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[Print Page](#)

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North Coast celebrates new move and 25 years in business

PORTSMOUTH — North Coast Family Health and Naturopathic Medicine will be celebrating 25 years of providing holistic health care to the Seacoast in January.

The clinic has recently relocated to Orchard Park from its offices on Noble's Island. Now located on the first floor with easy wheelchair access, the clinic is pleasantly lit by natural sunlight in most of the rooms and the entrance and hallways are painted in a calming surf blue with soft lemon yellow accents.

Husband and wife team, Dr. Leon Hecht and Dr. Kristy Fassler, naturopathic doctors, opened North Coast in 1990 in the Jabez Fitch House on the Hill. The practice moved to Noble's Island in 1993 and Dr. Jennifer Quinn joined the group.

Naturopathic medicine is the art and science of healing, based on the primary principle of preventing and reversing the underlying causes of disease.

"Leon and I were involved in the licensure of naturopathic doctors in this state," Fassler said. "My husband and I hold license numbers 2 and 3."

Former Gov. Steve Merrill signed the New Hampshire Naturopathic Licensing Bill in 1995. Fassler served on the naturopathic licensing board for eight years and Hecht continues to serve on the naturopathic formulary board.

Today, according to the N.H. Association of Naturopathic Doctors, there are 84 licensed naturopathic doctors in the state.

"We have seen a lot of progress in the acceptance of naturopathic medicine during the first 25 years," Fassler said. "Who knows what the next 25 years will bring."

Fassler received her doctorate of naturopathic medicine degree from Bastyr University of Natural Health Sciences in Seattle, Wash., in 1988.

She became interested in naturopathic medicine when she had an extreme case of eczema when she was 27.

"I was given cortisone cream, but as soon as I stopped using it, the eczema came back," she said.

Fassler discovered that by changing her diet, the rash disappeared.

"Many of our patients come to us in desperation because they are not finding solutions elsewhere," Fassler said. "Eighty-five percent of our patients have chronic diseases, and many of them are from tick-borne infections. Ticks are nature's dirty needles."

While North Coast does not take medical insurance plans, Fassler said, on the other hand, the doctors are not governed by insurance companies' time constraints.

"Medical doctors see patients on an average of 10 minutes and treat one symptom," she said. "We look at the whole person in an integrated practice, and may spend two hours during the initial visit."

North Coast treats many patients for hormonal imbalances, digestive disturbances, allergies and tick-borne illnesses.

"Ticks don't just carry Lyme disease," Fassler said. "There are also Babesia and Bartonella."

She added that there are a lot of false negatives when a person is tested for Lyme disease. Babesia is a malarial-like infection that is extremely prevalent in New England. Bartonella is a bacteria found in ticks.

The practice moved to Orchard Park in November and added two doctors, Jacob Aguiar and Lindsay DeHass.

"Interestingly enough, all doctors in this practice went to Bastyr University," Fassler said. "It's really just a coincidence."

There are currently four federally accredited naturopathic doctor post-graduate schools in the United States.

North Coast treats patients from birth through senior adult years. It currently has 3,000 active patients.

"Healing is a process," Fassler said. "We look at a patient's lifestyle, diet and hormonal imbalances, and then integrate new scientific knowledge with the healing power of natural therapies to help reverse the underlying causes of symptoms to prevent future illness."

AT A GLANCE



Dr. Leon Hecht and Dr. Kristy Fassler, naturopathic doctors who own North Coast Family Health and Naturopathic Medicine in Portsmouth in the center's new office at Orchard Park. The practice will be celebrating its 25th year in January 2015. Suzanne Laurent photo

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