

Naturopathic college looks to expand in South Portland rather than relocate

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

David Schleich, president of National College of Naturopathic Medicine, likes to quote this line from poet Robert Browning: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

Schleich is reaching to create a campus that will encompass the six square blocks bounded by Southwest Arthur and Woods streets, Kelly Avenue and Naito Parkway. He already has much of it in his grasp.

Since 1998, the college has operated out of a former Portland Community College campus at 049 S.W. Porter St. In 2007 they acquired the old Oregon Public Broadcasting facility at 2828 S.W. Naito Parkway and moved their administrative offices, and Helfgott Research Institute, there.

The college is currently turning a property on Southwest Woods Street into a large herb garden that will allow instructors to show their students what their medicines look like in nature. Last year the college acquired the Seemans Building on Southwest Porter Street from Andrew Davis; the college has begun converting it into a clinic that will replace an existing facility in Northwest Portland, and the college will have a "soft opening" in late summer.

Additionally, the college owns a building on Southwest Porter Street and Naito Parkway that will some day have school uses; possibilities include a student center and cafeteria, library, research center and bookstore, or some

combination of these.

The college owns several other properties and intends to acquire more as they become available. These will be used for student and faculty housing, and perhaps some retail services.

The aim is to create "a more integrated campus," Schleich told *The Post*. Marilyn Considine, public relations director, added that another aim is to allow "one stop shopping" for patients.

Until two years ago, it was by no means certain that all this would take place here in Portland. The college considered 19 possible locations for a campus, one as far away as Ashland. "We loved it, but it was too expensive and too small," Schleich said.

One of the criteria for a site was creating a campus that would be "minimally disruptive to our existing operations," and this clearly favored the existing neighborhood. "There were a few things that finally, totally convinced me to stay here and grow," Schleich said.

One of these was the reaction of the surrounding neighborhood to their plans; NCNM wanted to be a college "well-grounded in its community." "Our first meeting with the neighborhood [South Portland Neighborhood Association] was excellent," Schleich said. "They were so welcoming."

Asked how the association felt about the school acquiring private housing, often a sore point between neighborhoods and institutions, the response was, "Keep it people-oriented, and we're with you," Schleich recalled. The school hopes to make its facilities available to its neighbors, and would like to involve students of the nearby

Cedarwood School in some way.

"The neighborhood association is behind them 100 percent," Love said of the college's current efforts. He cautioned that the association has not yet fully reviewed long-term plans, but said, "So far, they've been extremely great to work with."

The college could use the housing, Considine said, for its students tend to be older than the average undergraduate; they are independent, some are married, and a few have children. The college recently held a "Take Your Munchkin To School" day, she recalled.

The college's current enrollment is about 500 students, Considine said, and they hope to increase this to 800. The college also hopes to increase its course offerings in the area of nutrition, public health and herbal arts.

National College of Naturopathic Medicine has already had collaborative ventures with other institutions such as Western States Chiropractic College, Oregon College of Oriental Medicine and Oregon Health and Sciences University.

Work with this last, the state's principal medical school, is an indicator of the degree to which traditional medical providers are accepting arts they once dismissed as akin to witchcraft. "The relationship has changed a lot as the



David Schleich and Marilyn Considine at the construction site of a new herb garden at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

benefits of natural medicine have become more widely accepted," Schleich said.

Considine noted that according to a recent study, many patients use alternative medical treatment without telling their mainstream doctors they are doing it. In a way, the college has always been on the cutting edge of this trend.

Founded in 1956, it is one of the oldest such institutions in North America, and its graduates have gone on to create similar institutions elsewhere. "Portland is probably the richest city in the country for natural medicine, and yet much of its citizenry is not aware of it," Schleich mused. That will change as he literally puts the school on the map.

Of course, to do so will involve money the school does not currently have. "Creation of the vision will take sizeable donations," Considine admitted. "We're reaching out to everyone we know. We definitely see this happening in the next five to ten years."

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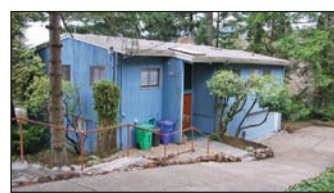
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