

Husband-wife duo have each other's back

BY SAMANTHA MURPHY

When you first walk into Ellcott Square Chiropractic and Wellness, owned by Dr. Neal Pignatoro and his wife Kathy, you quickly realize this is not your average doctor's office.

You're greeted by the calming music, the aromatherapy scents of lilac and the earthy green, brown and red hues that adorn the walls. You notice there are not rows and rows of chairs in the waiting room. Jewelry, neck pillows, vitamins, herbs and candles for sale add a boutique quality. Just as unique as their office is the way they run their business.

Neal Pignatoro, of Buffalo, opened Ellcott Square Chiropractic and Wellness, located in the Ellcott Square Building at 295 Main St., in 1998. After earning his degree in chiropractics from New York Chiropractic College, he realized there was a certain niche he might be able to fill.

"At the time there was nothing downtown for chiropractics; everybody was out in the suburbs," he said. "A spot opened up in the building, so I took it and started out one patient at a time."

He met his wife, Kathy, two years later in that same building. Kathy, originally from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., was working on the eighth floor at an adoption agency. She was having troubles with her back and went to see Pignatoro. They were married one year later. They now have a blended family of four children: ages 9, 12, 15 and 18.

Kathy Pignatoro joined the business in 2004 and they now run the business completely on their own.

They split the work up evenly, Kathy handles the business end and Neal handles the chiropractics. Almost daily, the couple is bombarded with the same question over and over, "How do you two work together?"

"It's amazing how easy it is to work with her, it's really effortless," Neal Pignatoro said. "She's my wife, but she's also my best friend."

"With our four kids and our busy lives it was actually more stressful not working together," Kathy Pignatoro said. "Plus nobody is going to fight for your business like family will."

"While most businesses focus on making money as their main objective, the Pignatoras have another focus: family.

"We're not workaholics," Kathy Pignatoro said. "The kids always come first, we're very family oriented."

"We are lucky to have flexibility in our schedule, especially in raising our children, so that we're able to go out and do things with them," Dr. Pignatoro added. "We can go to all the football games and dance recitals, something not everybody can do."

While the couple is now the perfect example of healthy living and wellness, it wasn't always that way. After having their fourth child, life became very hectic and wellness took a backseat.

"We had four children under nine," Kathy Pignatoro said. "Life was crazy and we weren't making those healthy choices."

Neal Pignatoro said, "When the people at the pizzeria knew me by name and knew I wanted mozzarella sticks, I knew there was a problem."



BOTH PHOTOS: JIM COURTNEY | BUSINESS FIRST

Dr. Neal Pignatoro, left, and his wife, Kathy, below, developed a successful chiropractic business in Buffalo's Ellcott Square Building.

So the couple took their health back into their own hands. They now hope to inspire people through their own example.

"It's all about better choices," Kathy said. "We've done it and I just hope to inspire people to go for it themselves."

"We're so much happier now," Neal Pignatoro said. "Healthy people are mentally more focused and physically happier; it just pours into your whole lifestyle."

The Pignatoros take pride in treating every patient as an individual, not just a number.

"We don't like to wait, so we're not going to make you wait," said Kathy Pignatoro. "We treat everybody with respect and compassion, just as we would want to be treated."

In addition to their chiropractic and wellness services, the Pignatoros opened a self-service gym in 2011.

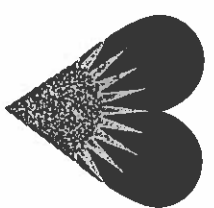
"We found that people really wanted early hours, cleanliness and no pressure," said Kathy Pignatoro.

"We broke all those barriers down and have signed up over 300 people."

As for their future, they plan to expand by opening a second location in Tonawanda.

Samanthia Murphy is a freelance writer.

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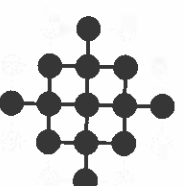


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