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# Helping others cope with stress

by Stephen Pistone  
GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

HAMMONTON—Sheri Marcantuono was in a dark place after her father's death in 2009. The ensuing stress in the aftermath became consuming for this 1991 Hammonton High School graduate and her family until, one day,

she began experiencing numbness in her face for a period of five days. It was brought to her attention by a co-worker that one side of her lips and one of her eyes were drooping—she was experiencing an occurrence of Bell's palsy.

Marcantuono credits that co-

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## Holistic healing by Lotus Wood Journey

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work for helping her get to a better place in life because shortly after she discovered reiki and eventually meditation as a way to manage the stress of life.

"I'm just so thankful for my journey. I'm thankful for meditation because, in meditation, I come down here—I in essence I have this beautiful room—I come down here and, just even 10 minutes, it just shows it," Marcantuono said.

Marcantuono said she has meditated nearly every day since then and went on to create Lotus Wood Journey, a holistic healing program that provides meditation classes among several other services designed to help people find the best version of themselves.

Marcantuono, a Berlin resident and graduate of Hammonton High School, decided to take the practice around and reduce stress to the masses after her daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia and didn't know how to cope.

"It was horrible because we didn't know what was happening. She was coming home from school, and she was saying that she didn't understand her math and she couldn't read... When I found meditation for myself, I started guiding her in the meditations, and she started to get a little bit of self. And, of course, now we understand, so we were able to help her

down more as well, but she had more of a feeling of self, was more mindful that she had to slow down, that it's OK because this is why. And still to this day, we do a meditation before she goes to school, every morning," Marcantuono said.

Marcantuono felt that if meditation can help her daughter, it could help other children as well. So, she began hosting classes for children in the healing studio in her home. By the fifth week of classes, Marcantuono noticed dramatic improvements, which spurred her to promote Lotus Wood Journey to students from other schools.

"I thought, 'This really needs to be in schools worldwide.'" So, I started at my daughter's school in Berlin, and there was one child that signed up for the class and he was great, he loved it. Then, I got a taste of a different child gaining confidence through this, and I thought, "Wow, I need to get it someplace else. Then, I started doing my open houses, any community days, anything that I could find to get to kids," Marcantuono said.

Marcantuono's pursuit to promote Lotus Wood Journey's services to local students led to her

being contracted with AlliantCare Behavioral Health Systems and her beginning to teach classes at a teen center in Weymouth Twp.

Through Marcantuono's experiences teaching meditation and other holistic healing methods, she has worked extensively with students from Atlantic City High School, who face a lot of turmoil during their childhoods. Marcantuono said working with these children and helping them find peace through meditation is a great honor.

"I've never been so honored to be part of something that's so much bigger than myself. It's just great that I can be this person that can bring so much peace to other people," Marcantuono said.

Lotus Wood Journey offers classes for children ages 8 and older and also offers adult classes. Marcantuono said Lotus Wood Journey's classes are designed to help anyone and the only requirement to ensure a fulfilling experience from her holistic healing services is to have an open mind and a desire to participate.

"Just like anything else, you have to want to do it. I could talk to you until I'm blue in the face, if you don't want it, you're not going



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SHERI MARCANTUONO. To purchase photos in The Gazette, call (609) 704-1940. Hammonton native and founder of holistic healing program Lotus Wood Journey, Sheri Marcantuono, stands inside her healing studio where she teaches meditation, reiki and other healing services.

to take anything from it," Marcantuono said.

Marcantuono urges everyone to give her services a try because she believes they have a profound ability to instill self-awareness and an understanding of self-worth in individuals who may be struggling like she once was.

"A lot of people come into my classes and they don't find the value in themselves, and I don't

know if many people realize what they're getting into when they come here. I think they think, "Oh, I'm going to learn a meditation," but when they leave here, it really opened them up to valuing themselves," Marcantuono said.

For more information on Lotus Wood Journey, call (856) 889-3173 or visit [www.lotuswoodjourney.com](http://www.lotuswoodjourney.com) for a list of services provided.

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