

Multnomah-area school has trained massage therapists for 25 years

By Polina Olsen
The Southwest Portland Post

Violet colored walls set the mood at the Oregon School of Massage. Their suite at 9500 SW Barbur Blvd. attracts students from across the state. Celebrating its 25th year, massage therapy has become increasingly popular. *The Post* stopped by last month to talk with the school’s founder and president, Ray Siderius.

“I was in graduate school studying counseling and felt massage was a valuable adjunct if it were taught in a certain way,” Siderius said as we walked into the large one-room store off the main reception area. New age music played softly. Lotions like Bioton Pure Touch Organic Massage Cream covered one wall. Shoppers included students, former students, and the public.

“We have more psychology than some massage schools,” Siderius said as he walked past hot stones, wind chimes and massage tables to the book section. He picked up an 800 page textbook entitled, *A Massage Therapist’s Guide to Pathology*. Other books like *Medicine*

Hands; Massage Therapy for People with Cancer and Pediatric Massage were written by OSM instructors.

“We teach communication and psychology of relationships,” Siderius said. “And, our program is known for a lot of electives. Students can focus on sports or maternity massage.” The school also offers classes, like couples massage, to the public.

Siderius started teaching massage at a counseling center in Milwaukie, Oregon. The school moved to Sellwood and finally to Multnomah about eight years ago.

“When I came in 1978, Oregon required a license,” Siderius said commenting on the changes in Oregon’s licensed massage therapist requirements. “You needed to take a written and practical test but you didn’t need to document training. Today, you need a minimum of 500 hours of classroom training.” It takes students between 15 and 18 months to complete the OSM program.

“We started with 35 students,” Siderius said. “Today, we have about 200.” OSM has two locations, Salem and Barbur Boulevard., and a staff of



Ray Siderius started the Oregon School of Massage in 1984. (Post photo Polina Olsen)

about 60. Student Services Coordinator Amy Stark stood behind the counter. “When I saw the website, I knew I wanted to work here,” she said. “I like the body,

mind, spirit philosophy.” Admissions Coordinator Valerie Mays talked about the student body. “Students want something rewarding,” she said. “Some come right out of high school. For others it’s a second or third career. Or, it’s a career add-on, like one nurse.”

Anthony Gitch (www.bodywork4me.com) graduated in June 2008. “The school was life changing,” he said. “The way they bring the education piece along with the mind body spirit connection was paramount.” Gitch particularly enjoyed science classes like the study of muscles and their actions. Now he has private practices in Vancouver and downtown Portland and works as a teaching assistant as OSM.

“The other schools I looked at didn’t meet my criteria as far as being able to bring in that spiritual grounding,” he said. “You’re taught how to connect with the person you’re working with. To me, that’s spirituality.”

For more information on the Oregon School of Massage, visit www.OregonSchoolofMassage.com or call 503-244-3420.



Instructor Lisa Barck Garofalo (left) teaches massage techniques to students Lisa Bennett Comley (laying down) and Wendy McKee. (Photo courtesy Oregon School of Massage)



Student Gea Barker practices foot massage on another student. (Photo courtesy of Oregon School of Massage)



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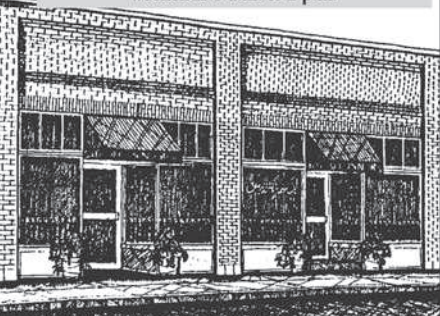
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