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## Birch River

### Setting the Tone for the Day – a More Active Way of Life

Starting your day with something you do just for yourself? Some meditation perhaps? A little exercise? For most of us, reality is more like grabbing a quick bite and getting

going with our day.

Bernice Patience is in the process of changing that routine for herself, and lately likes to begin her days with some de-stressing Chi Kung. The breathing, stretching and movement exercises relax her and set the tone for her day.

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Patience learned Chi Kung in classes introduced to her community by its CDPI committee, of which she’s the leader. Now, long after the classes are done, she’s still reaping the benefits and practicing what she learned. Chi Kung, which is designed to tone both mind and body, is a less aggressive form of Tai Chi. “It clears your mind and helps you get in tune with yourself emotionally and mentally,” said

Patience, who also walks every day. The program has helped seniors with pain control, even in cases of arthritis.

Birch River’s CDPI committee also initiated a hugely successful diabetes clinic, with 67 people participating, out of a total population of around 400. The great turnout didn’t just happen – Patience went through the local phonebook and phoned everyone she thought might be interested, and those she knew had risk factors for diabetes. This way, she said, “We got people who weren’t normally involved in a lot of things and wouldn’t normally come out on their own.” Appointments were slotted for every 15 minutes, and after the diabetes testing was done, people got a free breakfast. The committee is considering a follow-up clinic targeting younger people.

Success means continuity, and that’s just what the people of Birch River are seeing in the programs initiated by CDPI. A walking activity Wednesday nights and community walks with juice and watermelon have resulted in more walkers than there used to be, even when the specific programs are over. Successes include one young woman who, when she started, couldn’t do the whole Wednesday night route, but is now walking regularly and keeping up with the group. A weight loss group that meets Mondays decided to continue through the summer for mutual accountability. A call for donations to equip an exercise room in the seniors centre resulted in 15 pieces of equipment and a regularly used room.

Many of Birch River’s CDPI programs so far have been geared towards seniors, but as a teacher, Patience’s biggest concern is with young people. Birch River is her hometown and she really cares about improving conditions for people and helping them improve their health. “A lot of times,” she said, “you can’t do it alone, but as a group you’ve got the resources.

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**Contact Information:**

Bernice Patience  
204-236-4608

Take Note

**What is Chi Kung?**

- The literal meaning of Chi Kung is “energy exercise” or “working with energy.”
- The goal of Chi Kung exercise is to stimulate the flow of energy internally in the body so that it effectively rushes through and clears the entire network of Chi channels or meridians.
- Chi Kung draws on the accumulated wisdom of Chinese Taoist and Buddhist breathing practices and the practices and disciplines of the martial arts.

<http://www.worldwidehealth.com/health-article-Tai-Chi-and-Chi-Kung-Explained.html>