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SPA Report 2005

PREGNANT PAUSES

Park Slope's new Sage Spa relieves mom-to-be's anxiety, swelling, aches & pains



Susan Stratton, owner of SAGE Spa, was born in New Orleans and grew up in Florida, but she's been a Park Sloper since 1983.

"Now of course, Brooklyn's the coolest place in the world," she said. And an informal survey of the neighborhood would seem to reveal that Park Slope is experiencing a baby boom - a perfect time to open Sage. But Stratton and Sage's other therapists offer massage to everyone, not just mommies-to-be.

The upside is that Stratton eschews forms and questionnaires, instead asking her client, "How can I help you today?" She offers them several massage oils to choose from, each with its own special blend of healing scents.

"They choose whatever suits their mood for that day," said Stratton, who took a yearlong course in aromatherapy at the Open Center in Manhattan.

"Smell doesn't go to the rational mind first, it goes to the unconscious," said Stratton, explaining that she can get clues about how a person is feeling that day or what's ailing them depending on the scent they choose.

Occasionally, clients shy away from a scent - like eucalyptus - because of a deeply hidden memory.

"For some, that smell reminds them of medicine their mothers put on them when they were sick, so it reminds them of being sick - although they might not remember that right away."

While the treatment room I was in was a bit chilly, as soon as I mentioned it, Stratton immediately turned up the heat on the massage table. She set to work giving me a stress-relieving massage, paying particular attention to where I complained of an ache - my lower back (although I am not pregnant). Using gliding, pulling and kneading strokes and fingertip pressure she eased my aches and even released tension from areas where I didn't think I could have it, such as my face and fingertips.

While it seems impossible that the petite, smiling Stratton, with her sweet southern accent, could possibly give you a vigorous head to toe massage, you'll be pleasantly surprised. The former dancer and University of Florida cheerleader has enthusiasm and strength to spare.

"This is a beautiful and peaceful place with dedicated therapists," said Stratton. "We do what it takes to help people