



## Losing yourself in luxury

WE'VE ALL SEEN THE "CALGON, TAKE ME AWAY" COMMERCIAL. Anne Munson ('99M) has created a unique day spa to help clients reach that relaxation nirvana - while providing them with some healthful information at the same time.

### **Alumna offers up a healthy dose of relaxation at Cascades Day Spa**

In today's fast-paced society, it seems almost impossible to find time, let alone a place, to relax. Anne Munson ('99M) has turned this everlasting quest for peace and relaxation into a career - a career of providing tranquility for others.

Munson owns Cascades Day Spa in Lexington, Va., with her husband Noel. The couple opened the spa in April 2003, and Anne promises, "When you enter Cascades Day Spa, the world and all its troubles will seem miles away."

Soft hues of yellow and green and earthy wood and tile flooring immediately begin to soothe the eyes as you enter the spa. The 2,500-square-foot facility features six treatment rooms, a large multipurpose room and a Wet Room with a waterproof treatment table, wall-mounted shower rinse and a 10-jet stream shower. Munson has worked diligently to overcome the cold, clinical "doctor's office feel" atmosphere of many spas.

Each room of Cascades is decorated in an East Indian theme. "We want the spa to have an understated tropical feel," Munson says, "and I think we've achieved that through our decorations and simple woodwork details."

Munson says that the inspiration for the name "Cascades" came at an unexpected time. "I realized the importance of picking a name suited to such a soothing place. ... My husband and I were on a drive through the mountains one day discussing names, and we drove past a waterfall. Right then, we decided on the name Cascades."

Many Cascades visitors report that they "never expected to find anything like this in the Shenandoah Valley."

Munson says that it is important to make her spa stand out from others. Cascades differs from the traditional notion of a spa because it is "more of a wellness spa than a beauty spa," she says. The various forms of massage, facial and body treatments have all been chosen based on their healthful benefits. Before each client leaves the facility, Cascades technicians teach helpful tips on staying healthy and ways to take care of the skin and body. The "customer education" approach is something Munson is proud of. "People come here to invest in their health," she explains. "We want that investment to be worth their time and money even after they leave."

After earning a master's degree in higher education counseling/college student personnel administration from JMU, Munson began her professional career in JMU's University Recreation department. "I never imagined that I would one day own a spa," she says.

Munson originally planned a career in coordination of student services. One of her former UREC student employees was planning on attending massage school after graduation, and his enthusiasm influenced Munson to try it out. The certified massage therapist says, "My time at JMU indirectly led to my entry into the massage field." And Munson's master's degree helped her become director of the Virginia School of Massage.

The health-conscious entrepreneur credits JMU's faculty and College Student Personnel Administration program for teaching her "how to analyze and anticipate service needs, the need for a philosophy and a mission statement and the importance of networking."

"My counseling classes taught me how to listen for the real issue behind a conversation or complaint," she adds. "And, my job at UREC taught me the fundamentals and appreciation for health and wellness."

For anyone interested in starting a business, Munson recommends a visit to the Harrisonburg Small Business Administration office. "They have introductory seminars, a very pertinent library and a range of one-on-one services for committed entrepreneurs," she says. Munson also stresses the importance of "research, preparation, planning and getting the word out."

For now, Munson is pleased with the way Cascades is running. Like all customer-service approach businesses, Cascades will introduce new features in the future. In September 2003, Munson added hair removal treatments to the spa menu. She also plans to add workshops on exercise, nutrition, stress reduction, aromatherapy, herbal therapy and other topics that increase awareness of wellness.

Take a virtual tour of Cascades Day Spa at [www.cascadesdayspa.com](http://www.cascadesdayspa.com).

*By Lisa Freedman ('05), Montpelier editorial assistant*