

# The Heartland Spirit

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## The Power of Healing Hands

*Chiropractor Dr. Deborah Peters Practices Cutting Edge Healing Modalities with Amish Community*

By Nancy Pfoutz | Staff Writer

When first greeted by the graceful, soft-spoken woman with a warm, welcoming smile, a visitor might not notice the doctor's hands. Strong, supple and expressive. Dr. Deborah Peters' hands seem ready to go to work, eager to touch in just the right place to soothe and realign a segment of the body gone slightly out of line.

When she begins talking about the structural elements of the spine and the dural membrane of the newborn, her articulate words are matched by a dance of her hands. One can almost feel her subtle touch that is creating dramatic results in young Amish children living in Southeast Iowa.

Two days a week, this traveling chiropractor journeys to Bloomfield, Drakesville, Milton, Pulaski and Kalona to practice chiropractic and cranial approaches derived from osteopathy with the Amish, a community particularly receptive to her gentle manipulations. Her work includes a special focus on treating newborns, infants and toddlers.

Peters has a unique practice in which she incorporates chiropractic techniques with cranial approaches that gently manipulate the membranes surrounding the brain, spine and joints. These manipulations release distortions in the physiology which relieve imbalances and health problems

both on the level of the body and the mind.

"Within cranial philosophy, there are different approaches.

The direct method involves my deciding what to push or pull when manipulating.

With an indirect approach, I listen to how the tissues want to release themselves and follow that unwinding. There is also a less well-known approach within osteopathy - some call it 'biodynamic' - which is listening on a deeper level to rhythms and patterns, which I believe facilitates the most effective release." Peters predominately uses indirect and biodynamic cranial approaches in her practice.

"The Amish value this approach because, for over 100 years, they've relied on manual therapies for their healing," said Peters. "They live in proximity to the first osteopathic college established in the country, in Kirksville, Missouri, and the first chiropractic college, Palmer Chiropractic in Davenport. Because of their innocence and practice of full-time motherhood, along with a strong sense of community where mothers and sisters support one another, they are sensitive to the effects of this



Dr. Deborah Peters at her home office in Fairfield

subtle approach."

### "Opportunity of a Lifetime"

For Peters, working with Amish families is the "opportunity of a lifetime. They are already familiar with the value of this work, particularly for their children," she says. This opportunity also allows her to meld her knowledge of the structural/functional approach to healing with very recent research on fetal development on the cellular level.

"This research indicates that a large amount of genetic programming is being determined by environmental signals, such as predominant thoughts of the mother, foods eaten, and so forth," said Peters. Cellular biologist Bruce Lipton, Ph.D is furthering this hypothesis that these environmental signals create conditions on the cellular levels of a developing fetus. "My mission is to get the word out and assist the developing membranes of children

[as fetuses and] while they're infants, when their brains are developing so rapidly. If people knew the level of prevention that this work provides, from soothing fussy babies to reversing 'failure to thrive' to avoiding learning delays in school...they would all bring their kids," she says.

"The body has innate ability to heal itself if there's no interference, and chiropractic helps remove those interferences," Peters said. "Osteopathy historically deals with digestive and membranous functions, such as muscle, fascia, ligaments and so on. With newborns, infants and toddlers, the dural membrane (the toughest of three membranes that surrounds the spine and brain and through which all the nerves pass) is what we often work with. Kids come in with membranous distortions that will cause [problems down the road]."

### Grounded in the Hard Sciences

One of Peters' talents is the ability to network and bring together the merits of work done by other professionals. Though her work today might seem esoteric to some, it's actually backed by years of immersion in the hard sciences. Her own academic background is a fusion of influences. She received a B.S. in Geosciences from the University of Arizona, Tuscon, where she wove the study of evolutionary biology and ecology into her study of geology. Peters became interested in quantum physics, studied chemistry and math, and used this science background in her work at NASA's Lunar and Planetary Labs, where she assisted an astronomer.

Her studies brought her into contact with the late Stephen Jay Gould, world-renowned paleontologist and evolutionary theorist, who invited her to come

work with him at Harvard University. Peters declined, feeling an inner calling to follow a slightly different course. She wanted more knowledge of human biology, took more courses, and then enrolled at Palmer College of Chiropractic - West in San Jose, California, from which she graduated in 1990.

"Most people become chiropractors either because they come from a family of them or they have their own healing testimonials," Peters said of her career decision. "I had been a waitress and acquired a low back stress injury. Chiropractic benefited me. In addition, I'd always been told I had an intuitive healing ability."

Peters practiced in Palo Alto, California before moving to Fairfield in 1992. She treats clients of all ages in her practice here.

### A Special Relationship

Peters feels fortunate to have developed a working relationship with the Amish because "it's a huge base to work with - the average family numbers eight people and often there are 12 - 13 children. I've gained an invaluable amount of knowledge about the body, and it's made me a better practitioner with my adult patients."

She first encountered Amish women from Bloomfield while working part-time in Ottumwa in 1996. "They liked the idea of a woman chiropractor and asked if I would come down to Bloomfield one Saturday a month. I was able to help with eye-ear-nose and throat problems, fussiness, difficulty suckling, as well as completely turning around a non-responsive 11-week-old child. Now I'm doing personal training for a family of three sisters who want to learn to become more relaxed in pregnancy and childbirth," said Peters.

Teaching classes has become a big part of Peters' work. She's now training massage therapists, mothers of children with disabilities, and other healers who want to bring the more subtle quantum field effect into the healing process.

### Spreading the Word

Peters is taking her enthusiasm for the new research on infant development on the road. In November, she will be a panel member at an international conference for the Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH) in San Diego.

"It's a conference on the development of the psyche attended by psychologists, obstetrician/gynecologists, doulas (birth attendants) and others," said Peters.

She is developing seminars on pre-conception, pregnancy, birth and post/partum to maximize the optimum environment for the newborn's growth.

"That's the biggest reward, being able to know how much a newborn's life will be changed from this work," Peters said. "My biggest challenge is honoring my own body-mind and learning to say 'no', learning where my limits are when I get fatigued."

For other women in business, Peters advised not to give up on their dreams. Her dream is to continue exploring territories of new knowledge and bridging gaps between diverse fields to raise a new generation of children who will shine with wholeness and health.