Amore Salon – More Than Just Hair

--by Catherine Converse

Amidst a delightful, warm atmosphere and friendly smiles, Amore is a salon and spa that offers the full gamut of beauty services; glamorous cut and color, rejuvenating facials, manicures and pedicures, and therapeutic massage. Even cosmetic tattooing. But their service to the community doesn’t stop there.

Just over three years ago, Devon and Tracy Anderson opened the doors to their dream. Seventeen days later, they watched their dream go up in flames.

Tracy arrived to work on an early spring morning to fumes, fire, and smoke. The target of a cruel act of arson, an explosion triggered a fire that began in the basement and resulted in over $350,000 in damage. Despite the heartbreak, her strongest memory of that moment was the reaction of the community. “Everyone just dropped what they were doing to come help us. We just had this amazing immediate support all around us.” With that very support, the Andersons re-opened the elegant doors to their salon and spa a very short three weeks later. Within a year, Amore Salon won an award as a salon of distinction in Salon Magazine—the leading business publication for the professional salon industry—as one of the top 20 salons in the country for interior design. Not bad for a space that only a year earlier was covered with ash and disappointment.

What Tracy and Devon would soon discover is that the event of the fire was actually a blessing. It began for them a lifelong dedication to seeking out ways to help others in the community, the way the community had so quickly come to their aid. Tracy recalls the incident by saying, “We didn’t understand it, but we knew God had a plan for us.”

The Anderson’s first large contribution came about as a way to help others in a situation so close to their hearts; those affected by fire. They started the Amore Fire Fund, which has been an annual fundraiser to raise money. By collaborating with the Red Cross and the Kalispell City Fire Chief, the Amore Fire Fund provides gift cards or cash to re-build the lives of those whose lives have been drastically altered by incidents involving fire. The fund gave financial assistance to 14 families just last year. “Not everyone has insurance,” commented Tracy. “Some people must start over from the devastation completely on their own.”

Starting at the end of October, Amore sets up a large trunk in their lobby. Clients, friends, family, business people, “team members” (what Tracy calls her contractors), and many others begin to offer up gifts and services to fill up the trunk. Raffle tickets are purchased for one dollar and a name is drawn in mid-December. Last year, the event raised $3,500 and every cent went to support people in the community that have been devastated by fire. Amore hopes to also do a Spring “Wheelbarrow” event, with a theme of gardening and the outdoors.

Now Amore has taken on a new cause. Cancer. As the only salon that sells and styles wigs, Amore offers a service to cancer patients to aid them in the transition of one of the most dreaded side-affects of chemotherapy—hair loss.

After losing her dad to cancer shortly after opening the salon, healing those with the disease was already something that was close to Tracy’s heart. Inspired by her own clients, Tracy knew she was supposed to be a part of helping these women with their fight with cancer. “Clients I had known for 18 years were coming to me with their very sad diagnosis of (breast) cancer. I just felt helpless,” says Tracy. They try to get the wig ahead of time, while the cancer patient still has their original hairstyle. That way they can style the wig to match the patient’s current look, so when week 12 arrives, all they have to do is pull that little box out of the closet and they immediately look the exact same. “It takes faith and courage to fight cancer. Both of those are easier to come by when you feel good about yourself, despite your circumstances,” Tracy explains. “A person with cancer is already overwhelmed. To try to find the right wig on the internet only magnifies their stress.”

Cancer patients receive a large discount on the Raquel Welch wigs, and Amore donates the services to cut, color, and style the wigs. While this service is offered to cancer patients year-round, each September Amore holds an open house to celebrate Pink Month. The salon’s decor will be glowing in pink and team members will be offering lessons on applying make-up, wigs, fake eyelashes and eyebrow pencil application (also areas of hair loss), and other items that give people the tools to feel confident about themselves. You can also get pink hair extensions, at $10 each, which are donated by So-Cap out of New York. The money raised from the extensions goes to the Save-A-Sister foundation.

Tracy and Devon continue to seek additional ways to give back. They already personally donate to numerous causes, including the Sara Weaver-Balter Ministry of Forgiveness(www.rubyridgetofreedom.com), Ray of Hope, and Braveheart Ministries. In fact, everyone that works in the salon gives in the places they feel passionate, whether it is their church, a school, or a non-profit organization. Tracy holds tight to the belief that everyone has a God-given gift that is meant to be shared with the world. Her biggest gift? Herself. “It’s my Mission on a Black Mat,” says Tracy, referring to the padded black mat that the hair stylists stand on all day long. “My clients share things with me they wouldn’t even tell their doctor or therapist. I take that very seriously. We are in the industry of beauty, and that is really from the inside out.”

The clientele at Amore receive this type of experience every day. It’s no wonder they have retained clients from all over the United States and Canada. Tracy and Devon believe that every person who walks in their doors is meant to be there; and that alone gives people what they really want from their salon. So much more than just hair.

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