

abmp BizFit Member Profile

By Sean Eads

Heather Karr
Thousand Oaks, CA

Massage therapist or mad scientist? While most massage therapists are known to experiment with many different techniques to ease clients' pain, Heather Karr takes inventiveness to another level. She is the creator of a deep-tissue modality termed "golf ball massage," and was recently featured on an episode of the CBS show *The Doctors* for developing two related products: a self-massage treatment called KaddyBACK, and a tool for massage therapists called SPAball Kaddy. A mother of two, Canadian-born Karr became a US citizen at the age of 12 and currently practices in Thousand Oaks, California, with a particular interest in hospice work. Let's find out more about her hole-in-one career.

How did you become interested in a massage therapy career?

I spent the greater part of my life in graphic design, and built a great reputation in that field, but I was definitely missing something. I had seen firsthand how much stress affects one's health, and wanted a better quality of life for myself, and others. I attended The Massage Center in Thousand Oaks, took some advanced classes, and have been obsessed ever since. I read and absorb everything I can get my hands on.

What led to incorporating golf balls into your practice?

A client needed some really deep work. He said that he liked to roll around on golf balls on the floor, and then he ran out to his car to get a few. He loved the pressure on his back.

How did this lead you to actually develop massage therapy products that use golf balls?

I started using golf balls on other clients, and they loved it, but it was hurting my hands. It became clear to me why no one was doing deep work with golf balls, but the size and texture of the golf ball felt so good! I wanted to make something that would disperse the pressure on my hand but still allow me to control the ball while remaining in contact with the client.

Had you ever tried inventing something before?

I'm not the inventor type. I see something that just *needs to be*, and I go about creating it. I made the first KaddyBACK for my own self-care, until friends started asking for them. It's a seemingly simple idea that incorporates a golf ball for upper back therapy, but you'd be amazed how much thought goes into the materials, dimensions, and ultimate production design.

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Heather with her invention, the SPAball Kaddy.

Since promotion is the key to success in any business endeavor, how are you spreading the word? And how did you get on the CBS show *The Doctors*?

To start: web, Facebook, blog, Twitter, Yelp, YouTube, etc. They don't cost anything but your time and passion (which is everything)! I think CBS found me because they heard about "golf ball massages" and came across me all over the Internet.

It seems the Internet has definitely played a crucial part in your marketing.

Massage is such a personal service. The quality of the massage is as much about the energy you bring as the skills of the massage. The online presence helps tell people who you are, and in a way, they are getting to know you before they ever call you. The trick is to make those impersonal mediums not so impersonal. If you are dedicated to your profession, it will shine through.

What was it like to talk about massage on national television?

I wasn't as nervous as I thought I would be, but I was nervous. This was my chance in three minutes to communicate the technique behind this new modality. Thankfully, the people on the show were incredibly friendly and made me feel very comfortable and welcome. (Readers can view Karr's segment on her website, www.golfballmassage.com).

Let's talk about your hospice work. How did that come about?

My passion with hospice work as a massage therapist is to help with stress and pain management. I now know that everything I've done in my life (design, massage, personal experiences with the death of loved ones) has led me to something that is finally fulfilling to me as a human being. I've been working with two hospices, and I truly hope the sales of the products will allow me more freedom to pursue even more hospice work. I also hope it will let me contribute to The House of Hope (www.ourhouseofhope.org). The people I've met in this field—hospice workers as well as patients—have been inspiring. I've learned a lot about love, and strength, and what really matters in life.

Sean Eads is a freelance writer and reference librarian living in Denver, Colorado.