



Meet **Sandy Saldano** FOUNDER **Therapeutic Kneads**

By Alisa Bay

Where did you grow up and where do you live now?

I was raised in the Quad Cities (Bettendorf, Iowa) and currently live in Palatine.

Where did you obtain your higher education degrees, licenses and certifications?

I have an associate degree from Scott Community College in Bettendorf, IA, and received my massage therapy certification from the Chicago School of Massage Therapy in Chicago in 1987. I have been a Licensed Massage Therapist in Illinois for almost 40 years and am also a Certified Manual Lymphatic Drainage and Decongestive Therapist - Academy of Lymphatic Studies.

What drew you to the world of health and wellness?

Anatomy and physiology were my strong suits. I was intrigued with how the body worked. I originally wanted to be a physical therapist.

Was there a moment/ experience that made you realize this is what you were meant to do?

While working as a waitress, my co-workers would frequently ask me to massage their shoulders, saying, "Let Sandy do your shoulders - she's great at it!" It was while attending Palmer Chiropractic College to be a chiropractic assistant that I discovered massage therapy was a real profession with dedicated schools, and I left Iowa to attend Chicago School of Massage Therapy in 1987.

What did you do before opening Therapeutic Kneads?

After finishing massage school in 1988, I took a position with a chiropractor in Highland Park as an office administrator and massage therapist.

When did Therapeutic Kneads open and what inspired you to start your own business?

I always wanted to have my own business. After working for the chiropractor for a few years, I started a mobile business making home visits for patients who wanted more in-depth treatment. I went full-time and opened a small office on March 1, 1997, at 480 Elm Place in Highland Park.

How would you describe your approach to massage?

My approach is clinical and non-spa—a therapeutic modality for goal-oriented, client-focused change in the body, bringing about pain and stress relief. We customize treatments based on a thorough consultation and health history. We view massage as healthcare, not a luxury or spa service; it is a drug-free approach to chronic pain and mental stress.

What sets Therapeutic Kneads apart from other massage or wellness businesses?

We are massage-therapist-owned. I hire for attitude and willingness to learn. Our Training and Education Director was my instructor, and together we have nearly 80 years of experience. Therapists undergo an intense 4-week training and continue with on-site and off-site education. Our staff are employees, not independent contractors, receiving benefits and stable income, which translates to highly satisfied clients.

What types of clients do you and your staff mostly work with?

We are a Community Care Provider for the Veteran's Administration and are contracted with Lake Forest Place Senior Living to serve the geriatric population. We mostly see clients for chronic issues and as adjunctive treatments to complement cancer treatments, chiropractic, and acupuncture, and to enhance general wellness routines. Recently, we have been seeing more tweens and young adults for sports injuries, stress, and anxiety. We love that whole families come here.

Who can benefit from massage?

Anyone with "blood in their veins and a heartbeat" can benefit. The main benefit is improved circulation, which helps those who are immobile, less active, or over-active in sports. The aging population benefits from increased range of motion and less arthritis pain. Those who are immune-compromised can benefit from manual lymphatic drainage. It is also an antidote for epidemic stress.



What types of massage do you and your staff offer?

Sports, myofascial release, trigger point, neuromuscular, prenatal, reflexology, shiatsu, Swedish, stretching and range of motion, craniosacral therapy, manual lymphatic drainage, gua-sha, cupping, Reiki, hot Himalayan stone, and hot bamboo massage.

What do you love most about what you do?

That we get to help people feel better and witness physical change and transformation in real time.

What excites you most about this industry overall?

That research is currently being done on the benefits of massage therapy, and the medical community and even the US Government (for US Veterans) are finally listening and recommending it.

What has been the most rewarding part of owning Therapeutic Kneads?

Seeing my staff grow, come together as a team, and turning the industry on its head by doing things differently than the norm with training, benefits, and not overworking them.

What are your hopes/goals for the future of the business?

My hope is that every person will experience massage therapy in their lifetime and that it will become mainstream in the healthcare world.

If you could have dinner with anyone (living or deceased), who would it be and why?

Prince, because he played over 50 instruments, fought against the music industry "machine" to forge his own path, and had incredible drive and passion.

What three or four words best describe you?

Caring, driven, and heart-centered.

What's your favorite all-time movie?

The Sandlot.

What's your favorite holiday and why?

Christmas, because I enjoy being "Sandy-Clause!"

What's the best way to start the day?

Reading passages from the Bible, praying and meditating for a good day, and hugging my family.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

I would love to do the El Comino de Santiago in Spain to experience meals with locals and see the beauty of the countryside in slow motion.

How do you relax after a hard day of work?

Take a magnesium bath, have some tea, and take a walk with my dog, Sequoia.

What do you hope never changes?

I hope that people will be accepting and compassionate towards others who are different from them.

What's the luckiest thing that happened to you?

We adopted our son as a newborn and got to see him come into the world!

What do you wish you knew more about?

Investing.

What would you do with \$1 million to impact the most people?

I would create a foster program for families or adults to help them get on their feet and out of homelessness, teaching them budgeting, planning, and other life skills.

What do you regret not doing?

I regret not becoming a chiropractor and not having more children.

What's your favorite drink?

Chai tea latte.

What are you looking forward to in the next 10 years?

Retirement and travel.

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