

The healthful gift of massage

By **Jim Cornelius**
News Editor

Nobody raises an eyebrow when you insist on carving out time in your day to hit the gym or go to the gym or a yoga class. But tell someone you're going to get a massage, they might still think you are just pampering yourself.

That mindset is changing as people come to realize that a massage is so much more than an indulgence: It can be a key to a more healthful life.

"If you're good and you know what you are doing, you actually *fix* somebody," says Zoe Willitts, owner of Shibui Spa and longtime massage therapist. "That's why I got into the business 20 years ago."

Massage can help keep joints flexible and keep tissues healthy. Studies have shown that massage can lower blood pressure, at least temporarily, and boost the immune system.

"Once a month is an optimum that really helps people stay healthy," Willitts said.

Sisters has many options for massage in a variety of modalities. Therapists like Rich Hummell at Green Ridge Physical Therapy often work in close conjunction with a physical therapist to focus on injury-specific massage.

Massage combined with physical therapy not only speeds up the healing process; it can also help produce a better overall outcome. Hummell also sees patients regularly who want to aid their recovery from strenuous athletic endeavors, and/or improve their performance.

"Especially runners," he said, "because they have so much trauma on their bodies."

In some cases, physical therapy and regular massage can help patients avoid surgery to correct a nagging problem.

"It's amazing preventative medicine," says Shibui

manager Kendra Littrell.

Massage therapists tend to get into the field because they have a profound experience in helping others.

That's what motivates Michelle Farra, who recently launched her practice Massage by Michelle. Her life experiences have made massage therapy a kind of calling for Michelle. Her mother suffered from rheumatoid arthritis from the age of 16, and she saw first-hand the effects of chronic pain. For Michelle, there is no greater satisfaction and inspiration than using her two hands to bring relief.

"I want to help people in pain," she said. "I hate to see people in pain."

Massage by Michelle offers relief from pain and stress and can help people dealing with chronic issues reduce their level of dependency on pain medications.

Piedad Kingsland can testify to the gift massage can bring to someone with serious health problems. She's been battling liver disease for 10 years.

"I've had a bad liver and I've been up for a liver transplant," she told *The Nugget*.

Kingsland is the beneficiary of a unique program at Shibui called The Gift of Giving Back. People anonymously nominate someone in the community who they believe would benefit from massage and other spa treatments. Massage therapists donate their time to give the

healthful gift of massage to those selected.

Kingsland has received regular massage treatments (and facials) at Shibui, which are "big, huge gifts, as far as I'm concerned."

The gifts hit mind and spirit as well as the body. Kingsland acknowledged that her decade-long health battle can leave her feeling low — emotionally and spiritually fragile.

"The healing powers of the massage and facials have been so therapeutic," she says. "Not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually, it makes me feel much better."

Willitts notes that the act of taking care of yourself through massage is affirming.

"When you give yourself that, you're telling yourself you're worth it," she said.

Emotional and spiritual well-being combine with improved physical capacity to create a positive feedback loop that is self-reinforcing. Regular massage keeps that loop going and can significantly enhance overall wellness.

There's certainly nothing wrong with indulging in massage for relaxation, or as a way to connect with your partner in a romantic couples massage. But taking massage as seriously as you take exercise and healthful eating can maximize its benefits.

"Exercise, good eating, massage — it all goes together," says Willitts. "And it works."

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Brown accepts the trail as an Oregon Solutions project. If not, then I hope that the Forest Service, the city of Sisters, the Sisters Trails Alliance and other stakeholders will regroup. It is clear that professionally-led public participation and stakeholder engagement is needed here, as well as an understanding of what the trail will or will not bring to the Sisters community overall, now and in the future.

Karen Kane

To the Editor:

As I look at the wonderful forest around me and marvel in its beauty I am reminded of wise quotes from wise men.

"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."

— Ansel Adams

"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

I personally fail to see the value (monetary or otherwise) of destroying our forest. I remain steadfast in being one of the many guardians of the forests and its animals. I will never agree to laying cancerous asphalt in the forest and destroying animal habitat and destroying trees no matter where it is.

If you do not understand the value and beauty of the forest between Sisters and Black Butte Ranch, then take your children or your grandchildren on a walk through this beautiful forest. Then explain to them that someone wants to uproot many mature-growth trees. These trees provide canopies for animals and air for us to breathe.

Then explain to them that they are going to excavate this area so that they can lay 300,000 tons of gravel on it's floor. Then they are going to put 400,000 tons of cancerous, toxic asphalt on top. And then they are going to call it a trail. This is a paved road in the forest not a trail. And then ask them if this sounds like a good idea. An idea that will destroy the home of thousands of animals, birds, frogs, insects, all in the name of "I wanna ride my bike."

My parents taught me that you do no harm to the forest. You leave the forest as if you were never there. That is what I have passed on to my son and to my grandchildren.

Carin Baker