



Bent Creek **INSTITUTE**

Bent Creek Institute at the NC Arboretum Hires New President

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Bent Creek Institute, Inc., working with the nation's medicinal herb germplasm repository based at The North Carolina Arboretum, has hired Greg Cumberland as its new President starting January 1, 2011. He succeeds former BCI president Cheryl McMurry who has moved to Charleston, SC.

Cumberland is a veteran in the US medicinal herb industry and comes to Bent Creek Institute from Gaia Herbs, based in Brevard, having worked in executive management there for 13 years. He has spearheaded Gaia's academic research initiatives with, among others, Clemson University, the University of North Carolina, Wake Forest University, and the University of Washington. He is also the General Manager of Gaia's all-natural biopolymer technology spin-off, Earth Renewable Technologies, Inc.

The mountain region of North Carolina has a long, storied history of employing its native medicinal plants for therapeutic purposes. The mission of Bent Creek Institute, Inc. and the Bent Creek Laboratories at the Arboretum is to establish Western North Carolina as a research, farming, production, commercialization and economic development center for high quality, scientifically-validated botanical wellness solutions.

"No one has been more instrumental than Greg Cumberland in fostering our mountain region's growing reputation over the last ten years for excellence in botanical medicines and research," according to George Briggs, Executive Director of The North Carolina Arboretum and Chair of the Bent Creek Institute, Inc. Board of Directors. "His moving from leadership within Gaia Herbs, one of our nation's finest companies, into the role of advancing Bent Creek to national and economic importance is a logical next step in his career. Our region and our children are most fortunate that he has elected to pursue his creative vision here, in our mountains, for moving healthcare toward a more affordable, effective, and integrative natural wellness model based in botanical traditions."

Cumberland was a co-founder of Bent Creek Institute, Inc. in 2006 and continues to serve on its Board of Directors. He was also a co-founder in 2002 and past board member of the Asheville-based North Carolina Natural Products Association. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree (Phi Beta Kappa) in environmental earth sciences from Stanford University. Cumberland lives with his wife, Katie, in Fletcher. Their daughter, Estella Ray, is at Writtle College in England.

Attachment: Frequently Asked Questions



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is Greg Cumberford leaving Gaia Herbs?

A: Gaia Herbs, a 24 year-old company, has grown successfully to become the nation's leading branded certified organic medicinal herb grower and dietary supplement manufacturer. The skills and competencies required to grow medium-sized corporations aggressively are different than those required to grow and manage smaller companies. Cumberford's core competencies lie in setting up and managing organizational and innovative system structures for emerging life sciences and natural products entities. He is also very inspired to play a wider role in growing Bent Creek Institute (BCI) to serve national needs for botanical identity and safety assessment and in helping establish WNC as a national center for botanically-based integrative wellness research, horticulture, manufacturing, and therapeutics.

Q: Will this change Bent Creek Institute's mission or objectives?

A: BCI's mission remains the same. Cumberford will bring considerable value to BCI from an operational and strategic perspective, given his botanical industry experience and relationships. He will seek to improve and sustain BCI's operating revenues by securing contracts linked to BCI's unique capacity, as a non-profit medicinal plant germplasm repository, to perform complete botanical identity testing services for interested government, academic, and corporate clients.

Q: What is unique about the relationship between BCI and The North Carolina Arboretum?

A: The Arboretum is an affiliate entity of The University of North Carolina system and houses the Bent Creek Institute research laboratory and germplasm repository. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, Bent Creek Institute, Inc., has been established to partner with other organizations in leveraging the resources of the Arboretum toward economic and societal benefit for the mountain region and North Carolina. Arboretum Director George Briggs chairs the BCI, Inc. Board of Directors.

Q: Can the Asheville area really become a nationally-prominent center for botanical medicines and integrative health?

A: It already is. The region is one of the most botanically diverse and globally important landscapes in North America. The Asheville area, because of a long history of botanical medicine use by Native Americans and immigrants to the region, currently hosts about 2% of the nation's complementary and alternative medicine practitioners. Branches of the UNC Medical and Pharmacy Schools, multiple new health-related academic centers, Mission Hospital's new integrative medicine department, as well as significant growth in national and international dietary supplement markets, provide promising opportunity. Bent Creek Institute, Inc. features an advisory board of major scientific luminaries from across the nation and around the globe. Greg Cumberford's familiarity with national associations, federal manufacturing standards, and the integrative health community worldwide will

position Bent Creek under his leadership to capitalize on local, national, and international trends in natural and integrative wellness.

Q: How does biotechnology figure into the Bent Creek opportunity?

A: North Carolina is the third leading state in biotechnology-related jobs. Bent Creek is based on a philosophy of building therapeutic value from our indigenous botanical resources through “natural biotechnology,” using advanced life science research and national analytical standards, not to genetically alter medicinal plants (beyond traditional selective breeding), but to understand, develop, and produce regional botanical medicines of high integrity rooted in protecting WNC’s existing natural biodiversity and cultures. Bent Creek and the Arboretum are committed to genetic improvement only through natural means, as nature allows. As such, Bent Creek seeks to build a regional branding around this philosophy that will extend to many life sciences-related economic development opportunities. Coming from Gaia Herbs, one of America’s leading herbal products companies in terms of analytical integrity and certified organic product quality, Greg Cumberland is already steeped in these values.

Q: How does Bent Creek derive its support?

A: Bent Creek has been supported significantly from a variety of academic, governmental, and business entities. Lead support has come from UNC General Administration, the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, Buncombe County Commissioners, Mission Healthcare System and Foundation, and numerous other research, corporate, and private partners. A priority for Greg Cumberland and Bent Creek will be to sustain and grow Bent Creek’s capacity to benefit the state economically through research, commercialization, and job creation.

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