

Halt the downward spiral of osteoarthritis

Arthritis is a very common problem that progresses as we age. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 50 percent of Americans age 65 or older have been diagnosed with it. By far the most common form is osteoarthritis, sometimes called the “wear and tear” type.



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It is typical to see arthritic damage in the joint years after an injury, or with overuse; once we reach a certain age the X-ray changes are almost universal. There seems to be a genetic component to it as well — some people are more prone to this type of arthritis if there is a strong family history.

X-rays are a great way to diagnose arthritis, but they cannot tell whether it is causing any pain. The pain in an arthritic joint is not always from the arthritis itself; it is often caused by the same joint and muscle problems that cause pain in so many people without arthritis. I have seen patients with “bone on bone” arthritis have great pain relief when the joints were treated; clearly, their pain was due to something other than the arthritis seen on their X-rays.

Manipulation is the treatment that we start with for most of our arthritic patients. (This is not the case for patients with the disease type of arthritis.) Chiropractors are trained in many styles of manipulation, and we often modify our treatments for arthritic joints. There are special tables that allow us to use much less force, and no “cracking,” to get the joint working better and improve alignment, as well as handheld instruments that use even less force, perfect for the patient who has both arthritis and osteoporosis.

There are also tables that create gentle traction on the spine, which is a great relief for low back arthritis. If there is advanced arthritis, the relief may not be complete, but most patients do benefit from manipulation.

Acupuncture is also very helpful in treating arthritis. It reduces pain and inflammation, relaxes the surrounding muscles, and makes most patients feel more relaxed afterward.

These treatments are helpful in stopping or reversing the downward cycle that is common in arthritis; this is a situation where activity causes pain, so the patient does less and less until they end up sitting most of the day.

Unfortunately, inactivity is also bad for arthritic joints, so anything that improves tolerance for exercise helps prevent further damage to the joints.

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LINDA COAN O'KRESIK | BDN

Three generations of women from one Bangor family, Connie Potvin (from left), Beth Martin, Lyn Rohman and Amelia Potvin, have become active in environmental advocacy.

Becoming an active family

Three generations of women turn to environmental advocacy

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Bangor-area sisters Lyn Rohman, 57, and Connie Potvin, 58, never thought of themselves as political activists.

Until recently, the two — Rohman is a fundraising officer at Husson University and Potvin is an employee wellness coach — confined their volunteer efforts to local organizations and projects such as Junior League, Girl Scouts of America, the American Folk Festival, the Bangor Area Chamber of Commerce, and other local civic and social causes.

But at midlife, they have rolled up their sleeves to take on what may well be the most logistically daunting and politically divisive issue of all — global climate change. With leadership from Potvin's 29-year-old daughter, Amelia Potvin, and the active support of their 76-year-old mother, Beth Martin, the sisters last year founded the Bangor chapter of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, a nonpartisan international organization aimed at empowering voters and building the political will to counteract climate change.

The two sisters co-lead the Bangor group, which now has an active membership of about 30 and growing. In June, they travelled to Washington, D.C., with other environmental activists from across the country, where they met with members of Maine's congressional delegation and lobbied in support of Citizens' Climate Lobby's across-the-aisle initiatives.

It's an entirely new experience for them. Connie Potvin, who lives in Hampden, credits her headstrong, independent daughter with getting the family active with the

Citizens' Climate Lobby.

While some families struggle to reconcile generational differences of opinion, it was her daughter's commitment to environmental causes that tweaked this family's social conscience and kindled its idealism.

“It really all started with Amelia,” she said.

A role for ‘people like us’

“The whole advocacy world is foreign to us,” said Rohman of Bangor in a recent interview, “but we know there are many more people like us, from our backgrounds, who believe that climate change is real and needs to be addressed.”

People “like her” — she is trim, professional, conservative in dress and manner and married to former Bangor mayor John Rohman — bring a measure of balance to an issue that tends to be co-opted, on both sides of the debate, by more flamboyant, impassioned representatives.

Potvin, married to physician Paul Potvin, has much the same demeanor and a similar perspective on the roll she can play.

“I appreciate the clarity of the [Citizens' Climate Lobby] mission, the way the organization tries to raise awareness and talk about climate change to members of Congress regardless of where they are on the political spectrum,” said Connie Potvin, who is registered as an unenrolled voter.

Citizens' Climate Lobby, she said, aims to “turn down the heat” under the fractious political and economic debate surrounding climate change, develop broad agreement that a problem exists and move forward with effective, politically acceptable and scientifically sound solutions.

The problem, and a step toward solution

When Amelia Potvin explained the Citizens' Climate Lobby's targeted goals to her mother and her aunt, they were taken by the practical, nonpartisan focus of the organization's strategy.

Scientists agree that significantly elevated amounts of greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere are driving a global warming trend that eclipses any natural patterns of change.

Since the greatest source of these greenhouse gasses is the burning of fossil fuels, the climate change lobby supports a revenue-neutral proposal known as Carbon Fee and Dividend. The measure would impose a fee on fossil fuel producers, creating a fund that returns an annual dividend to American households and providing a financial incentive for energy companies to develop sustainable energy alternatives.

The organization also supports a nonbinding House resolution, introduced in September by Rep. Chris Gibson, R-New York, that acknowledges the broad negative effects of climate change, addresses its human roots and urges House members to work together toward a constructive solution.

“The goal is really to gain more Republican support, because many Democrats are already on board,” said Lyn Rohman. She is registered in the Green Party, she said, “but fiscally, I'm an old-school Republican.”

“I consider myself a behind-the-scenes person,” she added. “I'm not an expert, and I don't have scientific credentials. My strongest motivation is the responsibility I feel to the

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Lessons from online dating

In my last column, I compared signing up on Match.com to stepping alone into a boisterous, ongoing party. There you are, feeling a little intimidated and waiting for someone to come over and chat you up.

Since I'm an introvert, this was a deeply uncomfortable situation for me. It didn't help that my self-esteem had taken a big hit when my marriage fell apart. So, as I tend to do at parties, I held back and checked things out for quite a while, building up my courage and keeping an eye on the exit.

Fortunately, not everyone at this online party was as tentative as I was. After an initial flurry of slightly offensive emails, which I just ignored, I started getting more appropriate messages that referenced my profile.

“I see you like the water,” one of them might have said. “I just came back from fishing with my buddies.”

These messages, for the most part, felt like friendly overtures from good-natured men working at overcoming their own shyness.

To be honest, though, I wasn't interested in many of the men who initially contacted me. My outdoorsy profile had called in the hook-and-bullet crowd, when I prefer activities such as kayaking and hiking. I revised my profile to be more precise about those interests and with a stronger focus on art, travel and politics. After that, I got better responses.

But I also realized that I would need to loosen up and make space for someone new in my life. My future partner, if he existed, was not going to be just like me, my ex-husband or some idealized man I conjured up in a daydream. He would be a unique, imperfect, mature guy with his own interests and commitments, looking for a compatible woman to bring intimacy, companionship and security to his life. He was probably as uncomfortable with the online dating world as I was.

Emboldened by this insight, I relaxed and reminded myself that this process was about dating, not mating for life — an opportunity to meet a variety of men, enjoy some social interaction and learn more about myself in the process. So I tried to be more open, and I started initiating some contacts myself.

Over the next couple of years, on and off, I met and chatted casually via email with a lot of men. I spoke with some on the phone. I met a few face-to-face for coffee, a walk or a quick meal — always someplace public and safe. Three I saw more than once, but, as pleasant as these exploratories were, none developed into more than warm friendships.

I learned to break off an unpromising relationship without delay, and I learned to shake it off and move on when someone I was interested in didn't return the sentiment. I learned I could trust my intuition about the men I met online; I kept my radar on all the time, and never once did I feel I had been duped or conned.

These lessons alone were worth the price of admission to the Match.com party. But after two years of exploring the online scene, on and off, I was ready to wrap it up and go forward on my own. And then, just as I was waving goodbye and heading for the door, Douglas walked in.



MEG HASKELL

5 restaurants for midlife date night

Mainers share their favorite eateries

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Whether you're heading out for a quick drink, pre-theater bites or something else, Maine is full of great spots for libations and food. For dating couples in their midlife, the ambiance of a quiet cafe provides a pleasant backdrop for a getting-to-know-you conversation, while longtime partners find that an occasional night out adds spice to an everyday routine.

But where should you go? We asked five midlife Mainers for their favorite spots.

Sea Dog Brewing Co. and Thistles, Bangor

Lucas Richman, 51, has served as music director of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra for about six years, but he and his wife, Debbie, only recently sold their house in Knoxville, Tennessee, to settle full time in the Queen City. And they're al-

ready finding favorite spots among Bangor's growing food scene.

“Bangor seems to be a growing foodie destination,” Richman said. “There are a lot of new restaurants with a young, vibrant atmosphere.”

One of their favorites? The Sea Dog Brewing Co. on the Bangor waterfront. One of six locations of the brewing company that was founded in 1993 in Camden, the Sea Dog offers its own craft brews, including lagers and ales.

“We really like the Sea Dog Brewing Co. for its lobster roll and fish and chips,” he said. “And we love the year-round view of the river and the informal atmosphere. It's one of the things that first enchanted us about Bangor.”

Plus, he added, he's a member in good standing of the Mug Club, with a personalized beer mug hanging behind the busy bar.

For a more formal night



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out, Richman enjoys Thistles Restaurant, another Bangor landmark. The restaurant features dishes from Central and South America as well as European specialties.

“The food is tremendous,” Richman said. He recommends the Argentinian beef empanadas and the grilled avocado salad.

Sea Dog Brewing Co., 26 Front St., Bangor; 11:30 a.m.-1 a.m. Monday-Sunday. Thistles Restaurant, 175 Exchange St., Bangor; 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Quoddy Bay Lobster and Local Tavern & Grill, Eastport

Way down in Washington County, Chris Grannis, 61, runs the Eastport Arts Center, which supports an inviting, year-round calendar of educational and cultural events. She and her husband, Steve, have two local favorites for date nights.

The first is the uber-casual Quoddy Bay Lobster, a traditional New England clam shack with an indoor restaurant and a counter with outdoor seating. The seasonal

spot, a favorite for its lobster rolls, chowders and more, closes for the winter.

Off-season, they head for the newly opened Local Tavern & Grill, which debuted in March with a menu featuring American favorites made with locally sourced meats, seafood and dairy products. Located right across from the public library, the spot has a regular rotation of entertainment as well.

“They have karaoke at night and live music every weekend,” Grannis said.

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Two patrons make their way into the Sea Dog Brewing Co. restaurant on Front Street in Bangor in March.