

# Success based on '3 R's



RICHARD GREEN/BUSINESS 101

Frank Savino stands Aug. 27 at Aquablue Skin and Body Spa in Oldtown Salinas. Savino co-owns the business with his wife, Debbie.

## *Salinas' Aquablue spa started with a massage in Palm Springs*

By **BRIAN SEALS**  
Business 101

Frank Savino wore a suit and tie for 25 years as a sales and marketing executive in the high-tech industry.

One day while on a visit to Palm Springs with his massage-savvy wife, his life changed.

Debbie Savino suggested her stressed-out husband get a massage.

"I said 'No, nobody massages me,'" Savino recalls.

He's glad he changed his mind.

The massage he had that day not only relaxed him, it changed his career path.

The couple later trained at the Monterey Institute of Touch, a massage therapy school.

Today, they own and operate Aquablue in Oldtown Salinas, where they will celebrate their fourth year in

### **AQUABLUE SKIN AND BODY SPA**

**ADDRESS:** 229 Main St., Salinas

**OWNERS:** Debbie and Frank Savino

**EMPLOYEES:** 30

**ORGANIZATION:** Privately owned

**PHONE:** 422-2500

**ONLINE:** [www.aquabluespa.com](http://www.aquabluespa.com)

business Sunday.

And Frank has traded his suit and tie for sandals and shorts.

Salinas may seem like a tough place to establish a luxury spa business when you consider the competition in the tony areas of the Monterey Peninsula and the many tourists who flock there, seeking to pamper themselves.

But the Savinos said locating the hard-working agricultural heart of Monterey County made sense. They found after getting a massage in Monterey or Santa Cruz that the effect was thwarted by the tension of the drive back home. Frank

said Salinas' demographics made sense.

To succeed in Salinas meant fostering repeat business. Spas in the tourism-heavy towns can rely more on visitors and hotel customers.

"We have to step up our service to make sure people want to come back to Aquablue," Savino said while seated in his office, which features framed photos of Frank Sinatra and Jimmy Buffet. "We focus on local people. Our guests come back."

On top of the hometown market, the regular clientele comes from as far south as King City and up to the Hollister and Gilroy areas. Aquablue also draws business from the Monterey Peninsula.

The spa offers what the Savinos call the three Rs — relaxation, rejuvenation and results. The most popular services are relaxation and therapeutic massages. Aquablue also offers beauty treatments, such as facials and waxings.

The business also has "duet" rooms where couples, friends or groups — say a bridal entourage — can enjoy services together.

Aquablue started with a staff of six,

but now employs 30, mostly massage therapists and estheticians (skin-care specialists), Frank Savino said. The spa started with six rooms but has expanded to eight, with the business office in another building across Main Street from the spa.

Debbie and Frank trained in reiki, a Japanese relaxation technique, as well as massage at the Monterey Institute of Touch.

Working in the day-to-day operation helps make a good owner in this business, Frank said, because one can react to customers' needs promptly.

"We tell our girls, 'No one gets in trouble for happy clients,'" he said.

With their spa firmly established, the Savinos said, they're looking to grow the business.

"We know for sure we will expand in Salinas during the next three years," Frank Savino said.

Gilroy and Carmel are also considered possible expansion locales, he said.

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