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# IN THE PIPELINE: Relax in your 'back yard'

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The dark, warmly lit hallway feels like something out of a great Disneyland ride queue. Winding back and forth, the rich wood and amber glow promise something exotic at the end of the trail. Moments later, we arrive at our destination. Shoes are slipped off, our guide explains about the Zen journey that is about to commence, and then we slip into something more comfortable. The seductive sound of rain whispers from around the corner, inviting us into its warm, gentle embrace.

Are we in some remote mountaintop Buddhist temple? No. We are at Warner Avenue and Beach Boulevard. Skin Deep, to be exact. You may have passed the popular day spa before, located just across from the Edwards Cinemas. But until you roam the labyrinth-like halls of this ever-expanding place, it's hard to get a sense of what extraordinary pleasures exist on the inside of a fairly ordinary looking exterior.

I met the owner, Deborah Woods, recently after I spoke at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast. As we entered the holidays, I wanted to focus some column space on interesting local businesses with good stories to tell. After a few moments with Deborah, I couldn't resist. She started her company 18 years ago, and today it is thriving, due in large part to her creative energy, business savvy and pure passion for what she does. Skin Deep, owned by Deborah and her husband, also employs some 42 people, making good not just for your skin, but also for the local economy.

Deborah started out working in makeup, and then worked at a skin care place in Huntington Harbour, near Bolsa Chica and Edinger Avenue. Her knack for building the clientele of the place got her thinking about her own business, and some 18 years later, it's clear the plan was a good one.

Skin Deep sells all sorts of interesting baubles, clothing, books and other gifts in the lobby/waiting area. There's an eco, feel-good consciousness inherent in many of the products, which helps set the mood before you cross over into the realm of comfort on the other side of the doors (and the spa also takes part in many local charitable causes). Now, the place offers all sorts of various massages and therapies too detailed to cover here. But I did think that the new Zen Water Experience warranted some attention. It's a unique, five-stage, hourlong water treatment journey that Deborah was inspired to create after a visit to a native, rustic Mexican jungle several years ago. She's careful to point out though that the experience (just like the other spa therapies here) is not designed as simply a sort of placebo experience, but rather, features actual therapeutic benefits.

The aforementioned Zen guide directs you from one "Portal Enclosure" to the next as your journey progresses (about 10 minutes per phase). It begins with a gentle cleansing under a light, warm rain fall (a therapeutic Golden Moor body scrub that enhances the exfoliation and hydration process is also included).

Next, you're guided to the mud room, where you may apply the Golden Moor Mud, rich in humic acids, which are particularly good for arthritis and fibromyalgia. The mud also contains many rich antioxidants and natural antibiotics. From the mud room, it's on to the steam room where you relax and detoxify. You then submerge yourself in the mineral rich "hot spring" bath before lying down in a quiet "rest room" for some final moments of peace and reflection. Moments later, you're back outside at the corner of Warner and Beach, wondering if you just imagined the journey that took place.

I'm inclined to tell you it is just about the best \$45 you can spend these days on something like this — an hour of intense relaxation and escape from the outside world, alone or with someone (my journey was spent with my wife). I also know that \$45 is still \$45 and while today it's becoming harder to find "disposable" income, the quality of this upscale experience made it feel like a bargain — and an excellent gift idea.

As you may have read in this paper, Skin Deep Day Spa was also recently selected by DAYSPA Magazine to receive the Diamond Award for Day Spa of the Year — a distinction given to a business for continued dedication and support of the community. But what I find most impressive is that this is a place built locally by someone from the area. Deborah has invested a lot in the community and it shows. The creativity behind something like the Zen Water Experience brings something unique and interesting to this community, so the next time you're near Warner and Beach, look at the Skin Deep building and know that there is another world inside (and guys, many easy gifts in there for your wife or girlfriend). Visit [www.e-skindeep.com](http://www.e-skindeep.com) or call (714) 841-3313.

This holiday, there are many places to spend your money, but I encourage everyone to look in your own backyard first. Being at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast reminded me of all the good entrepreneurs in this town who deserve your business — especially now.

CHRIS EPTING is the author of 15 books, including the new "Vanishing Orange County," released this week. Write him at [chris@chrisepting.com](mailto:chris@chrisepting.com).



Skin Deep owner Deborah Woods in the "rain room" of the Zen Water Experience

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