

Spa 'grew out of few friends coming by the house'

By Bill Sterling • Staff Writer • February 2, 2011

CAPE CHARLES -- Ronald and Marian van Geijn bought a home at Bay Creek in 2006 because they loved the open spaces of the Eastern Shore and the beauty of the land. They often visited on weekends and finally moved to Cape Charles permanently in 2009 after living in Utah, Illinois, Maryland and northern Virginia during the 10 years since the couple came to the United States from Holland, where both were born and then married 15 years ago.

Marian, who had been trained in spa services in her native Netherlands and worked as a massage therapist in this country, did not plan on continuing that work in Cape Charles. But friends learned of her background and asked her to give them a facial or a massage. Gradually, her clientele built up to as many as 100 customers as she operated out of her home.

Working in the Internet security field, Ronald often traveled as a consultant and would return to their Bay Creek home on a Friday, only to find his living room full of customers awaiting on a massage or facial from Marian.

"I told Marian then. This is great you have so many customers even though you don't have a sign or advertise, but we can't have our home filled up with customers all the time. We need either to stop this or open up a business," recalls Ronald.

Thus, Breezes Day Spa was born in May of 2010 and in less than a year business has grown to the point a full-time employee, Julie Marshall, has been added and these days, Ronald spends much of his time on marketing aspects of Breezes Day Spa.

"I am thrilled I am able to take something I love doing and have so much passion for and turn it into a livelihood," said Marian. "The response has been tremendous. I have regular customers who come from as far away as Onancock, and many others drive from Salisbury or Chincoteague," said Marian, 52, who appears years younger, probably from the benefits of the services she offers at the spa.

Breezes Day Spa offers European facials, massages, manicures and pedicures, Asian threading, airbrush

tanning, eyelash tinting and treatments, body wraps and waxing and makeup. "We get customers who say they used to go to Virginia Beach to get the level of services we offer. We found there was a desire and even a need for a full-service spa on the Eastern Shore," said Marian.

Although Valentine's Day is around the corner, and massages, facials or manicures are a great way of pampering your loved one -- services are also offered to couples at the same time -- Marian says spa treatments have therapeutic value year round.

"People are so busy holding two jobs, rushing around and facing stress everywhere, that to treat oneself to a massage can be good for the body, mind and spirit. It's a way of thanking your body for what it does for you," said Marian.

Breezes Day Spa is located on 321 Mason Ave. in the building formerly used by Saffron, a gift shop. The van Geijns had a month to renovate the building before the May 1 opening last year because appointments were booked. In a flurry of activity, rooms for massages and other spa services were created, pedicure and manicure stations were installed, local artwork was used for a mural, and a music system that pipes in soft sounds was put in place. The result is a soothing, relaxed feeling that immediately puts the customer at ease.

"We don't even have to put up a sign that says no cell phones are allowed," said Marian. "The idea of coming here is get away from things that cause stress. The mood of the rooms lends itself to that."

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The unique gift items offered in the front lobby complement the setting. Ronald explains, "We get leather goods from Morocco and jewelry from The Netherlands. We also have local artwork on the walls. We know all the artisans we deal with and choose carefully the items we promote," said Ronald, who handles the business affairs and marketing, including developing and maintaining the website at www.breezesdayspa.com. They are also on Facebook.

"It's an eclectic mix of gift items that fits in well with the spa," said Marian, who notes the spa also offers Demologica beauty products, which can be obtained only at professional skin care locations. "We have some massage oils and lotions that contain chocolate shaped like champagne glasses. It sounds good enough to drink, but I wouldn't recommend it," she says with a laugh.

Ronald continues to perform Internet security work as a consultant but has cut back as business has grown at the spa. In fact, their plans to come to Cape Charles to play golf and enjoy boating has taken a back seat because of the demand for spa services. "We don't play golf, although we had plans to, and we did buy a 32-foot sailboat that needs work, a lot of work. As we get time, we will get it ready to sail," said Ronald

For now, Marian leaves the spa three days a week after it closes to attend classes in Virginia Beach in pursuit of a master esthetician certification. After first gaining her massage certification seven years ago, she is now a certified practitioner in a number of massage and therapeutic treatments as well as facial and body care. The master esthetician certification will allow her to provide more aggressive treatments using chemicals that provides medical care.

Massages are \$70 for 50 minutes, and facials start at \$75. Manicures and pedicures start at \$30 and range upward, depending on the detail. Waxing treatments start at \$15 and go up to \$60 for Brazilian. Airbrush tanning is \$29.

Despite their European heritage and having lived in several places in the U.S., the van Geijns feel right at home in Cape Charles.

"We just love it here," said Marian. "It's so peaceful, and the people are so friendly. I love the fact there are so few stoplights and you can park almost anywhere."

Approximately 40 percent of the customers who get a massage are men, says Marian, and customers come from all walks of life. Marian says the wife of a waterman comes in and gets nail treatments. She helps her husband handle clams for the market. Marian treated her with a 14-day nail polish she has recently introduced to the shop. "She came back and flashed her hands and said, 'Look, 5,000 clams and not a crack or a chip in my nails. That is good stuff.'"

Breezes Day Spa is open Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. but will take customers at other hours or on off days with a scheduled appointment. Marian says appointments are recommended for regular hours to avoid the disappointment of waiting when busy. In addition to Marian, Julie Marshall is a certified massage therapist and can provide facials as well as pedicures and manicures. The phone number is 757-331-3108.

"Life is good," said Marian. "I am thrilled the way things have worked out. I never dreamed when I came to Cape Charles I would be having a spa business, but it just grew out of having a few friends come by the house."

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Marian and Ronald van Geijn are the owners of Breezes Day Spa in Cape Charles. (Jay Diem photos)



Marian van Geijn offers a range of services at the spa.

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