

Hands On Mind & Body Wellness Center celebrates 30 years of service

By George Moses

Hands On Therapeutic Massage opened its doors in the 1980s in Downtown Brighton. As a therapeutic massage clinic, it was the first of its kind in Livingston County. At the time, founder Holly Stedman had to go to the Brighton City Council and negotiate a waiver from what was then known as the Parlor Laws. Karen Kazyak M.A., LLP purchased the business that is now named Hands On Mind & Body Wellness Center from Stedman 25 years ago. Kazyak, a trained psychologist has added counseling as well as yoga to the list of services offered at her practice.

When Kazyak first visited the clinic with the idea of buying it she was impressed. "I was here less than a week and I felt the energy. I saw the people coming in, heard their commitment to their wellness and I said 'You have an incredible foundation here.' And I knew that I was going to bring another aspect to the practice. I wanted to grow and have a more comprehensive wellness practice, but I thought the foundation was phenomenal!

"Part of the reason that led to the belief that I was embarking on something wonderful here is the number of clients that were weekly when I came and did my shadowing for that month. I was like 'Oh my gosh, these people are committed to their wellness, committed to what's happening here and if I do end up buying this business, I have a great responsibility to pass on this baton of care from Holly to myself, to be able to continue to uphold what she began. I take that really seriously and felt like I was able to do that and kind of take it to another level by adding the counseling and the yoga and things like that."

Kazyak began by hiring a team of 4 who stayed together for 10 years. They were committed to a common goal, wellness. "We had passion about our work. We felt the same way about our own wellness as well as service we would provide." Kazyak said.

"We're here because of the community we serve and our dedication to the care that we provide," Kazyak says. "They don't just come in, get their massage or their counseling or private yoga experience and go home. That's why we've put in place this whole mentality of no rushing.

There's enough rushing in our world. People come here as a respite. We're addressing and offering services for their body and mind and lifestyle. We take care in learning enough about them when we do their initial consultation. And then ongoingly, when someone loses a family member or has a birthday. The whole idea of sending flowers or cards for someone passing or going to a wedding, is that we're connecting and building relationships. I really, truly believe that's why we're still here."

Today there are dozens of massage therapy places. With all the change and all the new businesses that are coming, the massage clinics and the many chiropractors offices, physical therapy places, hospital-based therapy clinic Kazyak's business is no longer alone in the field. "I've always thought when people call and say 'Karen, a new place has opened, are you worried?' You know, the only thing I worry about is that they honor our profession enough to do a wonderful job. Because there are tons of people in our community and we can't possibly meet and be there for all of them."

Kazyak's team is small. "The focus has always been to do something that I love and feel blessed to be able to serve. I've hired a team with a family mentality. I would say to people in the interview process 'Please don't take this personally. We have a small team. We have a groove, a way of working together.' A mindset we feel very strongly about. We assist people. Everybody's really their own healer. We assist people in taking responsibility for their own wellness. Full wellness is when somebody fully embraces their empowerment to get well. So, we've always had that kind of mentality and I hire people who naturally have that too."

"I have a lot of friends who have clinics and the longevity of our team is very rare. We've all been together upwards of 10 years in this place. I love working with a group of passionate men and women.

"I knew that I was going to bring counseling practice here. I wanted that for a more comprehensive menu of offerings for people to heal. So some people come here for counseling



Hands On Mind & Body Wellness Center staff: Jessica Podhola, Melinda Salmeto, Terri Kinney and owner, Karen Kazyak (seated)

and eventually want to do some body work and vice-versa.

"Some come for body work and then go 'Oh my gosh, you do counseling too?' I'm the only one that does both here. And once someone enters one of those healing capacities with me they don't see me for the other. When somebody comes in to see me for counseling, they see one of my team members for massage therapy.

"People ask us often 'Who do you see more here, men or women? Do they come for relaxation or something else?' Statistically it's pretty even on both accounts. We see as many men as we do women. And we see a tad more rehab than we do relaxation for massage. Maybe 60/40 rehab to relaxation. And that's probably because we've been in the community for a really long time. I often call their doctors to consult with them about a client. I've worked really hard to be an adjunct to a patient's treatment from their primary care doctors. I want to know what they're already doing and what can I do to assist that.

"I try to go to new places so I can get a sense of things. I go to other places just because I love to get a massage and I like to find other great people that I can refer to. I'll pass out cards of other practitioners. It's always great to have that network. If somebody calls on Thursday and we're all booked I have a bank of people that I feel confident in referring clients to.

"I started doing pet grief therapy at Town & Country Veterinary Clinic in their conference room. And I got feedback that people were saying 'My pet was euthanized here, I cannot come back here to do my healing.' So we moved it here. People call individually and I'm doing one session right now, but if I have a group of people that want to connect with a group of people that have lost their pet as well sometimes I can put a group together and we'll do a session.

"I love what I do and I'm super geeked that I can still say that genuinely. I have an inner commitment to myself that I'm not going to just go through the motions. Life's too short. When and if there comes a day where I'm not feeling genuinely excited and I feel like the path has changed, that'll be the day that I'll seek out, like Holly did with me, the right person to pass

the baton to. The clients that come here deserve that. And I deserve that because integrity is huge. It's one of my favorite words. I feel like I can't do it any other way. I tell clients this often, that number one, I'm grateful that they still feel drawn to come here and that we still help them in some way. We both deserve the very best.

"Last week I had a woman come in, and this isn't uncommon, and she said 'I'm so happy to be here! You don't know how I look forward to this. This is the most highly anticipated thing I do for myself twice a year.' She was changing and I came out here and I felt a combined sense of heavy responsibility and humility, thinking to myself, 'This woman saved and for twice a year this is her treat to herself.' I didn't even know what to say, I was so blown away! That was really cool!

"I have a saying engraved inside one of my rings and it's what I live by. The saying is, 'Live life that when you are gone it will have mattered that you were here.' I love it and I share it and it's the foundation of how I live my life."

**Hands On Mind & Body Wellness Center
is located at 7077 Fieldcrest Ste. 100
(US 23 & Lee Rd.) Brighton, Michigan 48116
810.227.4432
www.handsonmindandbody.com**