

Why is poet and NPR commentator Andrei Codrescu coming to Portland next week? It's only natural



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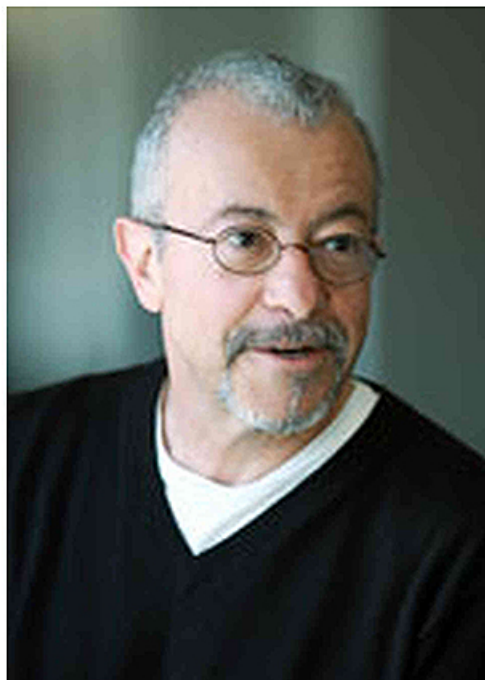
Andrei Codrescu, the Romanian expatriat poet whose thick accent and wry commentary are well known to NPR listeners, will deliver the keynote address at the National College of Natural Medicine's graduation ceremony.

Codrescu has a personal connection to the Portland-based school. His son Tristan received a Master of Acupuncture degree from the college's School of Classical Chinese Medicine in 2011.

For his part, Codrescu said he's pretty healthy and hasn't had occasion to try natural medicine, but he'd be open to it.

"If I developed giant boils, I would see a regular doctor or an acupuncturist, whoever could fix it," Codrescu said in a phone interview from his home in rural Arkansas. "What I like about the school is they take a holistic view of health and the body in the environment. It's the opposite of Western medicine, which treats the symptoms."

Codrescu retired from teaching English at Louisiana State University and decided to move to "a wild place," where he could rely more on natural resources. So he settled 14 miles outside of Yellville, a town of 1,300 near the Missouri border.



Andrei Codrescu will speak at the National College of Natural Medicine's graduation.

"There are still practicing herbalists and few medical doctors," he said. "It's an older region of the country. They didn't have much outside contact. There hasn't been a break with the old ways."

He's trying to convince Tristan to move there from Portland and set up an acupuncture practice.

"This is a place that would welcome him," Codrescu said. "He's more needed here than in Portland, where you can't throw a stone without hitting one."

Codrescu has written 40 books of poetry, novels and essays and has been a regular commentator on NPR's "All Things Considered" since 1983. He also won a Peabody Award for his film "Road Scholar" and the Romanian Cultural Foundation's literature prize.

In "Road Scholar," he chronicles a variety of quirky people and places on a coast-to-coast road trip across America, learning about oddities like rebrithing and crystal healing.

"Most people see me as a skeptic. I'm skeptical about a lot of aspects of contemporary life. In other ways, I'm wide eyed," he said.

In addition to his speech at the June 28 commencement ceremony, he will be the featured speaker at the college's annual Min Zidell Garden Gala, "Fifty Shades of Green," on Thursday, June 26.

The College of Natural Medicine will also confer the Presidential Medal of Service on alumna Betty Radolet for her lifetime of service in naturopathic medicine. The college recently presented Bob's Red Mill co-founder Bob Moore with an honorary degree.

Elizabeth Hayes covers health care for the Portland Business Journal.