

# 401 Counterculture: Sandi Andersen and the Dharma Healing Center

Americans have an interesting fascination with their health and well-being from the perspectives of both groundbreaking advances in western medicine, and a continued exploration of alternative medicines and healthy lifestyles hailed by many, scorned by some, manipulated by con men and brought to fruition by the true believers willing to show the way.

One such groundbreaking institute of alternative health and medicine is right at Providence's doorstep, and for those willing to commit their energies and open their minds, they will meet the lovely and enigmatic Sandi Andersen, founder and practitioner of Dharma Healing Center. I sat down with Sandi recently for a talk about just what Dharma does, and why Providence needs to talk about their health from a new perspective.

**Adam J Schirling:** For the uninformed, what is Dharma Healing Center and what is your role?

**Sandi Andersen:** At Dharma Healing Center, you will experience healing naturally and naturally healing experiences. We explore food as medicine, the expansion of human consciousness through programs, clinics and classes, bodywork, skin therapy, life & wellness coaching, yoga and meditation, for the integration of mind, body, spirit and environment in preventive healthcare, education, business and personal development. We believe there is an intimate connection between mind, body and spirit as well as between the individual and the environment. We share a vision of higher states of consciousness and embrace the path of enlightenment. The Dharma team will guide you on your path in achieving your goals. Success in health and wellbeing is yours to be had.

My role at Dharma is visionary, CEO, founder and traditional chinese medicine practitioner.

**AJS:** How did Dharma Healing Center come to be?

**SA:** Two and half years I ago I was working by myself with more clients than I could possibly serve. I was involved in a number of networking groups within the healing community and noticed that many amazing and talented practitioners could not make a living at their chosen craft or struggled to make ends meet. This inspired the umbrella the Dharma Healing center has structured to support practitioners by empowering them to focus on their healing practice instead of all the other stuff (marketing, scheduling, software management, administrative support, etc). The result is the practitioners are doing fabulous, the clients experience radical attention and support, and our business is growing!

The Dharma umbrella frees the practitioners up to focus their energy and attention on their healing practice instead of the admin work and the stuff that many practitioners just do not like to do.

**AJS:** Why do Rhode Islanders need Dharma Healing and similar services?

**SA:** Our society has had a loss of common knowledge. Until recently much of health was from our own kitchens, our own gardens, our mothers and grandmothers. Our society has lost touch with basic healing practices and as such, we have lost or given our power away to the almighty doctor or western

medicine.

Rhode Islanders, as well as the entire human race, need the work that the Dharma practitioners and other (w)holistic healers do. Two out of three Americans seek alternative (w)holistic healing services because traditional medicine is not providing the results we seek.

**AJS:** In your opinion, what is the state of health in our country right now?

Putting it in perspective ... I visited a huge box store yesterday and watched the food that people were purchasing. I have such a sadness to see the state of health and dis-ease that many are accustomed to living with. Lifestyle and food options are really bad in our country. If people do not have options, what are they to do but purchase bulk dis-ease-causing food-like products?

In addition, there's an epidemic of stress combined with a misconception that life is supposed to be easy. In reality, we have always had stress — huge amounts of stress — however, how we deal with it is the difference.

In Ayurveda, we believe that the body will heal itself when the body is allowed to balance itself by reducing stress, reducing foods that are difficult to digest, and using bodywork (massage) to stimulate the physical body in processing and eliminating amma (imbalances). Modern science is beginning to go back these ancient practices. The best proof, however, is in the pudding. Our clients show us every day that the work we do and provide is changing their lives for the better.

**AJS:** What's the biggest threat to the physical and spiritual health of Americans?

**SA:** The idea that change is scary. However, the only constant is the scary truth defined as change. If you are not feeling great, physically, mentally and emotionally, then you are suffering and dying.

As the human race catapults through time, we slowly, and in some ways quickly, are realizing the only option for humans is to change everything — how we eat, what we eat, where we get our food, how we think, what we listen to, who we listen to. With all that said, the great change is ironically going to be us going back to our roots. Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine have had the answers for thousands of years. The great change will be the human race entering a state of humility and receptiveness to the grandmothers and grandfathers of health and well-being. The forefathers of every culture and race have always looked to food as medicine. Now we are beginning to go back to these ancient truths.

**AJS:** You are the third small business owner I have interviewed for this column, and others have mentioned the overwhelmingly positive and interesting dynamics of running a successful small business in Rhode Island. Do you have any comments on that?

**SA:** I have found that people want to see us succeed. Everyone from our landlord, Robert D'Amico, to our realtor to our laundry company and every single client is cheering us on. We have so much support from our community and we are beyond grateful.

**AJS:** What are some things the average Rhode Islander can tweak in their daily schedule to begin making improvements in their well-being?

**SA:** The first step in the well-being awareness practice or process is just that — to create a daily practice. It can be as simple as drinking a glass of warm water with freshly squeezed lemon first thing

in the morning as a Sadhana, literally “a means of accomplishing something,” that can include meditation and mantras.

“A daily routine is absolutely necessary to bring radical change in body, mind and consciousness. Routine helps to establish balance in one’s constitution. It also regulates a person’s biological clock; aids digestion, absorption and assimilation; and generates self-esteem, discipline, peace, happiness, and longevity.” — Vasant Lad, B.A.M.S., M.A.Sc., Ayurvedic Physician

**AJS:** What is your response to the naysayers who arise when any non-western medicine is espoused as beneficial or life-saving?

**SA:** To each his/her own. However, if and when you need us and realize that the alternative does not serve you, we will be here. Judgment-free with open arms and open minds.

**AJS:** Would you consider what you do alternative health? Why or why not?

**SA:** (W)holistic (whole healing), alternative health and medicine is one way of describing the work we do. In reality, we are simply the liaisons of balance. Balance heals the mind, body and spirit. We are the only true traditional medicine, but we will give society time to catch up.

**AJS:** What can the one expect when visiting Dharma Healing Center for the first time? Are there many timid newcomers or regular veterans?

**SA:** With over 3,000 new clients in 2014 our practice is growing. When one comes to Dharma, the experience speaks for itself. You will need to visit to truly understand. I can say it better this way: You will not experience a conveyor belt massage, you will not experience hard selling, you will not experience a cold receptionist and you will not experience inexperienced practitioners. And the proof is in the number of new clients who decide to become members.

Our team is one of the most exceptional (w)holistic healing teams I have ever worked with and the value provided to our clients is unparalleled.

If you are a member at the Dharma Healing Center, you will experience 70 minutes of hands-on time during your sessions with extra time to chat with your practitioner before and after your session, free nutritional support and coaching, extra discounts on all services, and members always get free mini sessions any time, as needed, to support them through whatever life has them going through. Ultimately, they experience the personal time, commitment and dedication of the Dharma practitioners.

**AJS:** What is the biggest misconception about you and Dharma Healing that you want to clarify?

**SA:** I do not know of the specific misconceptions about Dharma outside of the societal misconceptions of (w)holistic or alternative health and medicine. I only know that when our clients come to us they want to stay, they want to learn more, they want to understand why they have not heard of these options before and they want their health insurance to cover their services and feel that it is a crime that health insurance does not cover preventive care such as Ayurveda and Chinese medicine.

Dharma Healing Center, **536 Atwells Ave, Providence. 401.237.0180, dharmanutritionhealing.com, Mon - Sat, 9am - 8pm**

