Massage therapy: getting started

The former high school teacher now puts his energies into other instruction.

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VINDICATOR CORRESPONDENT

Many people in the area know John Burek as the co-founder (with Diane Alexander) and director of Tri-State College of Massage Therapy, which they opened in October 1997.

But his interest in healing and human potential dates to his days as a teacher at Canton Central Catholic High School. It was the influence of Father Joseph Martin that first opened Burek to a new way of thinking. Father Martin ran the retreat program, which focused on human potential and peoples' emotional selves.

At the same time, Burek had also read a book about the Esalen Institute in California, founded in 1962 as part of the human potential movement. It was known as an alternative education center and supported things like organic foods and was also known as a blending of eastern and western philosophies.

Burek had an opportunity to spend a week at Esalen, but his first exposure to massage actually didn't come until 1980, when he began to suffer physical problems because of a high school football injury. He went to Jeanette Ezro for neuromuscular massage therapy.

"The sessions were very therapeutic — lots of laughs," said Burek. "Jeanette could talk about anything from 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' to making doughnuts. And I also began to realize the benefits of massage therapy."

By 1989, Burek was studying massage at the Ohio College of Massage Therapy in Kenmore (Akron). Ezro, who eventually earned a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, urged him to also study with Paul St. John, the developer of neuromuscular massage. In 1990, he obtained his state license to practice massage therapy and also became certified in neuromuscular massage. He left his high school teaching position in 1992.