

A Lesson in Abundance

By Evangeline Doyle

Just what does abundance and massage therapy have in common? On the surface, not too much – other than many of us would love to have an abundance of massages. Or, if you've lived here long, you might think this article is about the abundance of massage therapists in Vernonia. Then you might get sidetracked and ask yourself, "just how does a small town like Vernonia support multiple massage therapists?" **Then you'd be on the right track. And the lesson in abundance begins...**

When Heather Lewis (LMT, LMP, CLT, NT) first visited Vernonia in 1998, it was on the back of a motorcycle, "We were just out for a ride," Heather said, "the town was adorable...I could see myself living here someday." Several years later, when she was looking for a small community to move her massage therapy business to, Vernonia made the short-list. Heather smiles, "When I walked downtown Vernonia, everyone I met smiled and said hello, some told me their names, others asked if I was new in town. That sold me. One of the criteria I was looking for was a sense of community, and I found it."

Heather spent her first year in Vernonia remodeling her work/home location in downtown Vernonia, just off Bridge Street on Madison Avenue. During that time, people she met would ask "what do you do?" When Heather told them she always got "oh, well... we already have one of those [massage therapists], you'll never make that work here."

But Heather had done her homework, and she approached the situation from a place of abundance -- that there is always enough...such as income, clients, talent or time.

She took into consideration there were numerous massage therapists in town at the time, and factored in the current population. She purchased an affordable live/work business space to remodel in the downtown zone, calculated what income she would need to live, and she also considered that based on her location and her licenses, she would have a different clientele. She would offer other types of treatment and massage, Lymphedema for one, a treatment that benefits breast cancer patients with edema. Heather is one of four massage therapists in Oregon that are licensed in Lymphedema massage. She also provides nutritional counseling and teaches courses in nutrition and self-care. This, she thought, would ensure a new clientele. She was right. People come from as far as Portland and the coast for this specialized treatment.

You might think if you were one-in-four therapists in the state that had a specific certification that you might want to hang on to that one thing that sets you apart. But not so. Heather is now licensed to teach Lymphedema massage therapy and will be hosting a class at Cedar Ridge in April for twenty-six therapists looking to add breast cancer patients to their clientele.

This year Heather will again help host the "We Will Because We Can" breast-cancer bike ride. This year the event will take place the first weekend in August (Jamboree weekend). All proceeds from the event will go rebuilding a local breast cancer survivor's home that was impacted by the recent flood.

Heather approaches everything from a place of abundance, even her views on community. People who value community also understand that it's a participatory process – you must give of yourself – you must believe that you have the time to give. Heather is a member of our City Planning Commission; her research capabilities

have greatly benefited the City of Vernonia, recently working on both the flood and design standards ordinances.

Now enter the other element of this lesson in abundance, Marie Krahn, LMT. Marie moved to Vernonia from Wisconsin in 1991 -- for all the right reasons; no offense but it's bitter cold there and mosquito's are the size of small birds.

Marie chose to set up shop in her home. She lives with her husband Jim on the beautifully groomed Krahn Farm, with their donkey, sheep, cows, chickens, and Jack Russell terriers. They live minutes from downtown Vernonia, out in the country off Mellinger Road.



Marie Krahn and Heather Lewis

Marie is another successful massage therapist in Vernonia. Her abundance point-of-view comes with knowing that people who come to see her are the people she can help – the people she needs to be working with. "It's a very peaceful, even spiritual way of thinking about business," said Marie.

This does not mean that Marie sits back and waits for her doorbell to ring. Marie has also done her homework – she is very well trained in areas of massage with over twenty-five-years of experience. Marie offers rehabilitative services that focus on the treatment of acute injury or trauma as well as traditional relaxation services, such as Swedish massage, Aromatherapy, and Reflexology. She is also trained in Reiki and Craniosacral – energy-related therapy services.

Like Heather, Marie is also an active member of the community; Marie serves on the Vernonia Health Board. She too has donated numerous hours of massage therapy to school functions and local fundraisers. Marie says, "It's good for the soul and good for business. You have the feeling of giving of yourself and there's the added benefit of getting your face out in the community."

They say competition's a good thing...but abundance is better.

Heather and Marie met for the first time at a Vernonia Chamber of Commerce event, but they really started connecting after attending the same "How to build your business" seminar. Then Marie injured her back, and needed – yes, a massage therapist. The old adage "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," comes to mind. The two have used each other ever since for massages. Marie emphasized, "You can't be a good massage therapist unless you get massages from someone else."

These women don't agree that competition is a good thing. They refer to themselves as colleagues, trusted allies, sharing new ideas with each other, able to consider different perspectives – all in a trusted environment. They feel competition focuses on outdoing the other – "why does anyone have to lose when there can be an abundance of business for all?" says Heather. By taking a colleague-approach, these women have grown and expanded their own talents and businesses. They quickly learned that they have similar intentions around business, clients and community. Their actions and beliefs have increased both their clientele and their bottom line.

What at once was a business relationship quickly blossomed into a lasting friendship.

The benefits of their relationship keep flowing. Not only have these two prospered from each other in business, consulting on therapy approach and business ideas, they've also been able to guide a new generation of emerging therapists. Both women have helped with senior projects and school testing for students pursuing this career path.

While this article has focused on the massage therapy practices of Heather Lewis and Marie Krahn, there are even more therapists who live and work out of Vernonia. I encourage you to seek out the one that is right for you, as one good massage deserves another!

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