



CLINICAL CARE

Garden of Pure Water

"Garden of Pure Water" is the first in a line of DVDs offering the healing power of nature, music and guided imagery to promote health and well-being.

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The University of Minnesota's **Center for Spirituality & Healing** enriches health and well-being by providing high-quality interdisciplinary education, conducting rigorous research, and delivering innovative programs that advance integrative health and healing.

Following an Unknown Path

BEN BAECHLER STRADDLES MEDICINE AND BUSINESS
TO BRING WELLNESS TO THE WORLD

By Dianne Lev, Development Director



While passing through the halls of Mayo Memorial Building, Ben Baechler's life changed. A fourth-year Medical School student, Baechler was on a Urology rotation when he discovered the Center for Spirituality & Healing. Following a brief introduction to Mary Jo Kreitzer, Baechler knew that he had discovered

both a compatriot spirit and a new path that would impact him profoundly – in unforeseen personal and professional ways.

Only a few weeks later, Baechler responded to the Center's call for medical students to become part of a pioneering cohort that would study integrative medicine on the Big Island of Hawaii (**Integrative Healing in Hawaii INMD 7580**). For three weeks in the spring of 2005, Baechler spent time with legendary Medtronic founder, Earl Bakken; program director, Ken Riff MD; staff from North Hawaii Community Hospital; and a network of integrative health practitioners who were exploring, with great success, new models of care and healing. "I wish it weren't such a cliché to say that the experience was transformative, because it was! Those encounters gave me confidence to accept that my own approach to helping others would be unconventional," Baechler reflects. "Up until that time, I had been exposed only to classical medical training. After Hawaii, I knew I was ready to finish medical school and continue exploring new models of care. And I stayed connected to the Center – for course content and inspiration."

In fact, the connection only grew stronger. While finishing his degree, Baechler revised his schedule to take several Center courses, including **Introduction to Complementary Healing Practices, CSPH 5101; Art of Healing: Self as Healer, CSPH 5102; and Plants in Human Affairs, CSPH 5405**. He soaked up knowledge and new insights from Center faculty, and graduated from Medical School with a nearly-completed Graduate

Certificate in Complementary Therapies and Healing Practices (he will complete the program this fall). Then life intervened and Baechler's less-traveled road took another interesting turn.

This time, a knock of opportunity came from Baechler's identical twin brother, Andrew. In the late '90s, Andrew had been involved in a start-up venture that advanced early environmental technology. Now a full-fledged entrepreneur, Andrew was looking to bring wellness products to a consumer audience increasingly interested in prevention, nutrition and dietary supplements. Andrew sought his brother's medical experience as well as his passion for research, and in 2001, they became partners in a company called Eniva, a nutritional research and design firm.

Eniva products are known as nutraceuticals – dietary supplements produced to pharmaceutical standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. Andrew focused on building an international sales community while Ben directed product design, testing and training to ensure that Eniva representatives would understand their products' composition, benefits and limitations. "The partnership with Andrew is a family endeavor and it is also an incredible pairing of complementary expertise," admits Baechler. "We positively challenge each other's perspective and we agree totally on the shared vision of bringing wellness to the world."



This 2005 photo shows University medical students Ben Baechler, Lindsay Darrah, Brad Kuzel, and Kari Thompson surrounding Medtronic founder and Center supporter Earl Bakken (center).



"This was the highlight of my medical school experience. Amazing, caring, insightful instructors combined with a true passion for teaching. Thank you so much for a life changing experience."

Today, Ben Baechler's path finds him in the fast lane on multiple fronts...

Integrative Approaches to Primary Care

Still with Eniva, Baechler has returned to the University of Minnesota's Family Medicine residency program and is assigned to Smiley's Clinic in Minneapolis. It's a great fit, given the staff's strong commitment to evidence-based, integrative and global health practices. "I see patients each day who want options that include integrative health solutions. They push me as a practitioner to reach beyond traditional, allopathic models and consider more holistic approaches," he says. "The world truly is becoming smaller—Smiley's has one of the largest immigrant populations within the University's Family Medicine Clinics. Patients' cultural expectations require that physicians add integrative modalities to their treatment toolboxes."

Strategic Relationships for Nutraceutical Research

Baechler wants to demonstrate conclusively that natural products can be used for effective health promotion, proactive prevention and therapeutic intervention. He sees a myriad of applications in the areas of cardiology, immunity, stress reduction, and positive aging, to name a few. And he wants any natural products sales representative, regardless of their company affiliation, to be well-versed in product manufacturing processes and tested benefits. "We're at a pivotal point in this industry's growth curve," he observes. "As leaders in business and consumer health, we need to take it upon ourselves to self-regulate for accuracy and legitimacy. This form of accountability is a far more desirable future for the public's well-being."

Advancing the Center for Spirituality & Healing

For Baechler, it's also a time to give back. He is working with Mary Jo Kreitzer and several like-minded members of the Center's newly-formed Development Circle. Even in these tough economic times, the group is attracting traditional philanthropic gifts, and at the same time, they are formulating more entrepreneurial, sustainable approaches to support the Center's longer-term growth. "There is literally a sea change taking place in this country and around the world. In time, integrative health will become commonplace in homes, clinics, hospitals, long-term care communities...everywhere," he notes. "The Center is, without question, leading the way in educating the next generation of practitioners, conducting research, exploring clinical models and reaching out to the public. I want to influence the extent of its impact in the years ahead."

At the end of a long day filled with patients, business meetings and conversations with donors about the Center, Baechler finds his way home to his wife, Courtney, also a medical doctor in the field of cardiology, and their new baby, Sophia. In the nursery, his multiple roles of physician, entrepreneur, researcher, and fundraiser melt away, and he gets to be what he loves most: dad. He hopes to convey to his daughter the core values of family, community, learning, questioning and spirituality that have so deeply shaped his own life. And he wants her to know that transformative new directions for her life await around every corner when she is ready to explore them.