

# Enlightened Touch helps people help themselves

BY PAUL R. PACE  
STAFF WRITER

Paity Russo will be the first to admit as a massage therapist, Reiki master, teacher and spiritual healer, she doesn't fix people.

She does, however, help people fix themselves, she says.

As the director of the new Enlightened Touch Healing Center in downtown Farmington's Village Mall, Russo confesses she took a leap of faith from a secure job to devote her full attention to a career that helps people feel better.

About 18 months ago, she traded in steady work with the U.S. Postal Service to pursue her true calling, as she puts it, full-time.

Russo said she tapped into massage therapy inadvertently by attending a spiritualist church with a friend a few years ago. There, members were offering chair healing, where one person channels energy through another person, she said.

The experience sparked something inside her.

"I realized that there was something more (in life), she



Candlelight helps to create a soothing atmosphere for clients.

said.

Russo took massage therapy classes and soon attended other schools and classes to learn more in-depth touch therapies such as Reiki, the eastern art of healing through a person's own energy.

Sometimes people need non-traditional therapies to assist them in making tough decisions, or to reduce trauma or stress in

their lives, she said.

Russo said her young business is unfolding well and she's trusting its future success based on what has worked so far—word of mouth from satisfied clients.

She said while there may be skeptics to some of the treatments that boast such things as balancing the body's mind and spirit along with its physical well-being, she's not interested in pushing a person in a place he or she won't feel comfortable.

If the techniques fail to work for a person, she's OK with that.

Russo said just talking with a client sometimes makes a person feel better.

Relaxing atmosphere

The therapist also has another office across from her massage therapy room where she rents out time for other practitioners involved in non-traditional therapies. The other techniques include acupuncture, aromatherapy, palm readings, angel and spirit portraits and crystal ball readings.

She also plans to sell healing products such as oils and incense at the other office.

Her massage room immediately evokes a relaxing atmos-



PHOTOS BY KALL BRESLER | OBSERVER

Low light levels and soothing decor add to Darlene Denning's experience at the hands of massage therapist Paity Russo.

phere with soft lighting, spiritual background music and a feeling of peace.

Gary MacLaren of Waterford has been a client of Russo's for three years.

"She's into spiritual healing," he said. "She makes you feel secure. She's a professional."

MacLaren, who enjoys playing sports, said the massages cure any aches and pains he develops.

"It's the best one or two hours every once every couple of weeks you can do," he said.

Bonnie Amos of Novi said she's been a client of Enlightened Touch since it opened three months ago in downtown Farmington.

She said she enjoys Russo's craniosacral therapy, where a gentle touch is used at specific points of the body to monitor

brain and spinal cord functions.

"You go into such a deep state," Amos said. "Afterward I feel so reenergized and grounded. I even feel I walk differently."

"She's good."

Enlightened Touch Healing Center is at 33335 Grand River Ave. Call (248) 882-1183.

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## Farmington High School students will be up for adventure

BY HEATHER WEEHMAN  
STAFF WRITER

Some Farmington High School students will get a chance to start their school day by kayaking, mountain biking, climbing rocks and learning about back country camping in a pilot course approved by the Farmington Board of Education. The school board last week approved adding "Adventure Outdoor Leadership" to the curriculum at Farmington High on a pilot, or trial, basis. It will be classified as a physical education course and require that students complete a course in basic physical education and health before

taking AOL. Students also must receive physicals, and their parents/guardians must meet with instructors.

The class, which will be offered first period, will teach students about wilderness education, including back country camping, nutrition and food preparation, environmental concerns, navigation, leadership development and team building and safety.

The Benchmark, an outdoor outfitter on 32715 Grand River, will help provide technical expertise and lend some of its equipment as well.

The course's activity units will include basic first aid and CPR,

rock and wall climbing, fitness concepts, kayaking, mountain biking, orienteering and backpacking.

Farmington High Principal John Barrett said that the outdoor adventure class has been in the discussion stages for about a year. The class is similar to courses offered in Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills.

Some field trips, including an orienteering outing in Heritage Park and a two-day backpacking trip, will be scheduled to give students a chance to apply what they have learned in class, said Kelly Boyd, a Farmington High physical education teacher.

The class is intended to focus

on lifelong learning, she said.

"They're only getting a taste of what's out there," Boyd said.

The class will be open to 20 students per semester, though 200 students expressed an interest in taking it. If the pilot is successful, more students may be able to take it next year, and the class could be offered at the other high schools as well.

When students aren't hitting the trails or learning kayak use in the swimming pool, they'll be hitting the books. The two required student texts will be "The Backpacker's Field Manual" by Rick Curtis, director of Princeton University's outdoor action program and "Never Cry

Wolf" by Canadian writer Farley Mowat, which is set in the Arctic tundra and was the basis for the 1983 film of the same name.

The instructors will have their own textbook arsenal as well, including books on nutrition, weight control, outdoor gear, wilderness first aid and outdoor leadership.

Teaching the class will be an easy transition for Boyd, who said she taught wilderness education in Colorado. She will be one of the instructors for the AOL class.

The block scheduling at Farmington High will work out well for this type of class, Boyd said. In block scheduling, stu-

dents meet in all their classes on Mondays and meet two more times each in the remainder of their classes on a Tuesday/Thursday or Wednesday/Friday basis, with longer class times on those days.

"Because of block scheduling, we'll be able to use (longer class times) to our advantage," she said.

The class wasn't a tough sell for the board.

"I think it's good that we're connecting athletics and academics in the natural world," trustee Priscilla Brouillette said.

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