might be coming from.

**Local Concerns**

When it comes to Maryland, the Office of State Chemist which is a part of the Department of Agriculture seems to be very vigilant and well-

staffed. The head chemist, Warren Bontoyan, was particularly alert and knowledgeable about the issue of heavy metals in Maryland fertilizers. Approximately 20% are tested (approximately 1,000 per year) and he reports never having seen evidence of heavy metals present in our fertilizers. He was very reassuring, as was John Breitsman, Pennsylvania State Chief of the Division of Agronomic and Regional Services (although he felt Wilson's *Fateful Harvest* raised a lot of good questions).

However, the phrase "not above allowable limits" is commonly used. The standards are set by the Association of American Plant Food Control Officials (not the Federal government!). As of 2002, they allowed 1.6% lead, 0.4% arsenic and 0.3% cadmium in common zinc fertilizer. The issue of lead in Washington, DC drinking water is in the news lately. Agency responsibility for the problem, sounds like a running joke. Unfortunately, the situation is deadly serious.

I did not receive a return phone call from Dr. Phil Heard of the Maryland Department of Environment Protection. They share responsibility when it comes to Maryland consumer safety. So, I don't know about state testing and standards for biosolids (sludge) spread on farmland. I do know we are processing and selling Baltimore's sludge and turning it into compost for garden and farm enrichment.

No one, it seems, routinely tests for radioactive waste in fly ash or fertilizer in Maryland. And, there is no local facility for the testing of dioxins (soil suspected of being contaminated is sent elsewhere for testing). No one looks at deicing ingredients. Regarding the chemical body burden, there's no state testing of DBP (dodecyl pyridinium bromide), PFCs (perfluorochemicals), PBDE, BPA (bisphenol-A) and all the myriad of chemicals you absorb on a daily basis and is stored in your fatty tissue. That's left to the EPA-and many questions have been raised about their level of vigilance.

Our best ally, when it comes to a federal agency, is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. What's not understood currently is whether current levels of toxics in our body are associated with adverse health effects. What *is* known is that there is a link between those 12 million American kids who suffer from developmental learning or behavioral disabilities (3–6% of school children). The National Academy of Science indicates toxic chemicals play a part. So, exposure to organophosphate pesticides (i.e. Dursban), mercury consumed by fish, residual PCBs, lead in the drinking water, all affect the developing fetus and young children. Most of the new chemicals approved on a daily basis by EPA do not get tested for their impact on human biology. We are, essentially, human guinea pigs.

**What to Do?**

The contrast between US laws and European and Canadian laws is interesting. Our country's beliefs reflect the corporate rule we're subject to — the belief that present practices are fine until absolutely proven unsafe. In the US there is little national regulation of fertilizers, and individual states might or might not provide consumer pro-

tection. In Canada and Europe there are national fertilizer laws. We have had no limits for lead, arsenic, cadmium and other toxics in fertilizers; they do. Generally, we require tests only when products are first registered if at all. In Canada, they mandate testing every 6 months. Plus, the European Union is trying to pass reforms that would require all high-production-volume chemicals to be tested for health effects, but the Bush Administration is fighting tooth and nail to try to prevent that. The only real solution is a complete overhaul of chemical regulations. The government must require the chemical companies to test their products to substitute dangerous chemicals with safer ones, to phase out persistent bio-accumulative toxins and to clearly label all products so that consumers will be able to know what they are buying.

So one answer might be to support a presidential candidate who will mandate changes. Bush isn't about to mandate changes and I doubt that Kerry would either. But we don't want a repeat of 2000, so in the meantime, we as consumers must become more aware and demand change. Cynicism, shirking and philosophizing won't accomplish much. Instead, buy organic, eat lower on the food chain, avoid industrial chemicals, choose natural cleaners and plant-based cosmetics, raise the issue with and demand answers from responsible state, federal and local elected representatives, and raise hell!

If you know of a large group that would be interested in hearing an excellent presentation on the industrial chemical body burden, contact Jane Houlihan at [jane@ewg.org](mailto:jane@ewg.org). ●

*Michael writes a regular column for the Takoma Voice and Silver Spring Voice. He is also an organic farmer, who writes a regular column for the TPSS Co-operative Effort News.*

For further information about toxic chemical contamination of our foods and our bodies, contact:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/dls/report/pdf/complete\\_report.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/dls/report/pdf/complete_report.pdf)

Children's Environmental Health Network

<http://www.cehn.org>

Children's Health Environmental Coalition

<http://www.chechnet.org>

Environmental Working Group

<http://www.ewg.org>

Jane Houlihan

[jane@ewg.org](mailto:jane@ewg.org)

Stacy Malkan, Health Without Harm

[smalkan@hcwh.org](mailto:smalkan@hcwh.org)

# Hands-on Health: Every Body Tells a Story

By Kerem Karpinski, CMT

For over 2 years, I have had the wonderful opportunity to share the gift of touch and offer complimentary seated massages to Co-op members, volunteers and employees in exchange for groceries. Through this work, I've really begun to feel a part of the community that ripples out from this place. Hands-On Health, a new column focusing on massage and wellness for the TPSS Co-op community, was developed out of my desire to give back to this community by providing a unique perspective on massage from the practitioners point of view, and how massage can be used as a tool to help us all feel better in our bodies. If you have suggestions for future Hand-On Health columns, please contact Kerem (see end of article). Read on for the first column and enjoy!

Being a massage therapist has given me a unique view of the human body. Not many people get to work with hundreds of essentially naked strangers, day after day, week after week. But this is my job, so it's kind of cool, and I have come to appreciate this aspect of my profession. I get to witness with my hands and eyes in the quiet of a session, how each person has related to the world physically, the evidence all over their bodies: belly stretch marks from a pregnancy, scars on wrists from repeated chemotherapy injections, the rough calluses on the sole of an earth-trodding foot, the zig-zagged line along the knee from a major surgery, thick scar tissue from a grazed bullet on a shoulder. It's amazing how hard the world is on our bodies, or more to the point, what vulnerable creatures we are. As I trace my hands along each curvature and line of a new client, I am drawn into the story behind what I feel beneath my hands. Each body tells a story, some seemingly insignificant, some profound.

Sometimes I get advanced warning from a client of their body's story before the massage even begins as we talk about their health and medical history. During the session, I'll get a chance to confirm their verbal clues with the

coinciding marks on their skin. I find myself going down subconsciously through a mental checklist of their past injuries, surgeries, and accidents as I work on different parts of their body. Many times, however, I'll come across evidence of a story they didn't mention at all, perhaps had long ago forgotten about. It is very often these stories that are the most interesting, and asking about them brings the client back into another place in time, and into the emotions and life they experienced then. Our skin is renewing itself every moment, but our scars stick with us and remind us of how we have traversed this world. Check out your own body and find the stories you may have forgotten. It might be an exercise in misplaced memory, but maybe it'll trigger that long lost story that is a part of you.

My old massage teacher Mike Duggan's advice for me after my last hands-on final at the Baltimore School of Massage was to "go

for the thousandth massage." Implying that by the time I touched that many people I would be a master of my craft. At the time I thought that seemed way out of my league. But here it is, over five years after graduating and maintaining a full time massage practice, and I do believe I have reached that milestone. I wouldn't call myself a master by any means, but a thousand bodies have graced my fingertips and each one has had their own unique story for me to learn how to dialogue with through my touch. Working with so many different bodies with different stories and different needs has made me a better therapist. And with each new client I develop a deeper understanding of how complex our stories are and how massage really only gives a snapshot of the possibilities lying just beneath the surface of our human experience. ●



Kerem Karpinski is a massage therapist and musician living in Takoma DC. She has a private massage and reiki practice in Old Takoma at the Wisdom Path Healing Center, which is the naturopathic office of Dr. Nazirahk Amen, and offers walk-in seated massage out of Sangha, a popular Takoma destination for indigenous fair trade goods, art, music and community, throughout the week. TPSS Co-op sponsors complimentary massages with Kerem on Mondays 5pm-7pm. You can contact Kerem at (202) 263-7265 or email relaxwithkerem@yahoo.com.

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