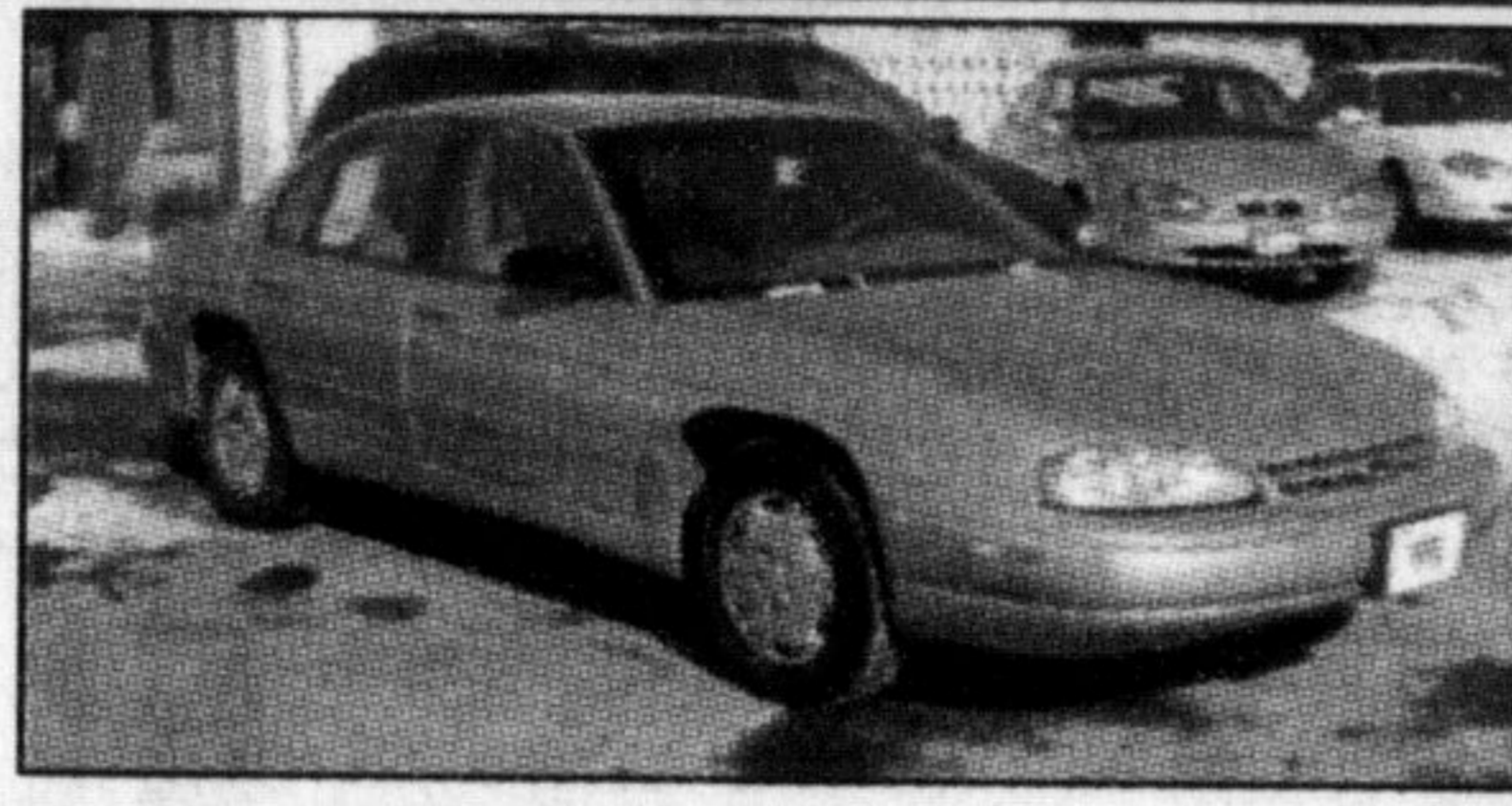


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Milton • Means Business

Therapeutic massage is business of the day

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Business has been brisk since the Milton Therapeutic Clinic opened its doors a month ago at 75 Main St. E.

And Milton-bred registered massage therapists Jillian Guard and Ryan Weaver are hoping it'll bulk up even more as the town expands.

The pair, who went to Milton District High School before earning degrees in different universities, were reunited while attending the Canadian Therapeutic College in Burlington.

And when it came to opening their own clinic, Milton was the natural choice.

"We have friends and family here," said Mr. Weaver. "With the upcoming growth, there seemed to be a lot of potential."

The clinic specializes in therapeutic massage, including deep tissue manipulation and rehabilitation techniques.

The health angle of massage is emphasized by the clinic's location, in a medical building across from Zak's Pharmacy near chiropractor and physiotherapist offices.

"We really play up the fact we're in a medical establishment because it's a therapeutic sort of treatment," said Mr. Weaver.

Specialized clients

Massage can help relieve everything from injuries to stress, and so far baby boomers have flooded the market. But the clinic also courts specialized clients. Ms Guard offers labour support as well as massage for pregnant women, infants and the elderly.

Massage treatments can help older people stay limber. And at a life stage when loneliness may come calling more often than friends and family, it also "gives them attention," said Ms Guard.

For some, massage can strike a preventative blow against stress-related maladies.

Runaway stress has been fingered as the culprit behind up to 90 per cent of visits to primary care physicians, according to some estimates. And unmanaged stress is thought to be a contributing factor in up to 80 per cent of industrial accidents and 75 per cent of high-frequency illnesses in employees.

For some, even the idea of going for a massage is stressful. But a precautionary release of tension is reason enough to come in, said Ms Guard.

"Medicine is changing now to being preventative," she said. "This is a way to balance, like maintenance for your health care."

Others worry about having to undress for a treatment. But while skin to skin contact does yield the best results, it isn't vital, she said. And clients who do choose to undress do so in private, then slip beneath a modest, full-length sheet. Only the area that's being worked on is revealed.

"I find that a big reason people don't come for a massage is they're worried about undressing," said Ms Guard. "People have this misconception that they have to get naked."

But when it comes to relaxing, deep breathing can help and both Ms Guard and

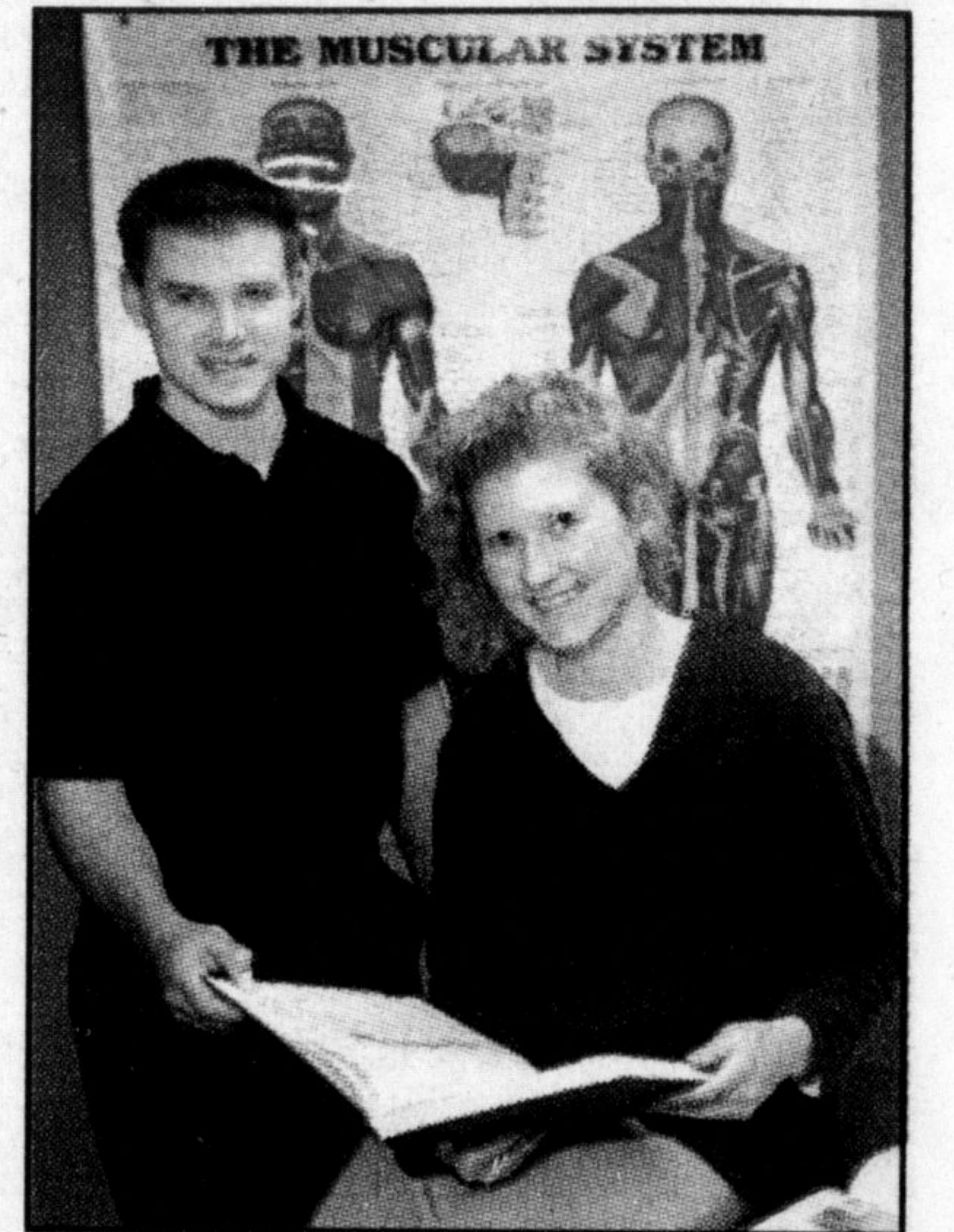


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

The tired, aching and just plain tense can get some relief through registered massage therapists Ryan Weaver (left) and Jillian Guard of the newly-opened Milton Therapeutic Clinic.

Mr. Weaver are willing to show a client how it's done.

The idea is if the breathing changes, it forces the nervous system to change with it. It goes something like this: the nervous system can be divided into two components — the sympathetic and parasympathetic.

The sympathetic is all about excitation, or the old the fight or flight response. It causes an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. In other words, it's what kicks in when a person strolling along a veld suddenly realizes a lion is preparing to have them for lunch.

In contrast, the parasympathetic response radiates serenity and restfulness. It's what the lion experiences when he's stretched out in the sun, lazily digesting the person on the veld.

In an ideal world, people would hop nimbly from one state to the other, striking a balance within the body. Since it isn't an ideal world, Mr. Weaver and Ms Guard can help.

Totally at rest

The first step is just booking a massage, which means for one blessed hour there are no phones, e-mail, traffic or kids to deal with.

"You're at rest," said Mr. Weaver. "It's one hour they can let their mind wander."

Then there's the deep-breathing trick. "It places the body in a parasympathetic state," said Mr. Weaver. "But it also changes your posture. You're using your diaphragm."

Shallow breathing, on the other hand, can conspire to keep muscles tense. And no one needs to be the meditative sort to master deep breathing. The body automatically slips into it during sleep.

If stress isn't behind aching muscles, poor posture probably is. A lot of pain is the result of shortened muscles which occur from bad habits at the work desk.

"What I tend to see are problems from people sitting at their desks all day," said Ms Guard.