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## Go with your gut: try the Belly Buddy

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Staff Writer

Alyce Sorokie says we need to listen to our guts, and she ought to know. Sorokie is the founder of Partners in Wellness, an "alternative-care center" at 1967 N. Dayton St., in Lincoln Park. Sorokie believes that when the gut isn't working properly it affects a person's whole system. Learning to recognize what's happening in your belly is what she calls "Gut Wisdom."

"Don't ignore the gut's message," explained Sorokie, who opened Partners in Wellness in 1990. "When it speaks to you, learn how to listen. Unfortunately, we don't think about our digestive system until there's a problem."

Sorokie began studying the gut after her dad, Michael, died of colon cancer in 1979. You could also say health is the family business, as she was raised in the health-food industry.

Michael opened Irving Park Health Food at Irving Park and Pulaski in 1956, long before health-food stores were in fashion. Michael had beaten urethra cancer after being given one-to-three years to live. He became involved with holistic healing, and after his health was restored, he decided to share his knowledge and give back what he knew. He lived cancer-free, Sorokie said, for 30 years until he died of colon cancer at the age of 60.

Sorokie took over the shop, and continued in the family business until she decided to take it a step further with Partners in Wellness.

"I was raised that when you were sick, you had enemas, herbs, and a steam bath," she said. "I didn't know of antibiotics until I was in college. If you had a cold or flu or fever, you had an enema. It was the family way."

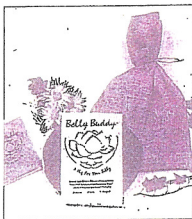
Her center offers a variety of services aimed at ensuring better health, such as colon therapy, massage therapy, acupuncture, nutritional counseling, foot reflexology. Sorokie describes the treatments as a supplement to medical services and said patients are often referred by doctors.

Sorokie herself has been a certified colon therapist and digestive consultant since 1984. That means if you're full of it, you can come to her for a complete colon cleansing, which cleanses the gases, wastes and toxins out of the intestinal track.

Jean (who declined to give her last name) comes to Partners in Wellness for just that. Jean, has been coming to the center since it opened. She swears by the benefits of colon therapy, as well as the benefits of Sorokie and her crew.

"Alyce is always out learning more and new things," said Jean, 60. "She has a wonderful sense of humor and is a lot of fun. I've recommended her many times."

"It's a learning experience. Alyce has also turned me over to other people over the years, and in some cases the women are also nutritionists so



**FIGHT:** Alyce Sorokie, founder of Partners in Wellness, 1967 N. Dayton St., invented the Belly Buddy, (TOP) a small pillow that's filled with a blend of spices, oils and grains that you heat in the microwave and position against your gut for a relaxing effect.

they're able to impart more knowledge of where they're going with the body. You find out a lot more specifics."

According to information provided by Sorokie, colon cancer is the No. 2 cancer killer in the United States, killing 60,000 annually. Two billion bottles of the antacid Zantac are sold per year, and 5 million people have ulcers. Six million people have frequent indigestion.

Sorokie believes that food can medicate and alter moods, and that moods often determine which food we choose to eat. The wrong foods and poor digestion can promote physical and mental discomfort and actually

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—Alyce Sorokie  
Founder  
Partners in Wellness

impair the immune system.

She suggests a diet regimen that aids the digestive process, assists in elimination of harmful toxins and places the body and mind in a more perfect and health-optimal balance. She recommends foods such as vegetables, fibers, ground flaxseed, fruits and grains.

"The belly is an emotional holding area," she said. "The gut is a little antennae. Think about when you have butterflies in the stomach, or when you're nervous and get nauseous. The gut will tell us when something's not OK. People need to begin to listen. The symptoms are the body's voice. It's a wake-up signal."

To help relax your gut, Sorokie has invented a gadget called The Belly Buddy, a small pillow that's filled with a blend of spices, oils and grains that you heat in the microwave and position against your gut.

"People need something to relax and restore function to the gut," Sorokie said. "It helps bring blood back to the gut, and stimulates blood flow, and the scent can also cause relaxation in the body."

Belly Buddy, which is \$35, comes in vanilla, lavender, or unscented, and is available in several patterns. It's suggested for both sexes, and is available at Partners in Wellness, as well as some Whole Foods stores and Healing Earth Resources, 3111 N. Ashland Ave.

And it's getting rave reviews.

"The Belly Buddy has a wonderfully soothing effect — obviously on the belly but also on the body overall," said Belly Buddy owner Mary Houbold. "It immediately warms and relaxes me and settles down my distress bubbling within. The aromas are delicious—that's worth the experience in and of itself."

In addition to inventing the Belly Buddy, Sorokie is writing a book to be titled, "Gut Wisdom: Belly, Mind Connection to a Healthy Gut." She anticipates that the book will be released late this year or early next.

As for her occupation, Sorokie said, "It's not a glamorous job, but in a short amount of time it's amazing the miracle you can see. Listen to your belly and trust your gut."

For more information on the Belly Buddy call Partners in Wellness at (773) 868-4062 or visit [www.gutwisdom.com](http://www.gutwisdom.com).

*Writer's note: After warming my light green, chenille-covered Belly Buddy in the microwave, I laid down on my couch and put it on my belly. I was asleep within no time.*

*I decided the Belly Buddy not only makes a really comforting tummy pillow, but also makes for a great hot water bottle-type pillow that could be used on more than just the belly. The Belly Buddy definitely does the trick to comfort and relax.*