

Therapist trumpets more pampering, more quiet

St. Pierre Massage and Spa moves to tranquil location near downtown

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Michelle St. Pierre spoke in a subdued tone as she guided a tour of the new St. Pierre Massage and Spa location near downtown Napa. While her quiet demeanor reflected the spa's "whisper-only" policy, the owner's enthusiasm occasionally caused a brief outburst in violation of the rule. "I'm really excited to be here," she gushed, pushing the decibel level. "Our other rooms were small before, so it's so nice to work in a larger area."

St. Pierre was referring to the recent move from the facility's original location in River Park, where she and her family opened St. Pierre Center for Massage in 2006. Earlier this year, the business moved into its new location on Clay Street at California Boulevard, expanding its therapeutic massage services to include more spa treatments.

"We wanted to offer more pampering services per requests from our customers," St. Pierre said. "They wanted the same quality but with additional services — more of a 'one-stop shop' place."

The standalone building and quiet neighborhood surrounding the new loca-

tion are a contrast to the busy, shopping-center atmosphere of River Park, where, according to St. Pierre, the massage-only business built up a healthy clientele over the past six years.

"When we started, we had a handful of therapists and just did massages," she said. "The focus was providing really high-quality massage at an affordable price in a comfortable environment. And it grew and kept growing."

Now with a staff of about 20 therapists and other employees, St. Pierre Massage and Spa offers a full range of "feel good" services from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week. St. Pierre said the new location accommodates up to 10 customers at a time and can usually accept same-day appointments.

Adding to its various massage treatments, the center offers a full spa menu of organic body wraps, various facials, skin therapy, pedicures and manicures. St. Pierre said that many of the offerings are unique, such as the vegan-organic nail treatments.

"I don't know if anyone else does this," she said. "The nail polish has no formaldehyde or other chemicals that could harm



Michelle St. Pierre of St. Pierre Massage and Spa recently moved her business to a new location at Clay Street and California Boulevard. J.L. Sousa/Register

your body. Also, we use a (nail) gel product here that uses an LED light for curing instead of a UV light, which recent studies have shown can be harmful."

A former college softball pitcher from Thousand Oaks, Calif., St. Pierre earned an athletic scholarship to Ohio State and later St. Mary's College. After graduation she worked in sales in the Bay Area.

"I did well, but wasn't completely fulfilled," she said. "My passion at the time was alternative medicine. I really wanted to walk down that path and eventually make a career out of helping other people feel good and helping my

family feel good."

After becoming a licensed herbalist and studying advanced massage in upstate New York, St. Pierre returned to California, settling in Napa and later opening the massage center in River Park with her father, Robert, an international businessman. From the beginning, St. Pierre said, the center drew an even mix of locals and tourists and thrived in the busy shopping center.

Back at the new location, St. Pierre navigated through the cocoa-colored rooms adorned with linen wall hangings and simple, natural furnishings. Fountains, candles and gentle

music add to the relaxing atmosphere. Guests are offered cucumber water or herbal tea. The center includes three massage rooms for individuals and two "couples" rooms, plus several rooms dedicated to spa treatments. Landscaping surrounding the building features native medicinal plants like lavender, rosemary, sage and elderflower.

"We want to eventually use some of these plants in our spa waters and maybe some of our spa services as well," St. Pierre said.

The spa uses natural products that are mostly organic and plant-based, she said.



Open For Business

Editor's note
On a semi-regular basis, the Napa Valley Register Business Focus will feature "Open for Business" spotlighting new local businesses in the Napa Valley.

St. Pierre Massage and Spa
• 2400 Clay St., Napa
• 255-1640
• StPierreMassage.com

"We're very mindful about this because we know whatever we put on a person's body is going to affect them internally," she said. "Anything you put on your skin, you are absorbing — it's as if you are eating it. So we're really careful with the products that we choose. It's really an important part of your whole spa experience."

St. Pierre Massage and Spa's one-hour massage sessions start at \$85 and most facial treatments start at \$75. A popular option for local clients, St. Pierre said, is the Spa Membership (\$69), a program that includes a monthly one-hour massage and significant discounts on other massage and spa services.

Not so loyal to your loyalty card?

Last week's column about loading e-coupons to loyalty cards led to — what else? — lots of reader comments about store loyalty cards! Whether they love them or loathe them, my readers are chiming in. Several were concerned about privacy.

Dear Jill,
I have a shopper's card that you can load e-coupons to. I don't have a problem with e-coupons, but I do wonder what kind of information the store tracks. I'm sure there's a list somewhere of the items I frequently purchase since my store sometimes gives me e-coupons for things I bought before. Should I be worried about privacy? — Rose H.

Dear Jill,
My husband hates the idea of using a store card to get a better price. He says the store is keeping track of what we buy. But I think it's silly to pay more in order to prevent a retailer from keeping a list of what I'm buying. Who's right? —Lora S.

Dear Rose and Lora,
If you use a loyalty card at the supermarket or



drugstore, there will be a list of everything you've bought. Stores call this "data mining," and they use the information they garner from your shopping habits in several ways. In addition to providing ongoing data about what shoppers buy most frequently, the data can also help plan future promotional offers.

If your store has a Catalina coupon printer, you may have noticed the coupons that print at checkout are often based on your past purchases.

If you buy a box of cereal, it may trigger more coupons for cereal, and so on. This data is often tied to your store's loyalty card. But not always.

While I understand that many people are concerned about privacy, and some may find the idea of data mining unsettling, stores can still track your purchase history even if you don't use a loyalty card. Many stores, including Walgreens and Target, tie purchase history to the credit card you use to pay,

not your loyalty card.

The New York Times ran a fascinating article about Target's ability to determine if a customer is pregnant by watching for a specific sequence of purchased items. And it isn't just diapers or formula — the list includes lotion, washcloths and cotton balls.

The data was so sound that Target could even tell what trimester the shopper was in based on what she bought, all without a loyalty card.

So where does this leave us?

If you don't want your purchases tracked, you should forego using a loyalty card and pay cash for

every item, at every store. But for shoppers who are loyal to their loyalty cards, consider the upside: Because the store knows what you're buying, you

might receive promotional offers and coupons you might not know about otherwise.

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