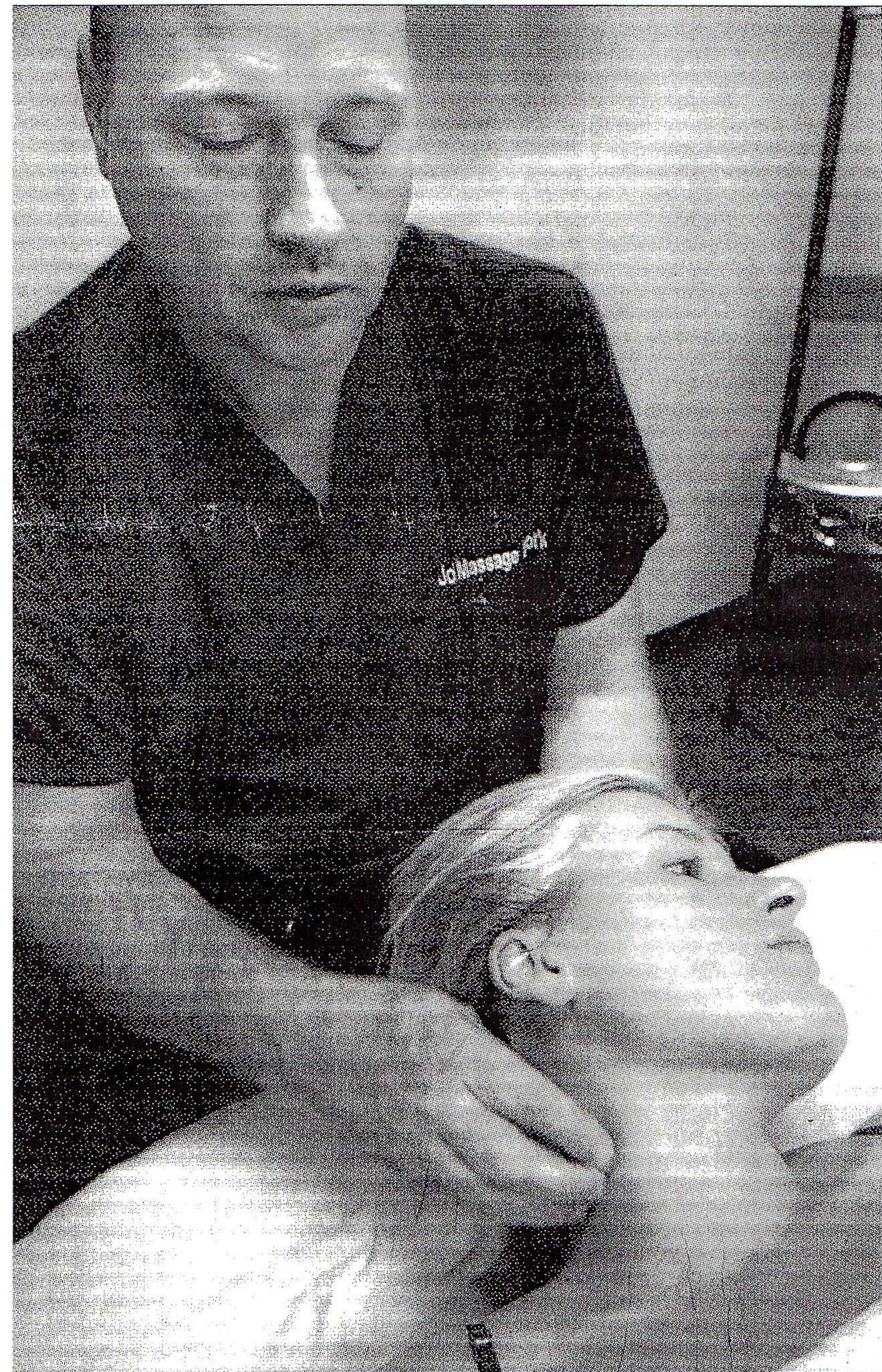


Hands-on approach

Massage technique a pain-relief option for some



John Everard performs trigger point therapy on fellow licensed massage therapist Tetyana Davis to help alleviate her migraine headaches and TMJ, or temporomandibular joint, problems.

After John Everard found relief from his pain with trigger point therapy, he quit his U.S. Postal Service job and went back to school to become a licensed massage therapist. "Pain is a pretty big motivating factor, and trigger point therapy works to relieve a lot of it," he said.

While at work as a mail carrier, Everard was rear-ended twice in vehicular incidents, 10 years apart.

"Not only did I have broken bones that had to heal, but I messed up my muscles, tendons and ligaments, too," he said.

He was getting limited results from physical therapy when a massage therapist friend tried trigger point therapy on some of his many aches and pains.

"It was amazing," he said. "I got real relief from pain for the first time in years."

The friend encouraged him to pursue certification in massage, so he attended the Cleveland Institute of Medical Massage and became licensed in 2004.

Since then, he's found that only a few people experience the immediate relief from their pain that he did with trigger point therapy.

"Most people need three to five sessions before they notice a big difference," he said. "But it definitely does work."

Trigger points, Everard explained, are nerve receptors in the muscles and the fascia tissue that's wrapped around the muscles. As a result of injuries or overuse, these nerve receptors can accumulate waste products in the body's soft tissue.

To the therapist, trigger points feel like nodules or taut bands of fiber beneath the skin, Everard said. In many cases, these points are not where a person's pain is actually located but are the real source of pain elsewhere in the body.

Carol Lazerick of Highland Heights became an advocate of trigger point work after Everard gave her a chair massage one Saturday morning at the North Union Farmers Market at Shaker Square in Cleveland.

"I'd flown back from the Newport Jazz Festival (in Rhode Island) the day before and had what I call 'airplane head,'" she said.

She had a clicking in her ears and an uncomfortable stuffed-up feeling she couldn't relieve. She recounted her problem to Everard as she sat in his chair for \$1-a-minute chair massage.

"He massaged the muscles in my neck, and the problem was gone," she said. "I couldn't believe it."

She's since made appointments with Everard's Mayfield Village office for trigger point therapy to relieve her chronic back pain.

"I've sent a lot of my friends to John for treatment of problems like back pain, headaches, (jaw joint pain) and tennis elbow," Lazerick said. "It's a great option for those of us who prefer to stay off medications with side effects."

Trigger point work is no "feel-good fluff and buff" massage technique, such as done in day spas, but can involve discomfort and requires participation from the client, Everard said. The presence and intensity of pain and discomfort must be communicated to the therapist as he applies pressure to the trigger points.

"Fifty percent of solving pain issues is figuring out what's causing it and where it's coming from," Everard said. "So I talk with my clients to help them discover what might be causing their pain."

He gives \$1-a-minute chair massages on Fridays at Wild Oats Market in Woodmere and on Saturday mornings at the North Union Market at Shaker Square.

People don't need appointments to sit fully dressed in a special chair for treatments that typically last about 15 minutes.

"I've actually got quite a few regulars who come to the markets every week," Everard said.

And many clients who book appointments with him at his offices in Mayfield Village and Bainbridge Township first were introduced to trigger point work through chair massages at one of the markets.

Massages at his office must be booked in advance and typically last an hour, but sometimes more time is required.

"But when people are in pain, I find a way to squeeze them in," he said.

In Mayfield Village, he rents space from another massage therapist who also works with trigger point therapy. In many cases, health insurance will cover their services, he said.

Trigger point therapy

John Everard

Call (440) 570-7785 for appointments at:

■ 781 Beta Drive, Mayfield Village

■ 8227 E. Washington St., Bainbridge Township

No appointments needed:

■ 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays at Wild Oats Market, 27249 Chagrin Blvd., Woodmere

■ 8 a.m. to noon North Union Farmers Market, Shaker Square