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Women's Health Experts Enlighten and Entertain

By Cathy Tyson

In an evening for adults only, two women's health professionals gave a fascinating presentation on mood, hormones and sexuality sponsored by the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation with Consortium partner John Muir Health. The charming speakers were Dr. Jeanne Alexander, a biological psychiatrist who specializes in reproductive psychiatry and menopausal sexual medicine, and Dr. Sondra Altman, an Ob-Gyn who has been practicing at John Muir Medical Center for the past eleven years.

"John Muir is a Founding Partner in the Glenn Seaborg Learning Consortium. This collaboration has now been extended by their providing our first corporate program sponsorship, which not only represents a generous gift to the Library Foundation, but will fund a series of health programs," said Kathy Merchant, Executive Director of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation. "Tonight was a great start to the series. To be able to hear a broad range of health information from the elite of the medical and health professions is an extraordinary benefit of this partnership."

In a wide ranging casual discussion, both doctors explained to an audience of mostly middle age plus women some of the intricacies of issues specific to females. Using humor and candid examples, they had the crowd in stitches at times.

Although the title of the event was Simple Pleasures - Wine, Women and Chocolate, with actual complimentary wine, chocolate and snacks, it turns out some simple pleasures can be rather complicated as women age, go through menopause and deal with cancer or hysterectomy.

"Let's start where I usually start - the vagina," said Altman, who usually goes by Dr. Sandi. Although very informative, much of the subject matter is a little blunt for a family newspaper. Talk of estrogen dependent tissues and the benefits of certain products that can "turn back the hands of time," had audience members taking notes.

"Put the zip back in your doo-dah," notes her website.

Dr. Alexander, who has done a significant amount of hormone and menopause research, explained the intricate relationship of hormones, fatigue, depression, the fabric of life and stress. "Fatigue is not an aphrodisiac," she said. She went on to discuss the complex relationship between estrogen and testosterone, "it's like a chess game." One problem with couples in long term relationships, said Dr. Sandi, is that they are "out of the habit of being sexy," wearing a ratty old t-shirt to bed and having a TV and laptop in the bedroom. She recommends keeping your bedroom a sanctuary and encourages getting back in the habit of seeing yourself as a sexual person. She advises, "Make what you have work - water your own garden."

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[back](#)

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