

Community Works



residents of Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless, style wigs for chemotherapy patients and read to schoolchildren. (Whew!)

Dijulius has just as much going on at his salon, but he prefers to narrow the philanthropic focus. "A lot of people have their hands out," he says. "You have to choose a crusade. We chose children."

The salon offers help to children in a number of diverse ways, including beauty services for patients at a local children's hospital, a 'sharing wreath' encouraging clients to bring wrapped holiday presents for hospital patients; the Prom Promise that offers high school seniors free hair cuts if they pledge not to drink or drive on prom night; free hair cuts to bearers of straight-A report cards; jobs for special education students; and more.

A Supporter of the Arts

Portfolio Salon and Renewal Spa combines a focus on building teenagers' self-esteem with a mission to broaden the community's access to the fine arts. Izzo asks high school art departments to have their students select and price some of their artwork for salon display and, perhaps, for sale to clients.

"The purpose is to get young artists into a business atmosphere," says Izzo. "A lot of times they don't have a clue as to what they're going to do once they leave high school. Amherst is a small suburban town, with a huge emphasis on athletics and not

much on art. I like the link between art and ourselves as hair artists."

Izzo also gives young musicians their due as well, hiring them to play live, soft music in the salon one day a week. One student, who wrote much of his own music, later thanked Izzo for showing him that he could earn summer spending money by playing his music instead of "flipping burgers."

Increasing access to art is also one of Salonblonde's pet projects, so much so that owners Doerfler and Pasiennik timed the salon's launch to coincide with the neighborhood's annual "Around the Coyote" arts festival. During its opening, Salonblonde displayed works of two local artists.

Explain the owners, "Our opening artist showcase highlighted our effort to support the arts in all media—writing, painting and drawing, sculpture, music and fashion arts. Because 'Around the Coyote' is one of our neighborhood's most visible events, we felt it was important to get onboard and demonstrate our immediate support for the artists and for this particular venue."

Salon Environmentalists

In Austin, the community concern is environmental, and Avant is right in the thick of it. The salon splits its community service attention between its "Any Baby Can" program that raises funds and awareness for children who have needs of any kind and the community's Save Our Springs Alliance (SOSA), an ongoing and comprehensive effort to protect the area's water.

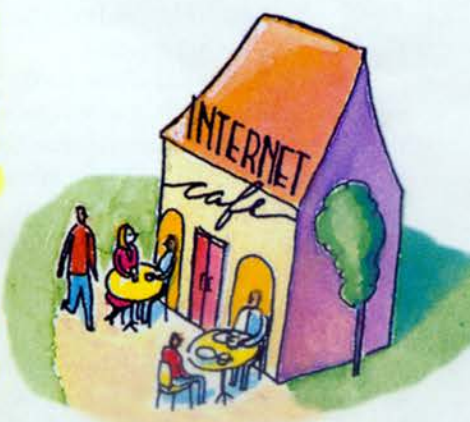
The Edwards Aquifer, a natural underground reservoir that is the sole source of drinking water for more than 1.5 million central Texans, is threatened by the region's rapid growth. According to Dini, greater metropolitan Austin's population has doubled in the past 10 years. Avant itself has grown to the point of planning its third salon opening, but Dini and Busch are passionate about promoting responsible growth management so that construction and pollution will not contaminate the area's natural springs, including Barton Springs, which serves Austin.

"We want to help Austin continue to be a great place," Busch states. "If we don't promote smart development—as opposed to just development—it won't stay that way. Everybody has a choice of whether to be part of the problem or part of the solution. By holding events and raising awareness in our community, we feel we're doing our part."

Protecting Austin's environment directly impacts the salon's economic health but, as with other salons and other causes, much of the satisfaction is inherent in the act of contribution.

Salon owners talk about being grateful for what they have, an elation in giving back, the "positive vibes" that come from staff teamwork and the importance of developing good karma. As role models, they are gratified to inspire staff and clients to connect with the community. Yet it's hard not to notice that these very giving salons do seem to court success along with all that feel-good satisfaction. Ihloff's public relations person calls it "cause marketing" and says it works. But why?

To motivator Mark Scharenbroich, the answer is obvious. "People want to deal with, work with and associate with human be-



ings who not only are knowledgeable but who also are authentic, concerned and joyful in their approach to life," he says. If you look up "salon professional" in the dictionary, you just may find that precise description. **ST**