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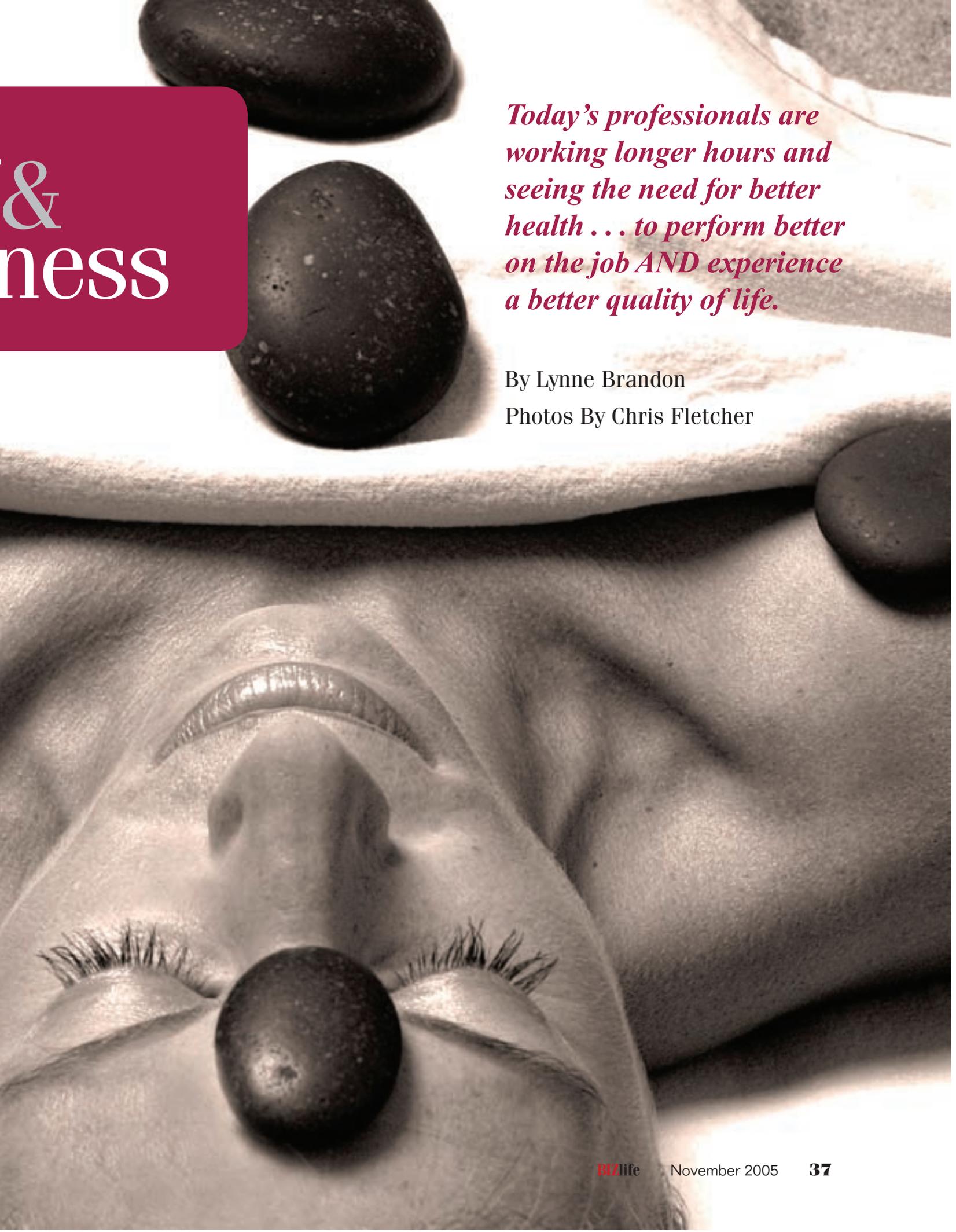
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*Today's professionals are working longer hours and seeing the need for better health . . . to perform better on the job AND experience a better quality of life.*

By Lynne Brandon

Photos By Chris Fletcher

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T E A M W O R K

Gloria Love remembers the day when Nancy Harrill sat her down at the upper body machine at Fitness Today. It was memorable for two reasons. Gloria weighed 225 pounds and was tired of it. More startling than her discomfort was the person working out beside her, a paraplegic in a wheelchair.

## Preventive Medicine

“Nancy asked me what my excuse was and I did not have an answer,” says Love. That was the first day of a two-year journey back to health and fitness for the trim, petite woman who now weighs 125 pounds. Love says several people held her accountable, but Harrill, owner of Fitness Today in High Point, was instrumental. Harrill’s no-nonsense approach to fitness paid off for Love who started slowly by walking on the treadmill and riding an exercise bike, later advancing to more strenuous aerobic classes.

Today at the age of 48, Love feels like life is just beginning. And a newfound confidence is directing her to work outside of her home for the first time in over 10 years.

Gloria represents the demographic age group (by 2010 one baby boomer will turn 65 every four seconds) that is poised to live longer than previous generations. The problem that arises with the boomer generation is the sedentary lifestyle that marks it like none before it.

Today’s professionals are working longer hours and seeing the need for better health so they

# Professionals & Wellness

can not only perform better on the job but also experience a better quality of life. “Baby boomers are my biggest market. Physicians are stressing the importance of a fitness program especially for those that are starting to have health issues. I see Type II Diabetes, hypertension, obesity and high cholesterol frequently. Nine times out of 10 I can get people off of medication if I can get them moving,” says Harrill.

## The Price of Wellness

Harrill speaks of another trend of companies paying for health club memberships or offering discounts to employees. “Employers are seeing the need for employees to have a place to exercise whether on site or at an exercise facility. Basically, wellness is cheaper than illness. Who would you rather pay? A doctor or a fitness club,” says Harrill.

Companies like American Express and others are recognizing the need for health care for its employees and the importance of fitness and wellness. Offerings to employees include daily office hours with an on-site nurse and annual health fairs that include screenings and specialized services.

Nancy Harrill, owner of Fitness Today in High Point, coaches Gloria Love to reach her fitness and good health goals.



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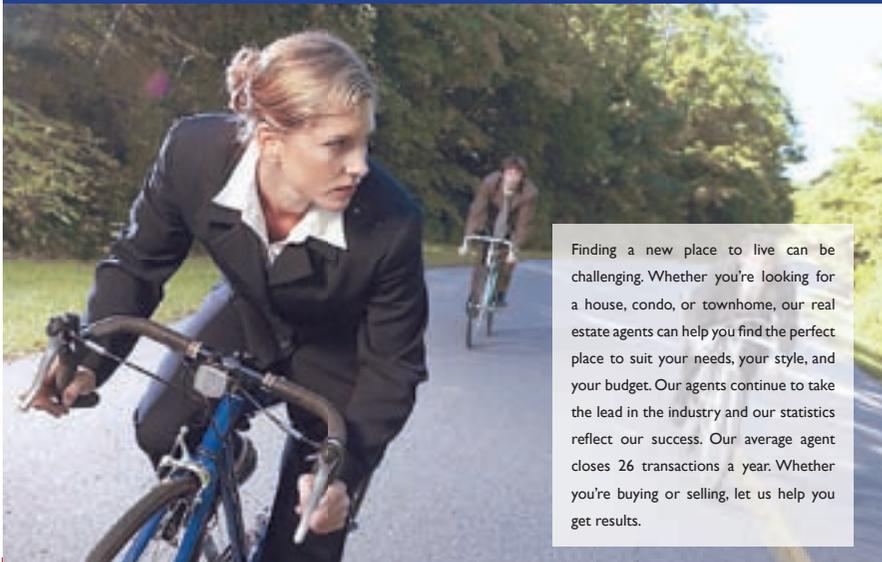
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Power Yoga participants at Sportime Raquet & Athletic Club.

Work-site fitness programs are on the increase and are up from 22 percent in 1985 to 42 percent in 1992 (Journal of Exercise Physiologyonline, Volume 6 Number 1 February 2003).

This trend is expected to continue as the population ages and companies realize the benefit to the financial bottom line when employees are healthy and productive. Dr. Steve Hamersky, vice president of health services at American Express, measures the success of their internal health and wellness programs by several factors. One is the estimated cost

# Professionals & Wellness

saving of more than \$400,000 in the Greensboro service center.

Other notable successes include the onsite health care that logged 3,252 walk-in visits in 2004, dispensed 860 flu shots (2003-2004 flu season) and provided 20 wellness programs that benefited more than 4,500 employees.

*These findings point to the question and ask, "What are professionals doing to take care of themselves physically as well as mentally? What are implications of a sense of well-being?"*

## Mind/Body Connection

Dr. Edward N. Robinson, Jr. FACP, professor of medicine (UNC) and medical director of infection control and employee health at Moses Cone Health System, recalls the frustration of running injuries and needing another way to exercise. Dealing with life-threatening diseases on a daily basis also impacted Dr. Robinson's quest to find a way to stay physically fit and to help diffuse the pressures of his profession. He found yoga and says he knew he was "home." He is not alone. (Yoga Journal reports that 16 million Americans say they practice yoga.)

Ten years later, the fit 52-year old teaches Power Yoga at Sportime Racquet & Athletic Club. All ages are drawn to the mind/body exercise for its adaptability to individual fitness levels, portability (grab your mat and go) and the physical as well as mental benefits. Yoga is especially "user friendly" for

non-exercisers or for individuals who have previously been inactive, allowing a slow immersion into the fitness world. Robinson cautions that yoga is not a cure-all but it will help participants to recognize and deal with stress. "Yoga makes you more aware of the triggers to stress and helps people approach life easier," says Robinson.

## A Little Pampering Goes a Long Way

Wellness is not just about health gained by physical activities. The esthetic approach to wellness offered by the cosmetic/beauty industry, private physicians and other providers, is a notable industry that continues to emerge as more working professionals are frequenting day spas and other health and wellness facilities. After clocking 12-14 hour days, professionals want to feel good about themselves and are looking to dental enhancements, cosmetic treatments and massages to bring a sense of rejuvenation into their lives.

Dr. Mark Hyman, DDS, is steadily seeing more patients for teeth-whitening, a hot trend that shows no signs of abating. The dental procedure is one of the fastest and easiest ways to change a person's appearance in today's marketplace, which might speak to its popularity. More importantly, Hyman says, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Service industries are reporting seeing more male professionals who are taking care of themselves

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Amy Fields Rumley, owner of Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio, performing eyebrow waxing procedure.

by getting massages, manicures and hair removal treatments. These steps show an attention to detail that often translates into confidence on the job. Anthony Mason is a stockbroker who has his eyebrows waxed every six weeks at Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio. Mason reports that he feels better when he knows he looks better. "It makes a difference in the business world when you take care of yourself and people notice. It does not mean you are not masculine, but it is refining the rough edges."

### Relaxation

The ancient art of massage therapy has long been touted for its soothing effect on individuals. There are different strokes for different folks but all are united in the common goal to connect the mind and body, allowing participants to "let go" of outside concerns.

Hot stone therapy is a national trend in massage that has found its way to area spas. The stones dissipate heat into the muscles and soften them at the same time, making them more pliable for the massage. Massage therapists report seeing all ages and genders for the relaxing treatment.

### Teaching the basics

While massage therapy, exercise and cosmetology treatments are all good in themselves, educators are sensing the urgency to train tomorrow's work force in the basics of a healthy lifestyle that includes balanced eating and exercise.

Dr. Tony Kemerly, assistant professor of exercise science at High Point University is spearheading the initiation of the school's first physical activity and obesity class. The genesis idea occurred to Kemerly, who developed the class, to educate students in the sports studies graduate program about the importance of health and wellness.

Kemerly reports that many students have made behavioral and lifestyle changes. Why is this important for students to learn? The short answer is to educate and hopefully reverse the obesity epidemic in the U.S. (65 percent of Americans are overweight or obese).

With employer participation and education, individuals can be more productive on the job and live fuller lives outside the workplace. Prevention is the best cure. ■

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