

# Ancient medical tradition finds home in Marshall



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Randy Litzinger

**WON'T HURT A BIT:** The needles used in acupuncture are exceedingly small, Sarah Steed demonstrates, and virtually painless.

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October 24 is National Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Day, and to celebrate, acupuncture and Oriental medicine societies and practitioners will contribute articles and host open houses, seminars, and online events to increase public awareness about this health-promoting tradition.

Acupuncture treatment involves the insertion of tiny, sterile needles into specific points on the body. These individualized "point prescriptions" address Qi (Chi) or energy imbalances resulting from diet, sleep deprivation, stress, and seasonal changes.

Local licensed acupuncturist Sarah Steed is always willing to promote knowledge and under-

See **ANCIENT**, Page A22

## ANCIENT

From Page A11

standing of this ancient healing practice.

Based in Marshall, she has been treating patients for problems ranging from muscular aches and pains to depression, infertility, and even smoking addiction for the last six years.

"Some people are terrified of acupuncture, or phobic," Steed said, "What they don't realize is that first of all, you don't feel the needles. This isn't like getting a flu shot. The needles are much smaller and thinner, and it's even possible to treat the whole body by using an ear alone."

"I always take the time to make sure my patients are relaxed and really understand the process, especially the ones who are afraid," she added.

Courtney Matthews has been one of Steed's regular patients for almost five years, and credits her expertise for helping him take first place in the recent Robert Trent Jones golf championship in Gainesville.

"I was hesitant to try acupuncture at first — my wife really had to convince me," he said. "I'm not a big fan of doctors, and like a lot of men, I don't go to see one until I'm in really bad shape."

"But Sarah's warm personality immediately put me at ease, and I felt intense relief after two minutes. Take the best massage you've ever had, multiply it by 25, and that's how I feel after one of my treatments with Sarah."

Steed first became interested in acupuncture while she was training and rehabilitating horses almost 20 years ago:

"After I saw the miraculous changes in the horses that had been treated with acupuncture, I knew this

was something that I wanted to do," she said

She understands Matthews' initial apprehension because she felt the same way before she started her education.

"I come from a family of doctors — there are three in my immediate family — and so Western medicine was really ingrained," she said. "The main difference between the two philosophies is that Chinese medicine focuses on treating the whole person, not just the symptom."

In order to become a licensed acupuncturist, students must graduate from fully accredited institutions and pass a national board examination administered by the National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental medicine (NCCAOM).

If you're interested in an acupuncture treatment, Steed stresses finding a fully trained professional.

"In Virginia, a medical doctor or chiropractor can add 'acupuncturist' to their credentials simply by completing 200 hours in a four-weekend program," she cautions.

"Personally, I had over 5,000 hours. Look on the NCCAOM Web site ([www.NCCAOM.org](http://www.NCCAOM.org)) to find a properly trained practitioner, because some people simply don't understand what they're doing."

Both Steed and Matthews agree that the benefits of acupuncture are powerful.

"I've had times where I've come to see Sarah, and I could hardly walk," Matthews said, "Afterward, my quality of life was so improved that I felt like I was 25 again. Acupuncture is phenomenal — but you have to do it to believe it."

For more information about acupuncture and Oriental medicine or to contact a specialist near you, visit the ASVA Web site, [www.acusova.com](http://www.acusova.com).