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For more information, contact Matt Baron at
708-860-1380 or Matt@InsideEdgePR.com.

Tyler Wellness brings soothing, therapeutic touch to the workplace

Mark your calendar: Administrative Professionals Week is April 20 to 26.

It's an occasion that may prompt some business owners to treat their support personnel to any variety of thank-you gestures.

But for the roughly 25 people employed by The Sachem Company – an international trade firm near downtown Oak Park that caters to more than 100 companies and suppliers – almost every Wednesday since April 2000 has been Employee Appreciation Day.

For them, it's not merely the midpoint of the workweek. For Sachem employees, Wednesday represents a time for sweet serenity, as a Tyler Wellness massage therapist administers chair massages to any and all employees for upwards of six hours.

“Our goal is to bring total-body wellness into the workplace through massage,” says Walter Miller, founder of Tyler Wellness, which is based in Oak Park. “Sachem’s owner, Paul Beckwith, shared this sentiment, and the results have been excellent.”

How it works: every Wednesday morning, licensed massage therapist Sally Richards, arrives at Sachem ready to knead out knots, stress, tension and tendons. She transforms an empty office in the back of the building into a spa-like sanctuary with dimmed lights and tranquil music.

Employees stop by throughout the day to visit Richards, as it fits into their schedule. They remain fully clothed as Richards works on their head, neck, shoulders, back and arms. Time slots are typically 10 minutes.

“The work pace at Sachem is pretty fast, and stress can run pretty high, depending on deadlines and projects. But when an employee sits in my chair, it's an opportunity to escape it all briefly and to just enjoy being

708.860.1380

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1515 N. Harlem Avenue Oak Park, IL 60302

pampered,” explains Richards. “I’m actually applauded when I walk in the door at Sachem – that’s how happy they are to see me.”

“I feel like a rock star,” Richards added with a smile.

Beckwith said that he and his staff indeed look forward to each visit, which is interrupted only when exceptional circumstances arise, such as Richards’ recently taking several weeks off around the birth of her son last year.

“My company thanks me a lot for bringing them in. It creates a better relationship among us all, and speaks to the value of our company, about taking care of our people,” said Beckwith.

One employee, Sara Stevenson, called the weekly chair massage “a wonderful bonus here.”

“Sally has a wonderful presence about her which just adds to the relaxing experience of the massage,” said Stevenson. “Muscles can get tight sitting at a computer, and sometimes work can get a little stressful. The massage is a reminder to the mind and to the muscles to relax and release the stress.”

Another worker, Carol Summers, said the massages provide an “opportunity to support better habits for posture and methods to release stress.”

“Sally always has a radiant smile and centeredness that contributes to her healing hands,” added Summers.

Michelle Donat, Tyler Wellness operations director, said bringing massage into the workplace provides a variety of benefits that help an enterprise’s bottom-line profitability and stability.

“It boosts employees’ energy and alertness, reduces chronic pain associated with heavy computer use, improves morale and loyalty, and reduces the likelihood of repetitive strain injuries,” said Donat. “It goes beyond being simply a thoughtful gesture on the company’s part. This simply makes good business sense.”

Tyler Wellness provides in-office massages to more than a dozen businesses throughout the Chicago area. In some cases, companies hire the firm on special occasions, which often results in repeat visits.

“Once they see the benefits,” said Donat, “it’s common for them to want it more frequently.”

About Tyler Wellness

Led by Michelle Donat and Catherine Boskovic, Tyler Wellness is a regional leader in individual and group wellness seminars, covering topics that include nutrition, stress resiliency, yoga and massage.

The company’s founder, Walter Miller, created Chicago's first walk-in chair massage store and has been an ambassador of massage, introducing thousands to the benefits of massage in settings ranging from Fortune 500 companies to convention centers to the old Comiskey Park.

Donat also owns Relaxation Plantation, a massage therapy practice. Tyler Wellness is located in Suite 706 of 715 Lake St. (the Medical Arts building), and is online at www.tylerwellness.com. For more information, call 800-695-5410.