



The Beauty Survey

Hundreds voted, and the results are in.

See who has the best place to get a facial, massage or new hairstyle.

BY *Laura Jean Whitcomb*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Paul Howe*

I'm going to go out on a limb here — I think there should be an online match site for hairdressers. Hear me out. You have to be comfortable with your hair stylist, be able to talk to them about your wants and needs. You have to trust them; that first snip means you'll be living with that cut for a month or two. And you should look forward to your appointment, looking at it as an opportunity to treat yourself and perhaps chat with a friend at the same time.



Now take that concept and think about your barber, your aesthetician, or your massage therapist. These are the people you trust with your hair,

your skin and your body. Doesn't that warrant the necessity of checking them out before you commit?

Before you run off and patent my idea for an online matching service for the beauty industry, *Kearsarge Magazine* asked readers for their advice on the area's best. Hundreds of you voted — it was inspiring to read how many of you are passionate about your barber, hairdresser or aesthetician — and here are the winners. Even without a relationship questionnaire to determine the salon or spa that's right for you, we're sure the results of this survey will help you find your perfect match. >>>>

Best Massage Therapists

We ran out of room, so please look for the top five massage therapists in a future issue of *Kearsarge Magazine!*

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Beauty Survey Winner 2012
Kearsarge Magazine

Lorena Clay
 Jessica Linn
 Owners/Stylists



Best Hairdressers

Michelle Murphey is a unique hybrid. As hair stylist, she relies on her right brain — the visual, creative side — and her inventive talent shows with each hair cut. But she’s also a logical, left brained educator, traveling across the country to teach other salons and stylists how to use Schwarzkopf Professional products. The end result: a cut and color that is raising the standard of excellence for salons in the Sunapee/New London area.

Michelle went to cosmetology school in California during the day, and took business classes at night. “I became a hairdresser just to work my way through college,” she says. But after a position at Opal Concepts, a national hair care company offering hair products and franchising thousands of hair salons, “I realized I didn’t need my business degree anymore.”

“Knows the latest styles and cuts; great with color; friendly, hip atmosphere — city talent in small town New England!”

“Michelle really knows how to cut curly hair. I wouldn’t consider going to any other stylist than Michelle. She is a master at her profession.”

Michelle switched her major from business to art history — “I continued to go to school just for fun,” she says — and opened her own salon in an old Victorian building in downtown Sacramento in 1994. For 10 years, she catered to the chic, urban professionals of California. Big companies, like Vidal Sassoon and Bumble & Bumble, frequently approached her with offers of education for her and her staff.

After meeting and marrying her husband, Michelle moved to New England in 2005. Although she loves New Hampshire — “I’m trying to get all my friends to move here,” she says — the opportunities for education weren’t as abundant. So when Schwarzkopf approached her in 2009, she was ready to take on the job of educating other salons in the Boston and New York areas on their product line.

That training brings a wealth of knowledge to her New England clients. Looking for a specific color line for blond hair? Michelle can recommend one. Need a “green” hair color line for your sensitive skin? Michelle knows of a new product line — with beeswax to nourish the scalp — that might work for you. Having trouble with expertise in hair extensions? Salon Studio M offers 13 different types. “We’re not your average salon,” she says. “The people who



#1

Michelle Murphey
owner/stylist

Salon Studio M
552 Route 11, Sunapee
763-1900

work here have the education to work with any type of hair.”

But there’s no conflict between Michelle’s left and right brain. “I’m not tied down to just one thing. I’m still a hands-on stylist, as are most Schwarzkopf educators,” she says. “I like being in education because it keeps me focused and up to date. I offer my clients new things all the time. If they want something new, they know that I know how to do it. If they see a picture in a magazine, they know I can achieve it.”





Best Hairdressers

The two friends are a study in opposites. Lorena Clay has straight hair; Jessica Linn's is curly. Lorena wears glasses; Jess doesn't. And Lorena is outgoing — her boisterous personality will inspire you to turn up your energy just a little bit. Jess, on the other hand, is quiet, sometimes talking only if you do first.

“Our personalities balance, and we feed off each other throughout the day,” says Lorena. “If I am too intense for a person — I can accept that I'm not for everybody — then they can go to Jess. It works well.”

“We don't mind sharing our clientele,” agrees Jess. “If you need to have your hair cut today, but Lorena doesn't have time, I might be able to fit you in.”

This balance keeps the clients of Hair Therapy in Grantham happy. Lorena, owner of the salon, is the fourth generation of hair stylists in her family; her mother, in fact, had a shop in the same location on Route 10 for seven years (1993 to 2000). If Lorena looks familiar, it's because she worked there before she was a licensed hairdresser, keeping the books and shampooing hair.

“My hair is difficult to style and Jessica does a great job. Very friendly, great sense of humor and very accommodating.”

“Lorena has been doing my hair for years. She is always exactly on point, takes her time, and, since I get my hair colored, its always very natural.”

After attending the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center (SRVRTC) in Newport, Lorena worked for 10 years in the Sunapee/New

London area before she opened Hair Therapy in January 2010. “I always wanted to come back to Grantham,” says Clay, a resident of Croydon. “It's a phenomenal location. I knew success would come here.”

Jess attended SRVRTC and graduated from the New England School of Hair Design in West Lebanon, but had to be employed for a year before she could rent a booth at a salon. “It's hard to find a full-time job at a hair salon,” says Jess, a resident of Newport. “Most places don't want to take on an apprentice. Hair school teaches the basics but you'll learn more out in the field.”

But one shop in the Sunapee area did hire her on as an employee, and that's where Jess met Lorena. When Lorena opened Hair Therapy in Grantham, Jess joined her four months later. The majority of their regulars followed them as well, and this fun, family-friendly salon now has hundreds of clients.

One of Lorena's friends thought of



#2
Lorena Clay, owner/stylist
Jessica Linn, stylist

Hair Therapy
120 Route 10 South, Grantham
863-1101

the name, Hair Therapy. “I'm also a licensed massage therapist,” says Lorena. Someday she'd like to expand the salon to offer those services but, right now, Lorena and Jess are “here for all your hair needs — and not so hair needs,” says Jess. “That's the ‘therapy’ part of the name. Hair is 50 percent and the other 50 percent is talking and getting to know each other. Not just being a hairdresser but being a friend.” >>>>





Best Hairdressers

Terri Pitta, owner of Bella Capelli in Warner, looks at each head of hair with the eye of an artist. “I look at it like a ball of clay that I can design,” she says. Then she pauses. “Of course there are some basic mathematical aspects to it, so I’m incorporating both math and design. I look at face shape, bone and head structure, hair type, direction it is growing, then decide, as a whole, how to cut this person’s head of hair.”

“She not only listens to what you want, but knows styles that may look good for your face structure. She’s amazing!”

But don’t get the impression that Terri is just running numbers in her head while you’re sitting in her chair. She’s a genuinely nice person who will do anything for her clients. She tears up when she mentions a client who recently had a death in the family. She’s insistent about keeping hair cut prices affordable for all income levels. She’s ready to chat about the book she’s reading, or the book you’re reading, and laugh over the fact that she hasn’t had read much of anything lately as the mother of two daughters, Tyalar, 16 and Annabella, 10.

Yes, you will laugh when you sit down with Terri at Bella Capelli, and you might be laughing a few days later

as well. Her sense of humor and her sense of style create the unique atmosphere of her year-old salon. It’s a homey, comfortable room on the second floor of the Brookside building. There’s a nail station in one room and a hair station in the other. She doesn’t offer perms or acrylic nails, because she’s looking out for her clients’ health and safety. And, frankly, it doesn’t fit with her salon philosophy — “bella capelli” means “beautiful hair” in Italian.

“I work in partnership with a client,” she says.

“I don’t want to give them a cut that they can’t do. The most important thing is how they would style it at home.” But what if someone brings in a photo of a celebrity haircut that they’d like? “You can always get a version of what you like.”



#3

**Terri Pitta
owner/stylist**

Bella Capelli
51 East Main Street, Warner
456-3336

Terri has been a hairdresser for 24 years. “I love it,” she says. She started with her Barbie dolls, then her friends, then her mother — and ultimately decided that hair is “a part

of who I am.” She attended the Blaine Hair and Beauty School in Hyannis, Mass., and continues to learn about the profession she loves, signing up for classes as often as she can. “With prom season coming up, I’m learning about updos in Europe, which will eventually make their way to California and the Northeast. It’s my responsibility to know those options when someone sits in my chair.”



Susan Binette-Carl, L.E. 603-938-6400

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Best Barber

Erin Andersen owner/barber

Erin's Haircuts for Men
428 Main Street, New London
erinshaircuts@hotmail.com

Men aren't usually big talkers during appointments, but they are with Erin Andersen.

One client discusses his recent vacation, while another talks about politics. Although she's completely focused on the client sitting in her chair, she's aware of people entering and leaving her New London barber shop, Erin's Haircuts for Men.

Erin is used to multitasking; she's a wife and a mother of three: ages 13, 6 and 2. And with the steady stream of customers on a rainy Tuesday morning, she's quick and efficient with each person. "I'm here for people looking for a quick but good quality haircut," she says.

"She just gives a darn good haircut!"

But that doesn't stop anyone from chatting; that's part of the fun of visiting Erin. A client asks about her children. "Which one was it that used to come to the shop and sit at the little table?" he asks.

"My oldest. You might see her here in the summer a bit," she says. "What are the ages of your twins?"

Now she's got him off and running, talking about what is new with his family. She combs his hair, spraying with water periodically, and trims the hair at the nape of his neck first, touches up the back with her scissors, moves to one side to trim the hair around his ear, then does the other side. Erin greets another customer, who seats himself in the open waiting area, and finishes cutting the hair on the top of her current client's head. As she brushes the hair from the

shoulders of his cape, they talk about the dismal June weather. "It was 57 in the house yesterday," she says. "I was tempted to put the heat back on!"

Erin has been cutting hair since she graduated from Sunapee High School. "I graduated in June and went to the Concord Academy of Hair Design in August," she says. You may have seen her working in Newport — she owned Spunky Dodge's old shop on Sunapee Street for five years — or working up in Hanover, which she did for another five years. Then she relocated her barbershop to New London, underneath the New London Inn for five years, before opening at her new location on 428 Main

Street two years ago. If you check the math, that's 17 years of cutting hair.

It's a simple premise: walk in, wait for a few minutes, sit in the chair for a few minutes to get your haircut, and pay with cash. Erin's laid back but professional demeanor — and her sharp sense of humor — make each visit an effortless decision. Why wouldn't you want to get your hair cut (and eyebrows trimmed) with someone who remembers details about your family, your health and even your last conversation? "I just try to make it fun," she says. "I am sarcastic, but fun at the same time. I get them in and get them out and carry on. It's super simple — and a good haircut." >>>>>



Erin Andersen, owner/barber of Erin's Haircuts for Men



Best Aesthetician

Lisa Gooding, owner/ aesthetician/clinical skin care specialist

Faces Spa at New London Inn
353 Main Street, New London
526-2557

For many people, an hour and a half is a long time to be talking about their skin. But not for Lisa Gooding, aesthetician and owner of Faces Spa at New London Inn.

“I’m big on consultation,” Gooding says. She takes the time to analyze a client’s skin, and take a history of their skin care. “What was your skin like as a kid? Are you seeing a dermatologist? What are you taking for internals, maybe fish oil? I’ll even have them bring in the products they are using.”

Gooding is passionate about skin; aesthetics has been her career since she was a student in her early 20s. “I was an art major, and I wanted to be a makeup artist,” she says. “I had acne as a teenager — and two older sisters with perfect skin. I was teaching myself about skin care even then. When I was 23, I got a facial for the first time and thought, ‘This is what I need to do.’” She enrolled at Christine Valmy School of Esthetics in New York City, and graduated at the top of her class.

Since then, Gooding has worked in medical settings with doctors and worked with a cosmetics company. She conducted her post graduate studies at the International Dermal Institute in Reston, VA. She had a single practice in New London for nine years, then worked at a medical spa for a year before returning to New London to open a new location for Faces Spa. She provides skin care to teens troubled with acne, burn patients with scarred skin, cancer patients with sensitive skin, and women and men who just want to do something nice for their skin. Gooding even has her own product line, which includes

glycolic washes, sunscreens, serums and makeup for different skin types, from sensitive to normal to oily.

At Faces Spa at New London Inn, you may see skin care modalities that you may not have seen before in New Hampshire, such as a machine that uses radio waves and light pulse to strengthen and tighten atrophied muscles of the face and neck. “It can also be used for dermabrasion, working deep on scarred skin,” Gooding says.

But, even with the products and technology available, Gooding is, surprisingly, a minimalist in skin care. “You need a good cleanser and a good moisturizer that offers protection during the day,” Gooding says. “Women of a certain age need to have eye cream. At night, you need something to replenish and feed, or peel it down.”

Even though Gooding likes her

product line and knows how much it can

help someone’s skin, she is honest about her evaluation of the products you are currently using.

“I don’t need to sell 50 products, but I might say, ‘Right now, we should really change your eye shadow colors,’” she says. “Everything that I do is unique to an individual and their needs. That’s really trademark to what I do. I want to benefit clients completely. It gives me a lot of pleasure when they come back and say that this treatment really made a difference.”

Clients do come back, again and again. They also invite Gooding into their lives, a true testament to her warmth and compassion. “I love being able to say, ‘She’s a client, but she’s also a friend.’ It’s a privilege.”



Lisa Gooding, owner of Faces Spa at New London Inn



Best Spa

**#1 Faces Spa at
New London Inn**
353 Main Street, New London
526-2557
www.newlondoninnspa.com

Enter the front door of Faces Spa, located under the New London Inn, and you feel like you've started the first day of a vacation. Orange scented air greets you at the door, as does spa owner Lisa Gooding, who offers you something to drink: freshly made lemon water, tea or coffee. Luscious green plants, colorful orchids and a prolific ficus tree surround the comfortable iron and wicker furniture in the waiting area, providing a relaxing atmosphere of an outdoor patio.

Gooding has plans to replace the front steps and the landscaping, perhaps later this year. But with all the renovation work she's done, she's given people more of a reason to stay and shop in New London. Faces Spa has three treatment rooms: one for facials, one for advanced skin treatments and a third for massage. Three different masseuses come in as needed. "I use community talent," says Gooding, "and work with three local independent massage therapists. I bring the skin care services; that is my talent and what I am passionate about."

Massages are not 50 minutes long, Gooding points out, massages are an hour or an hour and a half. She does not want clients to feel rushed; "this is not a corporate spa," she says. Massage oils — made from organic sugar, sea salt and essential oils — are blended on site for each client's body treatment. "We use almond oil, which is the best healer for dry skin, but perhaps you are allergic to nuts. Then I'll use avocado oil. It's what that person needs."

It is, indeed.

#2 The Garden Spa
29 Little Sunapee Road,
New London
526-6540
www.thegardenspanh.com

For some folks, it's not a big deal. But for others, disrobing, getting settled on the massage table, pulling up the sheet, and waiting for the therapist to enter the room is not an easy task. But at The Garden Spa in New London, that worry will be left at the door with all your others. Peter and Jill Tremblay have created a haven for people who need a brief respite — a therapeutic massage, a cleansing and calming facial, or a pedicure with a hot stone massage — from their busy day-to-day life.

It was what the Tremblays needed almost a decade ago, when they celebrated their anniversary at a spa in Florida. That experience inspired them to change their careers — Peter was working for a CPA firm and Jill was a billing manager for a home health agency — and move to Peter's old stomping grounds (Newport). They opened The Garden Spa in New London in July 2003.

The size of the spa is impressive — there's a waiting area, a lounge and a series of treatment rooms on the first floor; another lounge and the aesthetics room on the second floor — but it doesn't take away from the homey, welcoming atmosphere that Jill, Peter and their team have created. The Garden Spa is a place where everyone can feel comfortable. "Life today is usually very stressful and hectic for most people," says Jill. "It is very



The Garden Spot owners, Peter and Jill Tremblay

gratifying to know that we provide a warm, nurturing environment for them to come and relax and refresh their mind, body and soul."

And everyone is treated with the utmost care. Jill and Peter come out from behind the counter to greet you personally with a smile. They are genuinely happy to see you and you, in turn, are genuinely happy to be there. Even if it is your first visit or your one hundredth, you'll feel like an old friend.

"Our number one goal is to make sure that each and every guest is 100 percent satisfied with their service, no matter what it is," says Jill. "We always refer to everyone who visits the spa as our guests, not clients or customers. We feel privileged that they come to our spa." 

