

Dear Dr. Wilhelm,

I'm doing very well, thank you, and hope that you are as well. I am still a Registered Dietitian and a Certified Diabetes Educator, and when we last spoke I was working for the UT Health Science Center as a "lifestyle coach" in two NIH funded studies of lifestyle intervention in Type 2 Diabetes and Pre-Diabetes. About 3 years ago I started working on my Master's in Public Health and met Dr. Claudia Miller, who is a Professor of Medicine also with the UT Health Science Center, and who is an international expert on the health effects of low-level chemical exposures and chemical intolerance. Shortly after we met, I came to work with her as a research associate, and basically assist her with all the various projects she works on. This includes the South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) Program, which trains medical and health professions students in public health and Border Health, as well as various research projects and most recently the launching of the only 4-year combined MD/MPH Program in Texas. My current title is related to my role as coordinator for this program, although I continue to work with our other initiatives as well. The MD/MPH Program is a great pleasure – we have the terrific job of bringing the medical/public health community together in support of our students, who are exceptional people – globally-minded, optimistic, community-oriented altruists – and very bright!

I remain involved in dietetics, principally through serving on the board of our local society as the Chair of the Council on Professional Issues, and by frequent guest lecturing on Food System Sustainability, which is my passion. My mother and I remain on the board of Save the Laja, as well, which is a Texas-based non-profit that funds ecological projects in the Texas-Mexico corridor with a focus on the areas around San Miguel de Allende, GTO, Mexico.

You recall my husband Todd, who continues to work for his father's business near our home in central San Antonio. We are members of the San Antonio Museum of Art and enjoy attending openings and lectures there and at our other excellent local art museums. We get out for plays pretty frequently and occasionally for San Antonio Symphony performances, and to a few local jazz clubs. I had been "into" the punk rock scene here a long time ago when I worked in college radio, and still admire and support the do-it-yourself ethic of that scene, but I'm afraid it's now too loud and I'm too old. ☺ We have 3 Weimeriners, a large vegetable garden, and we're planning to get some chickens. The last vacation we took was a couple of years ago to see Todd's family in Canada and then up into Quebec and through the Maritimes to see a small piece of land we bought on Cape Breton Island. We used to travel quite a bit, but have been focused for the past several years on having children, so chose to put travel on hold. Our wish list includes getting back to Canada more often including revisiting Quebec and the town of Tadoussac on the St. Lawrence (where the whales come to feed) and then spending more time in Cape Breton. I'm also extremely eager to visit Cuba. As you know, Cuba lost 90% of its oil imports with the fall of the Soviet Union, so to feed their people they have had to totally overhaul their agricultural system to use organic and permaculture methods.

So, you asked what attending Wilhelm Scholê International meant to me. As you know, I was only there for about 1.5 years before we moved away, but it certainly made a lasting impression. Important and loved was recess (it's essential!) and the amazing snacks we received – nourishing gumbo on cold days, fresh fruit on warm days... As a dietitian and a mother it seems to me that

a huge underlying problem in our society now is that we simply don't know/honor the importance of taking care of each other and ourselves in these simple ways. Our family is firmly middle class, we are not wealthy, so these things we enjoy – good, organic food cooked from scratch or at restaurants that care about quality, or investing in the art museum, or travel – we live “beneath our means” in other ways so that we can afford these essential pleasures. And I think those choices are informed by the lectures you gave, that emphasized the creative spirit and connection with one another through art and music, over the status symbols to which so many are addicted. I don't think it takes much for people to view life through a different lens or to notice that the Emperor wears no clothes, but it does take something, some influence, some experience, some role model or friend to suggest there are other ways to approach daily life. I learned a lot of this from my parents, and a lot of this from you, and I plan to spend the rest of my life continuing to learn and teach with everyone around me – working and playing for a world that holds more peace and beauty.

Thank you for all that you have done for me and for our world.

Love,

Tatjana Walker

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