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Food as medicine, Farm focuses on health

by BizTimes Staff | May 28, 2012, 12:00 AM

<https://www.biztimes.com/2012/industries/food-beverage/food-as-medicine-farm-focuses-on-health/>

Kathy Bero founded Pewaukee-based NuGenesis Farm Inc. two years ago after surviving cancer diagnoses three times. Bero founded the non-profit organization, which is dedicated to working to prevent disease through education, sustainable organic agriculture and research. Since its founding, NuGenesis has opened a 35-acre farm in Pewaukee, raised more than \$500,000 in donations and has educated nearly 6,000 residents on how to maximize their health through good food choices. The organization has also hired its first executive director, Teresa Monaghan.

“Almost seven years ago I was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer. A few years after that, I was diagnosed with head and neck cancer. I was not expected to survive,” Bero said.

Bero began studying angiogenesis, the abnormal process of new blood vessel formation, which some research indicates is the root cause of many diseases, including cancer.

“Angiogenesis basically says that cancer and other diseases are dependent on blood vessels to survive and even thrive,” she said. “I was prescribed Avastin to help slow the growth of new blood vessels.”

While receiving traditional cancer treatments including the Avastin and chemotherapy, Bero learned that good food choices can also slow the growth of new blood vessels. So, she thought changing her diet might also help in her cancer treatment.

Bero says she has been able to keep her cancer from recurring and pain from arthritis at a minimum by eating specific foods scientifically proven to combat inflammatory related disease.

In addition to cancer, other inflammatory diseases that Bero says research indicates a good food diet can help combat are Alzheimer’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes, Lou Gehrig’s disease, Crohn’s disease, multiple sclerosis and age-related muscular degeneration.

Bero’s personal journey to health eventually led to the formation of NuGenesis. She initially reached out to Ford Titus, former chief executive officer of ProHealth Care.

“I thought I could help cancer patients,” she said. “It started at what was supposed to be a small project within the hospital but it has become so much more than that. It’s now a collaboration between multiple community partners. It’s physicians, board members, farmers and schools working together to improve health care, the quality of life and the economic stability of our community.”

“People have come together in droves to make change happen,” said Bero. “People are literally hungry for good information and passionate about choosing and preparing food that keeps them healthy, avoids disease or helps them recover from an illness.”

In addition to ProHealth Care, through its farm, headquarters and educational facility at N14 W29503 Silvernail Road in Pewaukee, the organization has formed collaborative partnerships with, Waukesha County Technical College, the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha, University of Wisconsin-Extension Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Quad/Graphics, Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, Arrowhead and Oconomowoc School districts, Carroll University, Good Harvest Market and other corporations, Bero said.

Suzanne Kelly, president of the Waukesha County Business Alliance, got involved with the organization for personal reasons, but said she sees the benefit in making connections between local businesses and the farm.

“Rising health care costs continue to be a significant challenge for employers in our area,” she said. “Promoting employee wellness and healthy eating habits can help get health care costs under control. If NuGenesis can help educate employees on what foods to eat, help educate employees on incorporating the right fruits and vegetables into their diets, employers can be rewarded by having healthier and more productive employees.”

Kelley is on the board of directors of NuGenesis, along with Titus and medical professionals from Waukesha Surgical Specialists, Radiology Waukesha S.C., Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

“Food is very basic,” said Dr. Kay Klaas, radiologist at Radiology Waukesha S.C., part of Waukesha Memorial Hospital. “So much of health care costs are related to self-inflicted decisions that people are deciding to participate in, bad behaviors such as not wearing seat belts, not eating healthy and nutritious foods. At some point we’re going to need to get to a point of medicine being more preventative instead of reactive. We need to work to get people out of that type of mindset. NuGenesis has a mission of education that can help people get to that point.”

NuGenesis offers year-round classes to help consumers learn about preparing and choosing food as medicine. This year NuGenesis hopes to form more relationships with local businesses and corporations, said Monaghan, executive director.

"I wish I would have had this information 20 years ago," said Bero. "We all need to know that the poor quality of our food is a leading cause of cancer and a myriad of other chronic illnesses plaguing our communities. A healthier population translates into higher productivity at work, healthier kids at school and lower health care costs, feeding the growth of the local economy. This, I believe, is the true health care reform we're all searching for."

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