

15 MINUTES

Florida student considers the artistry of massage

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

A small group of future massage therapists enjoyed lunch outside on a mild December afternoon. They congregated around benches next to their school, the Academy of Massage and Skin Care in South Fort Myers.

Student Rose Giro, 58, talked about her enthusiasm for health and well-being, massage therapy and how a therapist's hands may be like brushes for a painter or letters for a writer.

"I think that massage is an art," she said. "It's not about just the mechanics of joints and muscles. What's interesting about massage is everyone brings a different background and everybody develops such a unique touch in their work."

Ms. Giro to the massage table a lifetime of experience: a Midwestern childhood, traveling across the country, becoming a vegetarian, and an appreciation of her favorite artists, such as Claude Monet.

"I'm in what you might call the leading edge of the baby boomers," she said. "I think one of the reasons they've aged so well is they take care of themselves, and I think massage is one of those avenues that can lead to a better physical lifestyle."

In the mid-1970s, she became a vegetarian, and has aged elegantly, proof that she might be right about the choice. She had brought a zip-lock bag containing a healthy lunch to the massage school.

"I have dehydrated bananas, pecans, walnuts and a whole-grain cereal that

makes up a quick trail mix," she said. "At home, I'd probably have something hot, but still with fruits, vegetables and whole grains."

Ms. Giro grew up in the country outside Independence, Mo., the birthplace of President Harry S. Truman.

"I would describe it as quiet, rural, family and friend oriented," she said. "A hard-working and fun-loving community."

Later, she lived near Kansas City, Mo., where she was a volunteer speaker at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Ms. Giro gave presentations to civic and business groups about the museum, with its cathedral-like cafeteria and a huge lawn dotted with oversized pop-art birdies. It also boasts one of the largest collections of ancient Chinese art in the world.

Some of Ms. Giro's favorite artists are the local unknowns she sees in galleries like Space 39 or Arts for ACT in downtown Fort Myers.

"I appreciate local artists," she added. "I guess it's the expression of the inner self that I connect with. You sometimes connect with the pieces from certain artists whether international or local."

Ms. Giro moved to Fort Myers in 2004, after spending the previous six years traveling across the United States and Canada in a motor home with her significant other. Before leaving, they took a class on how to live on the road, the best way to get mail and finding a place to vote. They learned that about 1 million RVs were on the road full time when they first departed, in 1998.



EVAN WILLIAMS/FLORIDA WEEKLY

Rose Giro, student at Florida Academy of Massage and Skin Care

"We did have cell phones, but Internet services were problematic when we started," said Ms. Giro, adding that most RV campgrounds have wireless Internet connections now.

During this sabbatical, the couple stopped near Fort Myers more than once. They fell in love with the sub-tropic winters of mild breezes and swaying palm trees, among other places.

"We still didn't see everything, even after six years," Ms. Giro said. "Our goal was to see those places we had read about

that appealed to us, that other travelers had told us about. The coast of Oregon was very high up on my list."

She added, "It's just a spectacular coastline. It's rugged. It's gorgeous. The air feels good."

Now that Ms. Giro lives in Fort Myers, she plans on staying.

"The gypsy (in me) might take over at some point, but I've been happy in Florida," she said.

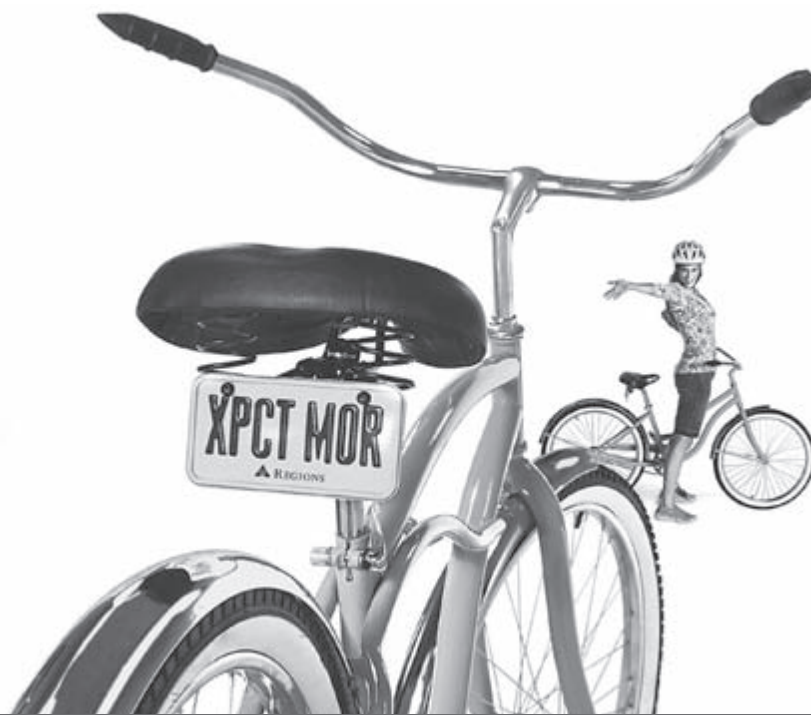
She is also a member of a senior tap-dancing group in Fort Myers, and is active on the social committee of Pelican Preserve. She was on the local 2007 United States Tennis Association team, which qualified for state competition in the adult/senior division.

On Jan. 7, she will graduate from the Academy of Massage and Skin Care along with six other students, prepared to get national certification. How will all her life experiences translate into her own unique style of massage? She's not sure, exactly. But it will help her clients feel better.

"I want to help people in pain," she said. "Massage relieves pain and anxiety, and extends the years of physical activity. It improves your mood. It could be a first option before prescriptions or surgery."

It also inspires Ms. Giro, who is learning more about nutrition and anatomy in her massage class.

"I find that massage and the body is endlessly fascinating," she said. "(The body) is this marvelous vehicle that we live." ■



Hop on. Our Grand Opening is rolling into your neighborhood.

**GRAND OPENING:
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6
10 A.M. – 2 P.M.**

Gulf Coast Branch
17810 Ben Hill Griffin Parkway
239-267-3549
Located in Gulf Coast Town
Center, next to McDonald's

Stop by December 6 from 10 A.M. – 2 P.M. and enter for a chance to win a 2008 Mercedes-Benz E320 BLUETEC and enter to win 1 of 7 opportunities to win up to \$500 in the Money Machine.¹

Get \$30 in gift cards² when you open a Regions Visa CheckCard.

Saturday, December 6: Free food, drinks and more³
Free Moonwalk and face painting for the kids • Free piggy banks³
Get your photo taken with Santa from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Free golf swing analysis with PGA Golf Professional Mike Miller
Pet adoptions with Haven on Earth Animal League
Meet Swampe from the Florida Everblades and so much more!

REGIONS
It's time to expect more.

©RegionsBank. Member FDIC. *2008RegionsGrandOpening "Expect More Green" Promotion. NO PURCHASE OR BANKING RELATIONSHIP NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. A PURCHASE OR BANKING RELATIONSHIP WILL NOT INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING. Sweepstakes open only to legal residents of AL, AR, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MS, MO, NC, SC, TN, TX, and VA of the age of majority or older in their state of residence. Void where prohibited or restricted by law. Promotion runs 1/18/08 through 12/31/08 (the "Promotion Period"). To enter, visit any Regions Bank branch grand opening event (a "GOE") and complete an Official Entry Form and deposit in the Official Entry Box on site at the GOE. Visit www.Regions.com/Grand_Openings.rf to find the dates, times and locations of scheduled GOEs. Limit one entry in the Promotion per person during the Promotion Period. Sponsor will select one (1) Grand Prize Winner from among all eligible entries received during the GOEs held during the Promotion Period. Grand Prize consists of a 2008 Mercedes-Benz E320 BLUETEC automobile (ARV of Grand Prize: \$51,000). Odds of winning the Promotion Grand Prize depend on the total number of entries received from all of the GOEs held throughout the Promotion Period. Sponsor will also conduct "GOE Contests" during each GOE, and will select from the eligible entries received at each GOE: (i) one contestant who will receive a cash prize of \$500 and will have the opportunity to play the Car Contest (the "Car Contest") for a chance to win a 2008 Mercedes-Benz E320 BLUETEC automobile (ARV of: \$51,000); and (ii) seven contestants who will each have a chance to collect as much money as they can in 15 seconds (up to \$500) from the Money Machine (the "Money Machine Contest"). (Total ARV of all prizes, including Promotion Grand Prize and prizes potentially available through all GOE Contests, is \$1,921,000.) Car Contest automobile prizes may not be awarded at any of the GOEs. For more information, please visit a participating Regions Branch or www.Regions.com/Grand_Openings.rf. Must be present at GOE to participate in GOE Contests. Odds of being selected as a GOE Contest participant depend on the total number of eligible entries received at the time of the specific GOE drawings. Subject to Official Rules available at participating Regions Bank branches and www.Regions.com/Grand_Openings.rf. Sponsor: Regions Bank, 1900 5th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. Administrator/Operator: Big Sky Enterprises. ¹The \$30 in gift cards is only available to customers who open a Regions Visa CheckCard at the Gulf Coast Branch, December 1-December 6, 2008. Cannot be combined with any other offers. Limit one per household. Please see gift card terms and conditions for details. All accounts subject to the Regions Deposit Agreement. ²While supplies last.