

## Alliance native co-authors health book with wife

By SHANNON HARSH  
The Review

"We all have the responsibility to take control of our individual health. We can't wait for someone else to do this for us," said Alliance native Dr. Lee Kirksey, who recently co-authored a new book titled "Your Guide to Optimal Health: Creating Your Personal Wellness Wheel."

The former high school athlete said he learned valuable lessons on personal health when he played sports for West Branch High School in the early 1980s and he first became interested in medicine after suffering sports injuries.

Kirksey, who attended The Ohio State University College of Medicine, where he met his wife and co-author, Dr. Seema Patel, is a board certified vascular surgeon dedicated to improving the personal health of his patients. He also serves as assistant professor at The University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and is co-founder of The Institute of Optimal Health, a private company in Pennsylvania that creates wellness healthy living programs for individuals, small groups and large corporations.

Though Kirksey now resides in Philadelphia, Pa., with his wife and their son, he credits much of his current success, which includes numerous awards, honors and publications, to his upbringing in Alliance.

"My background, growing up in Alliance, prepared me for many of the challenges that I have the opportunity to encounter," he explained.

Kirksey acknowledged superb teachers who challenged him, a neighborhood that nurtured him, coaches who taught him valuable life lessons and a family that supported him and helped set the right priorities all as influences in his medical career.

"I think that I feel very comfortable wherever I go in this world and whoever I'm speaking to, that my small community in northeastern Ohio has prepared me to meet the challenge."

The challenge Kirksey currently faces is how to improve the health of his patients — a task which involves educating them on their part in their individual health.

Though he has seen better technology and better medications developed during his medical career, Kirksey said that people still haven't become healthier.

"We don't live longer lives. Our quality of life, in general, is not better. Most of us will still ultimately die of a stroke, heart attack or cancer. And I offer the idea that



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the medical community (which I consider myself a part of) and people in general are responsible," he said. "In many cases, people would rather commit to taking an expensive medication rather than to eating better, losing weight and exercising. We, the medical community, have done a poor job of educating people about lifestyle behaviors and prevention."

Kirksey said he was surprised that many of his patients returned after having a life threatening operation to prevent a stroke and hadn't changed their eating, exercising or smoking habits. "It dawned on me that many people really didn't make the connection that these problems don't just happen," he said. "The problem develops from a life-long series of poor decisions like smoking and eating a high saturated fat diet. These problems really are preventable and in many cases, people will make changes if they just know what to do."

After seeing the success of the Institute's educational programs and its growth in popularity, he and Patel wanted to provide the same program to anyone who has the initiative to change their life. Together, they wrote the book, which gives an eight-part program to improve individual health.

"My colleagues joke with me that 'Your Guide to Optimal Health' is an attempt to put us (vascular surgeons) out of business," he said. "I guess in a way it is. It just doesn't make sense to me that we don't have better programs to teach people how to prevent a lot of medical conditions. And the bottom line is that Medicare is going broke and our health care system is facing a crisis. We have to change the way we do things."

"Your Guide to Optimal Health" represents what I believe is a better way for people to take control of their personal health care and that of their family's," he explained. "What our

book does is to spend time educating the reader because people have to understand why they're making a change. If they don't, the change won't last. We are helping each person to build a sustainable series of changes that will continue over a lifetime."

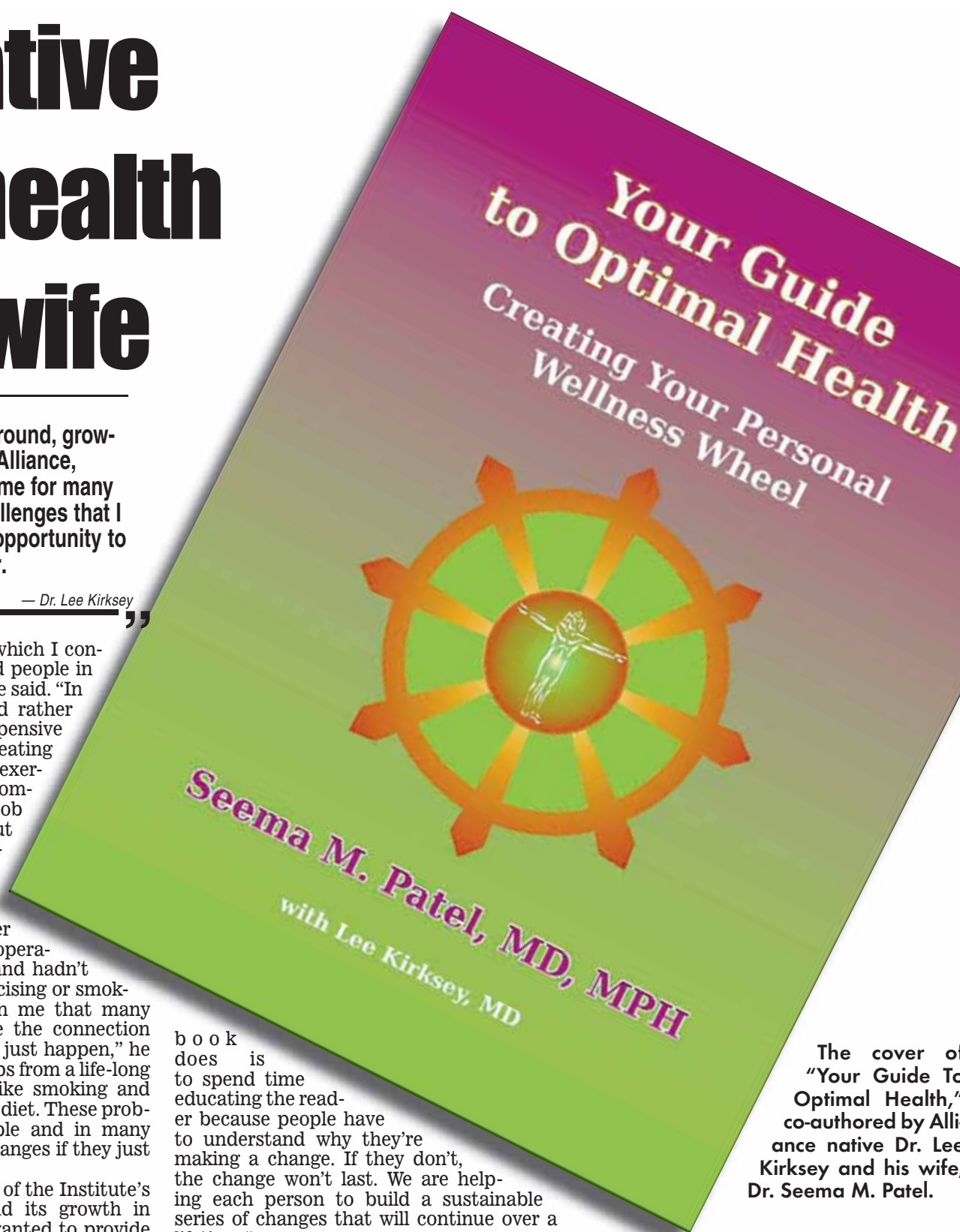
Kirksey describes the book as comprehensive and says in addition to chapters titled "Preventing Chronic Disease," "Changing Personal Habits," "Creating Ultimate Nutrition" and "Maintaining a Youthful Mind and Body," it includes helpful features such as a table of the important preventative screening laboratory tests and procedures that are recommended at various ages and periods of one's life, which can be used to record an ongoing medical history.

The book also covers the component of stress, which is often not addressed. "Stress can cause diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart attack, cancer and so forth," Kirksey noted. "Furthermore, people who don't manage stress well are more likely to become ill and when they do become ill,

they are less likely to manage the problem successfully."

"Your Guide to Optimal Health" is geared toward anyone wanting to gain fundamental knowledge about individual health. As we age, he said, health care costs become the number one household expense in many families. "Consider your time to learn about optimal health an investment with a back end return," he added. "For family's, its really important to teach our children healthy nutrition and activity habits. We have to reverse this trend of inactivity and obesity"

The book can be purchased by calling (877) 642-2644 or online at amazon.com or personalwellnesswheel.com.



The cover of "Your Guide to Optimal Health," co-authored by Alliance native Dr. Lee Kirksey and his wife, Dr. Seema M. Patel.

### Town and Country Gardeners announces new officers

Members of Town and Country Gardeners met Nov. 20 at the home of Alice Braisted and co-hostess Jo Peterson. The table was decorated in fall colors with matching dinnerware.

The meeting was called to order by President Eloise Bradford. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and the treasurer's report was given.

Several ideas were discussed about beautification projects for the coming year along with the club's monthly programs. De Ann Howell is designing a new club book, which will retain its original cover designed and painted by Judy Michaud.

Officers nominated and elected at the October meeting for the coming year were: Bradford, president; Howell, vice president; Betty Hons, recording secretary; and Penny Downs, treasurer.

The program given by Peterson on "The Happiness Equation" by Beth Levine was about keeping mentally and physically active. The article gave the members ideas about their daily lives — that they should learn to laugh at the things they do and decide what makes them happy and do it.

The next meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. Thursday at Alliance Country Club for lunch and a gift exchange.

### Damascus Garden Club gathers

The November meeting of the Damascus Garden Club was held at Damascus Friends Church with 16 members present. President Lee Kuentz opened the meeting.

A thank-you note was received from The Garden Club of Ohio for the group's contribution to its scholarship fund.

Committee reports were given by project chairmen. Marilyn Wingett gave the year-end conservation report. The gardens are ready for winter and discussions are underway for the spring planting.

Peggy Stoffer reported on the progress of the holiday decorations. A holiday workshop was held Dec. 1, at which time community decorations were completed.

Patricia Hoopes read "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost, preceding the Penny Pines Report.

The club's annual Christmas Sharing Project will remain in the community for this holiday season. Bring items to share at the December meeting.

After adjournment, Darlene Lane presented the educational program titled "What is a Bird?"

Following the presentation, lunch was served. Val Kneodler was the hostess for the day. Betty Bircher and Dorla Santee were co-hostesses.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Kuentz. The 2009 installation of officers will be held and a Christmas luncheon will follow.

The Damascus Garden Club is a member of Garden Clubs of Ohio Inc. and National Garden Clubs Inc.'s Central Atlantic Region.

### Deborah's learn about gems

The Deborah's of St. Paul's Lutheran Church learned about the history and romance of gems and stones when member Isabelle Ahlstrom presented the program for the group's monthly meeting in Garnes Hall.

Ahlstrom became interested in gems when she went with family members to a gem mine in North Carolina. On display were many kinds of stones that she found in a gem dig.

She stated that most gems are minerals — few gems belong to the rock family. Many minerals cannot be made into jewelry because they are too soft. They are just for collections. Most gems can be altered by heat, such as topaz, rubies, amethyst and rose quartz. Time and light can also alter their colors. The best known gems are diamonds and emeralds. They both are very loved stones.

President Gail Kelly conducted the business meeting and welcomed everyone, including special guest Dorothy Elsass.

Peggy Castina gave devotions, reading from "Small Miracles for Women" and a poem titled "Let Us Be Thankful." Shirley Kline gave the Sunshine report.

Gunnie Hunt and Ruth Siegfried were named to the nominating committee.

Visitation reports were given and the Least Coin was taken.

Irene Marschinke was recognized for her birthday. Members recited the Missionary Benediction to close the meeting.

Hostesses Sally Schuller, Kline, Kelly and Castina served

## Meetings & Milestones

three fall desserts at tables centered with a pumpkin arrangement along with an array of gourds and baskets of candies.

The next meeting will be a Christmas luncheon at the College Inn at 1 p.m. on Friday.

### Club 55 honors flags

Club 55 of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church met in Garnes Hall for its November meeting. The decorations were in the flag theme, with red and blue candles in the hurricane globes. The evening's committee, Dorothy Aiello, Annetta Arriss and Gail Kelly, used white place mats and flag napkins.

The evening's program was on American flags from the first to the present with 50 stars. It was presented by Ed Stockli with assistance from Richard Kruse of Deerfield American Legion and Frank C. Webb of the Alliance American Legion. In their presentation, they showed the various flags through the years of the country's history. Program Chairman Aiello introduced Stockli, commander of the Deerfield American Legion, who has been doing this program for local groups for two years. He is also a member of St. Paul's.

The program was well received by all in attendance. A special guest was first-timer Larry Hill. A casserole dinner preceded the program.

During the business meeting, the minutes were approved as read and the treasurer's report put on file for audit. Marie Stoudt gave the Sunshine report and Shirley Webb reminded members of the Christmas party to be held on Sunday with wassail and appetizers at 5:45 p.m. and dinner at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting closed with a reading titled "The Holy Alphabet."