

Chiropractic Franchise Makes Some 'Market Adjustments'

HEALTH CARE: Outlets Tap Successful Model of Regular, Walk-In Visits

By JULIE GALLANT

Maintaining a healthy spine can be as routine as a visit to a gym now that **The Joint Corp.** is introducing its chiropractic franchises to San Diego.

The Joint ... the chiropractic place opened its first local outlet recently and celebrated its grand opening in Mission Valley at the **Ikea/Costco** shopping center on Fenton Parkway. Soon to follow are outlets in Escondido, Mira Mesa, Encinitas and Oceanside.

Similar to a gym membership, the model is based on charging clients \$49 a month for up to four adjustments.

Steve Donnelly, owner and operator of the Mission Valley clinic, said the concept encourages health maintenance by putting the focus on regular chiropractic care rather than waiting until a person is in pain.

Dr. James Becroft, one of three doctors on staff at the Mission Valley location, said they also treat customers with neck or back pain and headaches.

"We improve quality of life through adjustments, through routine and affordable chiropractic care," said Becroft, an Australia native who was trained at the Life University chiropractic school in Marietta, Georgia, and practiced in Tucson for five years.

With 52 locations established nationwide, **The Joint** offers the convenience



Photo courtesy of The Joint Corp.

The Joint...the chiropractic place franchises are providing the popular model of health maintenance businesses where patients are offered memberships for regular monthly visits.

of no appointments, no insurance and no start-up fees.

The model is patterned after **Massage Envy**, which founder **John Leonesio** grew from a concept in 2002 to a \$300 million company with more than 800 licenses awarded in just six years.

Leonesio said he got his start by co-founding **Scandinavian Health Spas** with his brother **Frank** in the 1970s, growing it to 40 clubs before selling to **Bally Health and Fitness** in 1985. After working for



John Leonesio

Bally for five years, he said he and **Frank** co-founded **The Q, the Sports Club**, and grew it to 20 units in five years, before selling to **24 Hour Fitness**. Then in 2001, he was approached by a former health club director with the idea of taking **The Q** in a new direction, and saw an opportunity to organize and provide a retail experience for massage therapy.

"The only thing I knew was the membership model and we incorporated that into **Massage Envy**," said Leonesio, whose goal was to provide services on evenings and weekends to fit the customers' lifestyles.

With an irresistible offer from an India-based company, the **Massage Envy** fran-

chise was sold in 2008 and Leonesio was able to retire. He was coaxed back to work by Austin, Texas-based **Business Venture Capital** with a desire to build a membership model and brand recognition around **The Joint**, which had been founded by **Fred Gerretzen** in Tucson, Ariz., in 1999.

As CEO of **The Joint**, Leonesio says 261 licenses have been awarded to 69 franchisees who are buying an average of four units.

"They like the concept of buying multiple units," he said. "That's a good sign of a franchise when people want more than one."

Leonesio said the typical franchise is open 52 hours, six days a week with two or three doctors and two to three receptionists who serve up to 100 patients per day.

Locally, the company is gearing up for 22 to 25 franchises in San Diego and roughly the same amount in Orange County, said **Dennis Conklin**, regional developer for **The Joint**, **Massage Envy** and **European Wax Center**. So far, 13 licenses have been sold in San Diego and 18 in Orange County, he said.

Conklin said he came to **The Joint** by way of **Massage Envy**. He signed up with **Massage Envy** based on his wife's experiences as a customer at a thriving franchise where he said the phone was ringing off the hook and people were turned away because their dozen rooms were booked solid.

"It's one of the smartest things I ever did," Conklin said. "We help so many people, it's just a great feeling, and we hope to do the same thing with **The Joint**."



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