

Different Strokes

the voice of ABMP

A Fresh Perspective

ABMP's Updated Website Helps You Get the Most From Your Membership

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Implications for the Massage Profession



Access additional member resources online at ABMP.com.
Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

A Fresh Perspective on ABMP.com

New Look on ABMP's Website Helps You Get the Most From Your Membership

By Lara Evans Bracciante

A free email account and website, customizable brochures and client newsletters, continuing education opportunities, and fresh ideas to invigorate your practice are just a click away at our recently remodeled ABMP.com.

The screenshot shows the ABMP.com homepage with a clean, organized layout. The header includes the ABMP logo and a navigation menu. The main content area is divided into several sections, each with a title and a brief description. The sidebar on the right provides quick access to various resources and community features. The overall design is professional and user-friendly.

We hope you'll find it easier to navigate your way through the many member benefits we have available for you online. Here is some of what you will find on our home page.

- Members share their insights into making the most of ABMP membership. Photos provide a snapshot of your ABMP colleagues. Let us hear how ABMP works for you!
- ABMP has built its reputation and membership on a dedication to customer service. If you have questions, ask us!
- Our online community is full of passionate conversation amongst your colleagues. Join us!
- ABMP's president Les Sweeney weighs in on the profession's issues of the day with his blog, "Expect More, With Les."
- ABMPtv offers short videos, including tips from other members, on getting the most from your membership.
- Our list of upcoming events shows you what webinars and workshops are on tap. **All are free or discounted for ABMP members!**
- ABMP partners with service providers to help support you in building a successful and fulfilling practice. Keep your eye on our featured member benefits!
- ABMP's flagship magazine *Massage & Bodywork* is available digitally. Flip the virtual pages and enjoy the profession's best publication.
- ABMP provides social media content, both to keep you abreast of news in the profession and to provide you with content for your own social media efforts.

**NEW &
IMPROVED**

Log in to ABMP.com today.

The screenshot shows the ABMP.com website interface. At the top left is the ABMP logo and the text "Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals" with a tagline: "Celebrating 25 years of serving the massage therapy community through practice support, ethical standards, legislative advocacy, and public education." To the right are links for "Renew Now", "Member Home", and "Logout". Below this is a search bar and a "SEARCH ABMP" button. A navigation bar contains four tabs: "MARKETING CENTER", "BUSINESS MANAGEMENT", "CAREER DEVELOPMENT", and "CLIENT FORMS". The main content area is personalized with "Hi Jane," and displays membership status: "Your ABMP Certified membership is valid through July 22, 2013." It lists benefits like "Certified Liability Insurance", "Additional Insured Endorsements", and "Business Personal Property Insurance". A message center shows "9 new messages in your queue". A sidebar on the right includes "Questions? Ask Us!" with contact info, "Your ABMP Account" with links to update information, "Featured Member Benefit" for FullSlate scheduling software, and a "President's Blog" entry.

MARKETING CENTER > The ABMP Marketing Center makes getting and keeping clients easier. Grouping our benefits into categories, we provide you with a clear understanding of what's available to you. For some products, like our brochures, newsletters, posters, etc., select our choose-and-use content, drop in your contact information, and be ready for distribution!

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT > We continue to hear that bodyworkers want to spend their time supporting their clients. Our Business Management section is designed to take the pressure off your business requirements and give you that time. Whether you need state regulatory information, HIPAA guidelines, or an outline for a business plan, you can find it here, along with many other resources to help you manage your business.

ABMP.com Members Section Opens Up Your World of Benefits

The ABMP.com Members section is your gateway to the benefits you need to help cultivate a successful and fulfilling bodywork practice. We have reorganized this section for easier access to the benefits you love.

Once you log in with your member ID, your landing page gives you a summary of your membership, including your expiration date so you know when you need to renew. From here you can navigate to the pages you use most, whether it's updating your website, accessing your email, enhancing your referral information, downloading a copy of your certificate of insurance, or just surfing the site for practice support.

The other links in the right sidebar allow you to access your account information, take advantage of discounts from partner companies, and watch video shorts to get the most from your membership. In addition, our scrolling marquee acknowledges our ABMP veterans who've been with us 10 or more years. Click on the four tabs at the top for a wealth of resources.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT > Being a bodyworker isn't just a job, it's a career you're committed to, no matter if you practice full time, part time, as a sole proprietor, or within an organization. ABMP's Career Development section provides access to continuing education, cover letter and resume samples, events, and more to support you in shaping a fulfilling massage career.

CLIENT FORMS > These invaluable client forms are essential for effectively managing your clientele. SOAP notes, health history, physician referral, and cancellation policy forms are a sampling of what's available right at your fingertips.

Lara Evans Bracciante is the director of Information Services at ABMP. Contact her at lara@abmp.com.

Tell Us What You Think

ABMP is committed to providing a positive online experience for our members.

Whether you log in regularly or simply check in periodically, visit the newly refurbished ABMP.com and let us know what you think! Email us at expectmore@abmp.com.

Different Strokes

The Voice of ABMP

For questions or comments, please call 800-458-2267.

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Update Your Contact Information

If you've moved, changed your email address, added or canceled a phone line, or if any other contact information has changed, please let us know. We want to be sure you're receiving your ABMP publications and membership-related communications in a timely manner.

Update your contact info by logging in to the Members section of ABMP.com or contact us by phone or email, as listed above.

Join the ABMP Community Online



www.facebook.com/ABMPpage



[@ABMPmessage](https://twitter.com/ABMPmessage)



<http://abmp.us/LinkedInMT>



www.messageprofessionals.com



Members in the News

You can find links to the articles listed here on ABMP.com. On the home page, scan down to News and Resources, and find the "ABMP Members in the News" link there.

Robin Allen in "Wellness Center in Northbridge to Help Kids with Diabetes," *Northbridge Daily Voice*.

Lauren Bear in "Affordable Bodywork: Bear Offers 'Pay What You Can' Option," *Sun Sailor*.

Lisa Bedoya in "Massage Therapist Uses Scheduling to Propel Online Marketing," *Street Fight*.

Mary Edwards in "Feel Good Friday," *KDVR Denver, Colorado*.

Liz Florine in "A Touch Above Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork," *Barrington Patch*.

Koleen Fruhling in "Massage Therapist Enjoyed Time with US Swimmers" and "Fremont Massage Therapists Will Help Olympic Hopefuls," *Fremont Tribune*.

Jacki Gethner in "Multnomah County Health Department Honors 2012 Public Health Heroes," *Multnomah County*.

Janet Hagerbaumer in "Fremont Massage Therapists Will Help Olympic Hopefuls," *Fremont Tribune*.

Danielle Hendrix in "Apple Valley Massage Therapist Thrilled to Be Picked for 2012 Olympics," *NBC Los Angeles*; "Local Massage Therapist Heading to Olympic Games," *Victorville Daily Press*.

Mark Lamm in "Renowned Longevity Expert Honored by the World Massage Festival for Lifetime Achievements in Massage and Bodywork," *WSFA Montgomery, Alabama*.

Marice Leonetti in "West Wash Park Massage Therapist Called to Her Career," *Denver Post*.

Alma Nightingale in "'Everybody Deserves a Massage' & 'Got Pain' Health Fair," *KSEE24*.

Donna Ridenhour in "Everybody Deserves a Massage," *Salisbury Post*.

Larrie Rodriguez in "Stretching Her Reach: Yoga, Massage Give New Direction, Business," *Commercial Appeal*.

Robin Swanson in "Equine Bodyworker Massages Horses, Assesses Gaits," *Oakland Tribune*.

Denise Theobald in "Massage Therapy for Dogs," *ABC 7 Chicago*.

Ludivina Velazquez in "10 Questions for Divine Massage Therapy Owner," *Los Gatos Patch*.

Barbara Verrastro in "Everybody Deserves a Massage Week," *New Life Radio 91.9*.

Jon Weedn in "Everybody Deserves a Massage," *Sierra Sun*.

Tell Us Your News

If your practice was mentioned in print, online, on the radio, or on TV, let ABMP know. Send an email to differentstrokes@abmp.com with the subject line "Members in the News" and include a link to the news coverage online, or scan and attach a PDF of printed material.

Watch for the fall session of the **World Massage Conference** coming November 12–14. Go to **WorldMassageConference.com** for more information and the latest updates.



EveryBody

Deserves a Massage Week

Our members had a highly successful week spreading their hands-on work throughout the community, raising money for their favorite charities, and giving free massage to groups that need it most during ABMP's annual EveryBody Deserves a Massage Week, July 15–21. If you haven't already done so, please forward any information you have about your event, as well as any press mentions or photos, to differentstrokes@abmp.com. You could be included in our next issue of *Different Strokes*.

Hot Stone Coverage Included with ABMP Membership

ABMP is pleased to help protect you and your clients by providing liability insurance coverage for hot stone massage/therapies **at no additional charge to members.**

Hot stone modalities have historically presented a higher degree of risk than other types of massage, so ABMP is providing members with materials to help ensure safe sessions. **In 2012, at the time of your renewal, each ABMP member who uses hot stones will be asked to complete two Hot Stone Risk Management steps—agreeing to a Hot Stone Risk Management Statement and watching an 8-minute “Hot Stone Massage Safety Guidelines” video.** Completion of these steps will be necessary in order to maintain your hot stone liability insurance coverage. Once you activate your coverage in 2012, you won't need to repeat the process.

If you've already completed this process, thank you! There's nothing else for you to do to activate your coverage. **If your 2012 membership anniversary and renewal date is still to come, you will receive instructions when you renew about how to activate your hot stone liability insurance coverage.**

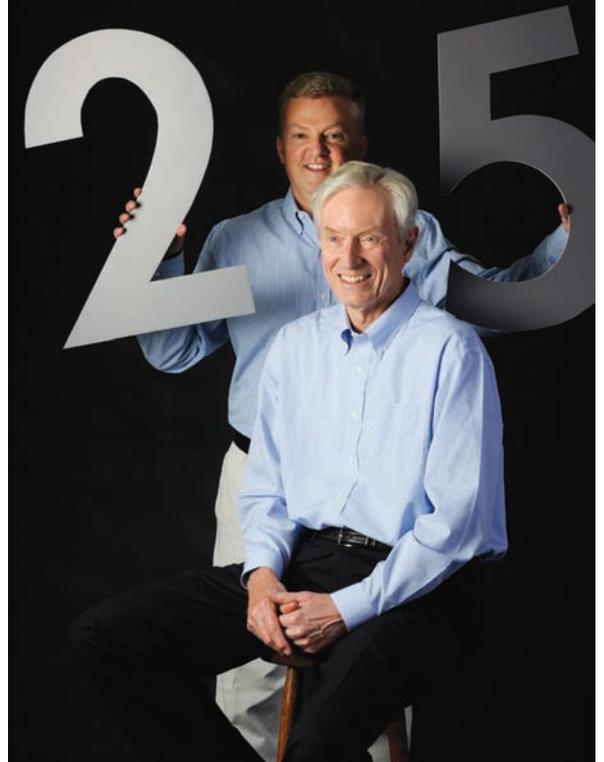


A Letter to You

ABMP is celebrating its 25th anniversary and our president and chairman want to say thank you to all of our members, and pass along a little perspective on how things have changed over those 25 years. Here is a snippet from their letter:

“When ABMP began operations in October 1987, the fee for an annual professional membership was set at \$199. Today, that membership costs—\$199... How is that possible? You make it possible by recommending us to massage and bodywork colleagues. A large membership enables us to gain efficiencies, hire top-flight staff members, and commission innovative new projects.”

Read the full letter to members on page 9 in this issue of *Massage & Bodywork*, which accompanies this newsletter.



ABMP's Membership Renewal Contest Winners

Meet Your Colleagues

ABMP has proudly served the massage and bodywork profession for 25 years, and we want you to share in our Silver Anniversary celebration! Throughout 2012, **all members renewing at or upgrading to Practitioner, Professional, and Certified levels will automatically be eligible to win a refund on their membership fees.** Every two weeks, we'll conduct a random drawing from all qualifying members who renewed or upgraded their membership during that two-week period. **If your name is selected, we'll write you a check for 100 percent of the membership dues you just paid.** Renew when your membership expires and you're automatically entered for that time period. It's that easy.

Thank you to all of our renewing members! Here are our latest winners.



Cindy Delmonico

When we called Cindy Delmonico of Anoka, Minnesota, to let her know her name was selected as our 13th winner of the ABMP 25th Anniversary Renewal Contest, we asked if she would like to say a few words about ABMP. We are grateful for her wonderful testimonial. Thank you Cindy, and congratulations!

"In 2001, I decided to attend massage therapy school while going through a divorce. I was told that, as students, we were required to carry liability insurance. The instructors told us about the insurance plan provided by ABMP. I checked with our personal insurance carrier who told me she couldn't even come close to ABMP's rates.

"Fast-forward a few years: I am still a full-time church business administrator and a part-time massage therapist who specializes in working with people with developmental disabilities. For years, massage therapy for people with special needs has been a passion of mine that I find extremely rewarding. Because I am so busy with a large family, a full-time position at the church, and my massage therapy practice, the only way I am able to learn new skills is through the great articles contained in the magazines and the webinars offered through ABMP.

"One of the first things I did after finishing school was set up a monthly newsletter to help educate others on the benefits of massage therapy and other health-related topics. Since beginning school, I've never worried about insurance, the rates haven't increased, and I recently applied for a credit card through ABMP. I am so pleased that I was told about ABMP years ago."



Kim Thomas

A 2008 graduate of Irene's Myomassology Institute, Kim Thomas has a massage therapy room set up at her local health and fitness center. As a runner herself, Thomas likes to help clients with runner-specific issues, and she finds the articles in *Massage & Bodywork* magazine and on Massagetherapy.com very helpful. Married to her best friend, Mike, for 20 years, Thomas spends most of her free time riding and playing with her horse, Jewel, as well as hiking, reading, gardening, and taking care of her three dogs.



Aimee Willmoth

"I have just recently graduated from massage school and am excited to begin a career as a massage therapist. I have just started a job providing massage in hospitals for people recovering from surgery and for postnatal women. My dream is to travel the world while continuing my education and providing bodywork to those in need."



“One of the first things I did after finishing school was set up a monthly newsletter to help educate others on the benefits of massage therapy and other health-related topics.”

—Cindy Delmonico



Curtis Hisao

“Massage is my second career after being in the airline industry for more than 25 years,” says Curtis Hisao. After his retirement 10 years ago, Hisao was looking for something that would translate from his job managing the Admirals Club at San Jose Airport. “I thought that something like running a spa at a luxury hotel would be a good fit. I was going for interviews and they all liked my work background, but they said I needed some experience as a massage therapist or an esthetician. I decided to go to school for massage therapy. There, I discovered that I was more of a therapeutic healer, and the school also thought I had what it took to be an instructor, so they made me a teaching assistant and clinic supervisor while continuing my studies.”

Hisao now teaches a (soon-to-be) 900-hour program at the National Holistic Institute (NHI). “I also have my own private practice and company called San Jose Bay Area Massage, and am currently the team massage therapist for Major League Soccer’s San Jose Earthquakes. One major project I take on is the California Firefighters Olympics that happens in our area every two years.

“My encouragement to my students is to do everything after they graduate so that they can make a more informed decision on which direction they want to take massage. I also have a saying that ‘the more you know, the less you know,’ which means that massage is a lifelong learning experience and that continuing education is necessary to keep up-to-date with current trends and new research about massage therapy.”

Learn more about all of the winners at ABMP.com.

CONGRATULATIONS! 10-YEAR MEMBERS

Juanita Akins
Susan M. Allmann
Yolanda A. Amezcua
Danielle Maria Amundson
Susan M. Andrzejak
Joan Annunziata
Jessica Appel
Leah Applebaum
Jeanne Lee Backhaus
Barbara J. Bangert
Carol Bates
Catherine Bauer
Marianne H. Beck
Barbara Bednarz
Ingrid Bell
Bradley Alan Benik
Melayna Benson
Linda A. Beushausen
Christine H. Blaha-James
Dennis Boehm
Cornelia M. Boisjoli
Bonny Bourland
Lisa Marie Boyadjieff
Maria Bromm
Melissa Brown
Cecelia Burnett
Angelica Rose Bustamante
Connie Callard
Eva Linda Campos
Joan Carnaghi
Warren G. Carpenter
Daniel C. Caruso
Angelique D. Castagna
Elizabeth Cenicerros
Dianne Clark
Julia Coda
Krisa M. Cooper
Heidi Correia
Billie J. Cramer
Hazel E. Cripps
Elizabeth M. Cross
Paula Cross
Rhonda N. Cullen
Mark B. Cunningham
Isabelle M. Dake
Kathryn Ann Daub
Munsie Davis
Anastasia DeJulio

Sharon Ann DePauw
Jodi K. Dehlin
John J. Deltuvia Jr.
Deborah Jane Dickson
Dina Dishman
Jeannette Doolittle
Kathleen M. Dugan
Kristi H. Duncan
Alisa Ernesti
Mary Falker-Howard
Stacy Anne Florio
Ruth E. Forrest
Laura M. Foucault
Sarah Mary Frank
Benjamin C. Franklin
Diane C. Gajos
Debra M. Garcia
Sheri Gaston-Mihacsi
William Gavin
Jamie Gemme
Janette E. George
Rose Giarrana
Sandra Goguen
Debora M. Grey
Jody Griffith
Timothy John Hackett
Corinne M. Hagen
Inanna Allyson Hall
Janette Hammond
Lisa Harkness
Rebecca Harrigan
J. Linn Black Henline
Karen Hensley
Christine Hicks
Teena Holley
Ami Hughes
Tara Lyn Ingle
Richard C. Ireland
Alexander M. Jackson
Laima Janutiene
Maria E. Jaramillo
Judith K. Jensen
Nita Johnson
Lorri C. Jordan
Frederic C. Jurgensen
Beth Beisner Kallam
George S.P. Karpus
Anne Elizabeth Katoch

Gadi Kaufman
Isabel Keeffe
Nancy Ellen Kelly
Jennifer Marie Kessler
Jacqueline A. King
Stacey Kloby
Jason Ernest Knapp
Patricia Ann Kolon
Kathy Kowal
Karen Margaret Kowalik
Barry Krost
Julia Ann Krusel
Gini Kyle
Teresa Ann Lanzetta
Joy Lawrence
Joseph R. Lee
Karen Liefer
Sara Light-Waller
Kathrine V. Lindeman
Yakov Lishanskiy
Amy Lowrey
Justine K. Luciw
Kathleen Sue Mack
Steven Marshall Mack
Elizabeth Madden
Elizabeth Ann Maddox
Marcie Malloy
Susan Martel
Shantimol Martin
Bette A. Martinson
William Nicholson Matthews
John R. McCarthy
Patricia G. McClary
Colleen E. McCowan
Bruce McKay
Philip N. McKee
Denise McMahan
Rainene Miller
Natalie Miner
Mari Montgomery-Burke
Constance Moore
Alejandro Ruben Morin
Amy Moser
Kim L. Moskes
John Ike Moton Jr.
Carol Neal
Leslie Norris
Colleen O'Hearn

Lauren A. O'Neill
Carey Louise Ohler
Regina M. Palvas
Paula E. Pare'
Denett Parham
Erin Parker
Heather Parker
Jennifer Paschal
William C. Patton
Linda A. Paulson
Theresa L. Perino
Cindy Pettegrew
Janice Pfenning
Mary Elizabeth Pfister
Susan Shelley Pitman
Stephen J. Pizzella
Joan E. Poole
Karen L. Potter
Patricia L. Provin
Joyce Purington
Pamela K. Radosen
Denise Ranay
Krishna Raven-Johnson
Sonya Barton Reece
Douglas A Reighley
Shelly A. Ritz
Kelley Riviere
Alina Rodgers
Lynette M. Roth
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Valerie Rouse
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Melody A. Rudolph
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Jeanine Elizabeth Saunders
Kathleen Scannapieco
Bonita A. Schaal
Judith A. Schnack
Elizabeth Schramm
Sibylle G. Schroeder
Lenore Schulein
Jennifer Schwarz
Suzanne J. Scott

To see the newest list of individuals who have been ABMP members for 10+ years, log in to ABMP.com.

Doloresa Seniuniene
Crystal Shepherd
Randall Lee Shipp
Deborah T. Singer
Linda Sirianni
Georgina Yvette Smoak
Julie Snyder
Ann Sousa
Mary Joan Spath
Lynette M. Stauffer
Melissa Stchekine
Susan Denise Stolberg
Keith Stone
Sharon Sweat
Karen S. Tabor
Jennifer L. Tavares
Gayle M. Taylor-Roberts
Carrie Thomas
Rita Thomas
Mona Tomaszewski
Jay J. Toyofuku
Snezana Trajanovska
Barbara S. Uechi
Jayne Varian
Laurie M. Vasquez
Margaret E. Villarreal
Anita K. Walters
Derek Washington
Diane S. Waters
Sheri Wells
Diane Marie Whigham
Dwana White
Loya A. Whitmer
Carolyn Wicks
Trisha L. Wicks
Janet C. Wilkinson
Linda Witherspoon
Dimitri Leonard Wolosyn
Dana Adel Woods
Keelee Wright
Kelly Lynn Yawger
Pam Ziskie
Gregory A. Zocher
Andrea A. Zwegat

CONGRATULATIONS! 20-YEAR MEMBERS

Kathleen Bennett Batko
Kenneth C. Brecheisen
Sherri L. Bullock
Janet E. Caspers
Sandra L. Clegg
Timothy P. Duffy
Beverly H. Edwards
Dawn R. Evans
Kenneth R. Foster
Peggy D. Hagen

Vonda L. Hall
Linda M. Iwamoto
Shannon W. Kaul
James F. Kimbrough
Tana L. Kradolfer
James A. Kriebel
Wendy L. Minter
Lloyd V. Minthorne
Jamshid T. Moghadam
Terese M. Mraz

Ruth K. Otake
Jack T. Phillips
Marie R. Pujalte
Sheera Kostas Rexroad
Michael J. Ryan
Teresa P. Sabo
Nikolai P. Shapkun
Rose M. Sher
Ray Siderius

Elvia L. Swanson
Maria C. Swisher
Russell S. Tanji
Shehana Debi Torcellini
Heather L. Willingham
Jean-Marc Work
Margaret A. Zelenka
Jean L. Zuelke

Human Trafficking

Implications for the Massage Profession

By Jean Robinson

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery where people profit from the exploitation of others. Victims of human trafficking include children and adults who are coerced or deceived into providing commercial sex acts. Considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, human trafficking includes elements of force, fraud, or coercion that are used to control people. Every year, human traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits by victimizing millions of people around the world, and in the United States.

You may be saying to yourself, “That is awful, but what does it have to do with me?” Unfortunately, the massage profession finds itself caught right in the middle. “Massage parlors” are one of the most commonly used fronts for human trafficking. As the term indicates, we are not talking about legitimate massage therapy businesses. We are talking about criminal brothels operating under the guise of massage.

For the last few years, there has been a plethora of state legislation designed to help combat human trafficking. The legislation varies from seeking stiffer criminal penalties for traffickers, to ensuring better services for victims. One commonly introduced bill across the country relates to public posting requirements of the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-373-7888).

This type of law requires certain businesses to post the hotline information in a conspicuous area in clear view of the public. The businesses specified in the law are, for the most part, high-traffic areas such as airports, bus stations, truck stops, and hospitals, where there is a good potential for victims to see the information and learn that help is available. However, in some states, the bill attempts to include massage businesses.

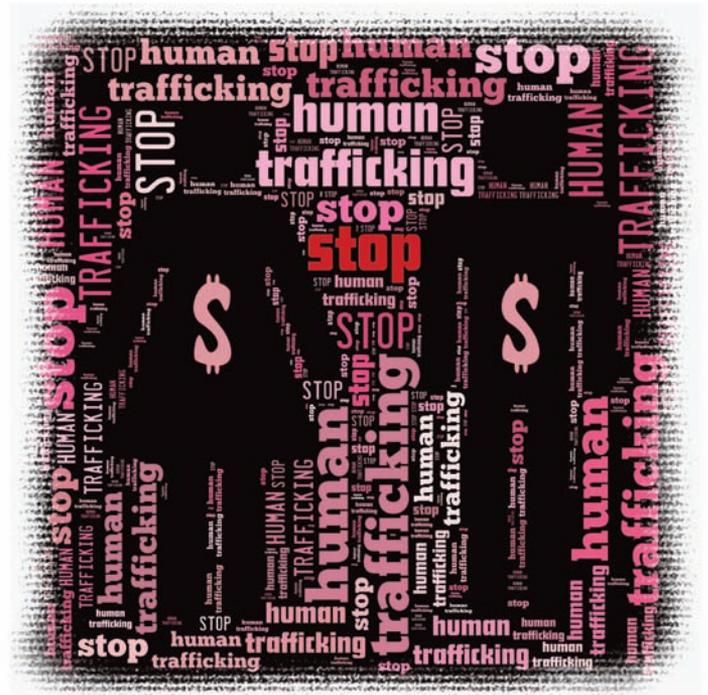
The intent of the legislation is good—raise awareness about human trafficking and identify where to seek help for victims. However, massage businesses should not have to post human trafficking information. This creates an unacceptable link between massage therapy and prostitution/sex trafficking.

ABMP’s goal (and challenge) is to assist legislators in finding a balance between providing law enforcement with a tool to identify legitimate massage therapy practitioners (through state licensing and enforcement), while ensuring our members and other massage therapists are treated as the health professionals they are. Too often we see state regulatory boards and law

enforcement attempt to create additional hoops and obstacles for legitimate practitioners in their quest to pursue criminals and protect the term “massage.”

There may be instances in which massage laws need to be changed in order to, first, create a better tool for law enforcement to identify legitimate practitioners, and second, use this tool to go after prostitution and sex trafficking happening under the guise of massage. However, a law is only as good as its enforcement. It is the responsibility of all of us to report questionable activity to the regulatory body overseeing your license or to local law enforcement.

Jean Robinson is ABMP’s director of government relations. To get the latest updates on all legislative and regulatory activities affecting the world of massage and bodywork, visit www.abmp.com.



Do you know how to submit a complaint to your regulatory agency? Do you complain to friends about “foot spas” or other questionable, unlicensed massage being provided in your area, but never notify the regulatory board? If you haven’t, ABMP encourages you to do so. There is information about how to file a complaint on most state board websites. (Link to all board websites from ABMP.com) We have to start demanding better enforcement of the existing laws regulating massage.

Member Profile

By Jed Heneberry

Kristen Burkholder Belfast, Maine
ABMP Member Since 2011

Kristen Burkholder balances a thriving private practice, volunteer time at the local high school wellness room she helped open, and a second career as a musician. What's her secret to managing it all? Each activity helps her replenish and renew.

Careers in Balance

Joy is evident in Burkholder's voice when she talks about her blended career as a massage therapist and musician, perhaps because she wasn't always so content in her path. "I was in the high-tech industry and hopelessly misguided," she recalls, "but I didn't realize I was. The clue for me was that I spent most of my time in the bathroom crying."

These days she has neither the inclination nor the time for waterworks, focusing instead on running her own massage practice, Belfast Maine Therapeutic Massage and Reiki; singing in Tango, her musical duo; writing and performing comedy in Belfast and Bangor; and establishing the wellness room at Belfast Area High School.

"I have these two careers now—performing and massage therapy," Burkholder says. "Massage therapy is very sacred to me, and I'm very careful of how I treat people from the minute they walk in my door to the minute they leave. But then I go out and do these wacky shows. And I've found I really just like making people happy and connecting with them, whether it's giving them a session that's completely tailored to them, or whether it's in a performance—it's the same heart in each situation."

One of the reasons she feels so at home as a massage therapist is a family tradition of massage passed down from her grandfather to her mother. "As I've gotten into this work, I can see a lot more clearly what it was that brought me to it," Burkholder says. "I had the blessing of my mom giving me massages and she had the memories of her father giving her family back rubs. I also enjoy listening to people, which I think I inherited from my father, a minister, who has that gift."

For Burkholder, she's found in massage exactly what she was missing from her previous career. "Personally, I need the work that I do in my massage therapy office," she says. "For the silence, for the careful attention I give to just one person; I need to connect with people on a profound level."



Kristen Burkholder in her massage therapy office in Belfast, Maine.



Kristen singing as part of her group, Tango (with accompanist Martin Gottlieb). Photo by Georges Nashan. www.tango-cabaret.com



RoAnn Blood, school counselor, and Kristen outside the Belfast Area High School Wellness Room.

A Creative Approach

Burkholder incorporates massage therapy and reiki in her practice, a combination that she did not plan for when first enrolling in massage school. “Reiki was not something that I ever thought I’d be doing,” she admits. “But I had such an amazing experience with it. It changed my life, and it changed my perception of the whole practice.”

After years of working at it, Burkholder finally feels she has come to an understanding of how to balance the different aspects of her training, especially in her new passion, oncology massage. “What reiki has become for me is more than what I give during the session,” she describes. “It’s who I am in the session. I’m not only working with massage therapy techniques, the intake information, anatomy and physiology, the history I know of this person; I’m also constantly monitoring what my intention is and who I am in the session, which helps me become a proper conduit.”

Her experience onstage also influences her identity as a massage therapist. “As a performer, you already have that experience of going into something and not knowing what’s going to happen,” Burkholder says. “It’s sort of like an improv show—you have a routine, but you also have to keep that creative mindset. What’s going to happen today? What’s this person going to bring? It’s the same in my massage practice.”

Back to School

Recently, Burkholder has embarked on a new venture with chiropractor Jane Robertson, bringing a wellness room to Belfast Area High School where students and faculty can receive complementary and alternative medicine sessions from practitioners who donate their services. “It took us about eight or nine months of making presentation after presentation,” Burkholder says, “but we did it.”



Kristen singing the “Great American Songbook” with Tango.
Photo by Larry Pritchett

The program debuted in April 2012 and was quickly embraced by curious students. “The kids love it,” Burkholder says. “A few had a good experience with acupuncture, and all of a sudden everyone wanted to try the ‘weird acupuncture.’ I’ve had kids come in because their friends have told them about how good massage is. It’s a microcosm of a larger community, but word travels much faster.”

Part of the joy for Burkholder is being the first massage therapist to work with many of the students. “It is so exciting to give someone his or her first massage,” she says. “To be the first person to touch a teenager in a professional, loving way, with a nonagenda-based, encouraging touch—it brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it. To be able to be with these young people and give them 10 minutes of, on a cellular level, encouragement, love, understanding—what a huge difference that can make.”

Even in the short time the program has been up and running, Burkholder has seen tremendous benefits. “It’s a great educational tool, and the experience lodges somewhere in their brain or in their bodies,” she says. “Not only is this an option to feel better rather than taking drugs or doing something else to get away from pain, it’s also a career option.”

That experience is something that Burkholder knows very well. “I said once that I think massage therapy saved my life,” she says. “And I don’t think that’s an exaggeration.”

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