

CITIZEN ON ASSIGNMENT: Practitioners raise the profile of massage as therapy during awareness week

Massage therapists provide hands-on help

MARIANNE STILL
CITIZEN ON ASSIGNMENT

Markham Stouffville Hospital hosted a three-day educational Massage Therapy Clinic last week, coinciding with National Massage Awareness Week.

Sandra Conway, the hospital's director of the Step Into Wellness Program for physicians, nurses, staff and volun-

teers, said the focus was to educate the public and health care professionals about the therapeutic benefits of massage.

Massage therapy is now being used in labour/deliveries rooms. Pamela Polley, owner of Unionville Massage Therapy Clinic and past president of the York Regional Massage Therapy Association, said she assists women at the onset of labour, travels to hospital and provides massage therapy both during and after delivery.

Several York Region massage therapists volunteered their time for National Massage Awareness Week, providing free 15-minute massages to hospital staff and volunteers.

Most people have never had a massage, Polley said. "Once one has tried it, they usually come back for more."

A lot of massage therapy work is seasonal. With winter approaching, we can expect to see snow shoveling and hockey injuries as well as the usual slips and falls on ice.

Massage can relieve many specific problems such as migraine, low back pain, digestive/lower bowel problems, sciatica and arthritis. Diabetes sufferers can benefit from massage therapy's effects because it helps normalize the circulatory system. Chronic care, palliative and elderly patients may find relief also because massage affects the metabolism, muscular and nervous systems and their independent functioning.

Massage therapists are required to complete 2,200 hours of intensive anatomical, physiological and clinical studies, including extensive practical instruction at a government approved vocational massage therapy school.

After the completion of those exams, in order to be registered, individuals must complete and pass their College of



PHOTO/MARIANNE STILL

Marita Counck, YRMTA president and owner of Stouffville Therapeutics, offers relief by way of massage to Markham Stouffville Hospital nurse Lynn Adamson.

Massage Therapists exams. Registered massage therapists have photo ID cards issued to them, showing their registration number; you have a right to view this ID card in order to be assured that your therapist is registered.

For help and information on finding a massage therapist in your area, call OMTA Referral Service at 416-968-6487 or 1-800-668-2022.

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If you have news to share with the community and would like to try your hand at being a reporter, you could be a Citizen on Assignment for the Markham Economist & Sun or the Stouffville Tribune.

You'll need a story idea — whether it's your parents' 50th wedding anniversary, a class fundraising project, your daughter's award or your neighbourhood's achievement.

The next step is to pitch your idea to the editor. If you get the go-ahead, you'll need to attend the event and/or arrange interviews. When you're on assignment, make sure you collect plenty of information and quotes from the people involved in your story. Bring a notebook, pens, perhaps a tape recorder, and a 35-mm camera, if you have one.

You will be required to write your story to a deadline determined by the editor. Arrangements can be made for weekend deliveries.

We'll provide a tip sheet prepared by our staff that will help you write your news story, a Citizen on Assignment T-shirt, a roll of 35-mm colour film. (We will process the film and give you the photographs after the story is published.)

Call news editor Julie Caspersen at 294-2200.

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