

# Local practitioner brings her healing touch

## Acupuncturist Aria Walker's 'long, winding road' takes her to Cannon Beach and a new business

By Erick Bengel  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Chinese and alternative medicine abounds with concepts — “energy,” “circulation,” “meridians,” “qi” (pronounced “chee”) — that may confuse the nonpractitioner.

Aria Walker, 43, the newest owner of Acupuncture & Natural Medicine Clinic who moved to Cannon Beach in early July, has spent more than two decades studying, applying and teaching these concepts. Articulate and focused, Walker brings forth the ancient beauty behind the familiar buzzwords.

In traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture — which involves small, thin needles penetrating the skin — is a way to adjust the flow of qi to certain areas of the body. Qi (“life energy”) is believed to run along bodily channels (“meridians”) that don't

have a physical structure. Meridians don't appear in Western maps of human anatomy, so Walker compares the qi flowing along them to “sky to ground lightning”: “The lightning takes a path, but after the lightning hits, you won't find a pathway ... even though you can clearly see it when it strikes.”

The needles, she said, help to get the qi moving where there is a “deficiency” or “blockage” — the two main types of energy “interruptions.” She invokes a river metaphor: Sometimes the water is low, and other times there's a tree in the river blocking the flow.

Using sterilized needles placed at “acupuncture points,” Walker's job is to tap into a spring of qi, “getting the energy to come back up into the area,” or to open up a blockage, “bringing in more qi,” she said. The goal is to “stimulate the body's own healing functions and

bring the body to homeostasis,” she said.

Patient testimony widely associates acupuncture with pain relief, though the pain-relieving mechanism is a source of debate. Whether patient beliefs and expectations play a role is an ongoing subject of scientific study, according to the National Institutes of Health.

### Wish list

Before moving to Cannon Beach, Walker owned a private practice in Anchorage, Alaska, while working for acupuncturists in the nearby city of Palmer.

Early last year, she wrote out a wish list, which included moving close to the water, living within biking or walking distance from her office and being of service to a community where she could make difference.

Minutes later, she received an email from a list serve written by Genevieve



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Aria Walker administers acupuncture treatment to Seaside resident Rebecca Parker. Walker ran a private practice in Anchorage, Alaska, before taking over the Acupuncture and Natural Medicine Clinic on South Hemlock Street from Genevieve Johnson in July 2014.

Johnson, former owner of Acupuncture & Natural Medicine Clinic, advertising the business for sale.

“I don't know how it ended up in my inbox because, normally, I have to go to that site to pick up messages,” Walker said. “But, in my inbox, this practice was listed, and — line item — everything (Johnson) wrote about the practice was everything that I had just written in my wish list.”

Accompanying the ad was “this little picture of the building, which looked like a picture I'd had in my head for about 30 years,” she said. “So it caught my attention.”

A few weeks later, she visited the Pacific Northwest for the first time. When she saw the building on South Hemlock Street in person, “if I wasn't sold already, it was a done deal.”

Originally owned by Nancy Burton, the clinic has been in Cannon Beach for 15 years. Burton sold it to Johnson about five years ago.

Walker, a midtown resident, is now the sole em-

ployee — unless you count her 8-year-old blue-and-gold macaw, Skye, who greets patients with an amiable “Hello.”

### 'Long, winding road'

Walker called her life's journey, which spans the United States, a “long, winding road.”

Born and raised in Mentor, Ohio, she ended up graduating from high school in North Carolina and earned an associate's degree in photography at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York.

She eventually transferred to Ohio University in Ath-

ens, which is where she met her first teachers in the healing arts outside of school.

After attending the Boulder School of Massage Therapy in Boulder, Colo., she moved to San Diego, Calif., where she studied traditional Chinese medicine at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine.

Later, in Alabama, she worked as an assistant for a third-generation Chinese acupuncturist and, from there, moved to Gainesville, Fla., where she graduated from Academy for Five Element Acupuncture. Walker finally moved to Alaska in 2011.

Though acupuncture is her forte, over the years Walker has immersed herself in the myriad branches of the healing arts: massage, Reiki, herbalism, moxibustion, reflexology, cupping therapy, aroma therapy and Japanese shiatsu. She considers alternative medicine a “complete system” of treatment.

“To me, they all work together, they just work on different levels,” she said, adding that Chinese medicine offers more in terms of preventing illness than Western medicine. “Keeping people healthy before they get sick? Not a strong suit of Western medicine — at least not hospital-based pharmaceutical Western medicine.”

### 'Keeping people healthy before they get sick? Not a strong suit of Western medicine...'

Aria Walker

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## Cannon Beach Police Log

### Dec. 7

**12:43 a.m.** 100 block of West Warren Way: assistance provided to another agency. Officers assisted another agency in attempting to locate missing suicidal subject. Subject not located.

### Dec. 10

**9:32 p.m.** Les Shirley Park: camping within city limits. Subject(s) warned for unlawful lodging.

### Dec. 11

**5:27 p.m.** Van Buren Street and Ocean Avenue: public assistance. Caller reported a down line. Officer located the line; it was not dangerous.

### Dec. 13

**10:40 a.m.** Fifth Avenue and Larch Street: dog/animal complaints. Found German shepherd. Dog lodged in kennel. Contacted Clackamas Coun-

ty dog services. Left message with license number. Dog later released to owner.

### Dec. 15

**12:42 p.m.** Hug Point: welfare check. Report of hikers stranded near Hug Point. Officer arrived and contacted the hikers. They were not in any distress.

**4:36 p.m.** Skate park: other all. Helmet warning.

**6:12 p.m.** 300 block of North Spruce Street: assistance provided to another agency. Received report of a possible overdose on medications. Arrived and secured scene. Patient stated he had taken his prescribed medication (which the officer confirmed) and had become nauseous, vomiting up the medication a short time later. Patient refused medical treatment.

### Dec. 16

**3:55 p.m.** North entrance: assistance rendered: officer

contacted vehicle and driver, who was lost. Officer assisted and cleared.

### Dec. 18

**7:58 p.m.** 1400 block of South Hemlock: assistance rendered. Motel staff wanted contact regarding suspicious guest.

### Dec. 19

**4:16 a.m.** 400 block of Kimberly Court: assistance rendered. Citizen requesting assistance with changing her oxygen filter. Officer assisted and filter was changed.

### Dec. 20

**3:48 p.m.** U.S. Highway 101 at Warren Way: driving privileges suspended/revoked. Officer stopped vehicle for illegal U-turn. Driver was cited for driving while suspended.

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