

# SARITA ELIZABETH COX

*Healing the body, mind  
and spirit*

by Kristen Mather

**D**r. Sarita Elizabeth Cox has both a master of science in oriental medicine and a doctoral degree in naturopathic medicine, though she doesn't need either to practice acupuncture in Alabama. The state has not yet adopted legislation to ensure the education of practicing acupuncturists, and doesn't recognize the practice as a legal profession.

In a decade where formerly "alternative" medicine has become integrated into health care, Cox wants to raise Alabama to the national standard. "The standard has been set," she said. "Even Mississippi raised the bar in 2009, and now it is our turn."

She is talking about a regulation to designate what kind of education and clinical experience each practicing acupuncturist must obtain before treating patients. Cox is working through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine to pass legislation that will bring Alabama up to par. "Currently my bigger goal is to educate the public on this issue," Cox said. "I'm an excellent candidate to offer it up for legislation. I am a native daughter with a growing business in Tuscaloosa. I am honored to be here, taking on the goal."

Cox graduated from The University of Alabama with an English degree in 1990, then did some soul-searching before stumbling upon naturopathic medicine and acupuncture as her calling. After seeing her persistent childhood allergies dramatically reduce through the practice of meditation, she was a believer in the power of natural healing. "I had a strong need to do service, but I had no idea how," she explained. "I looked into several programs before applying to the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Ore."

Though she knew the conservative roots of the South might challenge the success of her business, Cox said she

returned to Alabama in 2006 because she missed Southern hospitality. "I like the slowness and pace of life, the acceptance of eccentrics and the generous culture of Southern people," she said.

In Tuscaloosa, Cox works with patients on improving their quality of life by encouraging a relationship with nature, improving their diets and quieting their minds through meditation or relaxation. Details about her services can be found at [drsaritaelizabeth.com](http://drsaritaelizabeth.com). "I help people hold a vision of being well in mind, body and spirit," she said. "Western medicine often separates the spirit and the mind, so they will heal one without healing the others. Part of naturopathy is health counseling, and I am an ally or friend on a patient's journey of health."

Cox said that simple naturopathic practices, like daily meditation, dry skin brushing with a soft-bristle brush to stimulate the lymphatic system and detoxifying the body twice a year (eating whole foods and avoiding food intolerances), will improve overall health. "From a young age, we are taught to only seek health care if we

are sick," she said. "But naturopathic medicine says you can always be improving and optimizing your health."

She takes someone's pulse to determine which meridian of the body has a disturbance in the flow of energy, or what the Chinese call "qi." With acupuncture, she said, she can relieve the blockage. "I found acupuncture by grace more than anything," Cox said. "It keeps my business afloat. I am so lucky because I absolutely love what I do."

Though Cox has had positive experiences with western medicine, she said she believes in the wisdom of Chinese medicine that says health comes from harmonizing yourself with natural elements and treating the cause of an ailment, not just the symptoms. "We need a community to have a good quality of life, and we need a team of physicians in order to treat our body and optimize our health," she said.

