

Ahhhhhh! It's our annual spas of Central Mass issue p14



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Ahhhhhh! Five Central Mass women, 15 spa treatments and a doggie massage school

We sent our writers out to be pampered and they did just that.

Crossing Over to the Spa Side

By Emily Roche

“What have you gotten us into?!” my cousin Gretchen asked me, half jokingly, half accusingly. The big smile on her face matched mine, and we were soon giggling like two crazy people, not quite believing that it had taken us less than an hour to abandon our previous beliefs and whole-heartedly cross over into the land of the Spa People.

In all our hours on the planet, neither one of us had ever really considered spending any of them in a spa with Spa People. It's not that we have an irrational, high-school-girl flashback hatred of them, we just assumed that spas, the services they offer, and the people who go there, just wouldn't be for us. Neither one of us really knows how to put on makeup, we think “manis and pedis” sound like a weird '80s band, and after hearing facial horror stories, could never quite figure out why anyone would put themselves through that torture when they could just wash their face with something expensive instead.

All that changed after we spent the better part of the Saturday before Christmas at All About You in Westminster. Since we were basically spa dunces, the staff helped us choose our services: we'd start with a 10:30 yoga class, then each have a facial and massage, Sacred Hot Stone for me, and reflexology for Gretchen.

I'm not that fluent in yoga and don't always know what to expect, so I was relieved when our yoga instructor

suggested that we de-stress from the year by doing a series of poses that would feature meditative, calming stretches: no extreme contortions or 90-degree marathon sessions. She was a genius at reading everyone's ability and had the flow and pace of the class just right, leaving everyone relaxed, and invigorated.

As others left the studio Gretchen and I we were ushered into the low-lit, warm-hued Tranquility Room, where trays of chocolate-covered nuts, cheese and crackers, fresh fruit, and water awaited us. After the staff confirmed that this food was in fact for us, we got into our spa groove, lightly snacking, sipping, and chatting while we waited our treatments.

First up: a Classic European facial. As I got under the covers of the heated massage table and relaxed into a warm, happy bubble, Sherry worked her magic. A steamer primed my skin for cleansing, which involved smooth creams rubbed into my skin and comforting warm towels placed over my face to “rinse” them away. She then performed gentle extractions to unclog blocked pores. The facial ended with a massage for my neck, shoulders and hands, which had been placed in warm mitts to get them ready. Where, I wondered to myself, had my friends gone to get their facials?

While I had the facial, Gretchen got reflexology, a highly-focused foot massage. In reflexology, each area of the foot corresponds to another part of the body, so this “mono-massage” ends up de-stressing the whole body. Gretchen

can attest to that.

“It was the fastest hour I've ever experienced,” she says. “I sat in a zero-gravity chair and Marsha used oil to massage each portion of my foot: each toe, the heel, everything. I loved it. I got completely blissed-out and almost fell asleep.”

I had the same reaction to the Sacred Hot Stone massage. As Melissa massaged my body, she placed hot stones collected from a Rhode Island beach under different areas or *chakras* to create a body/soul balance. Sometimes the stones were used as part of the massage, like when she placed little, tiny stones between my toes during the foot massage. The combination of the soothing heat from the hot stones and the pressure of the massage was a total stress-killer.

Afterward, we had our final Tranquility Room stop before re-entering our lives. As we talked, we both admitted that we were more relaxed than we'd ever been. I reached for my cell phone to check the time.

“Oh no, not here,” said Gretchen. “No cellphones or stressful subjects in the Tranquility Room.”

As we were leaving, the staff, knowing we were new to this, helped us plan our return visit.

“It's like your car,” they smiled. “Keeping your skin healthy is just as important as getting an oil change.”

It all clicked. In two months we'll be back for our tune-up, just in time for our birthdays. ●

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