

[success stories]



Westmoor Club membership comes with access to the clubhouse (pictured) and the Wellness Center (below).

Island Standard

A charming club on Nantucket meets the wellness needs of its discerning membership with an exciting array of offerings.

AT THE WESTMOOR CLUB (NANTUCKET, MA), membership has its privileges, especially for those who make health and wellness a priority. The clubhouse, which is housed in a 1917 mansion formerly owned by Alice Vanderbilt, opened in 2004 with 40 founding members. Today, it boasts an impressive membership of 2,000-plus who have access to countless amenities, including fine dining, charming overnight accommodations, tennis and croquet courts, an outdoor pool, gardens, boats, and more. But for wellness-minded members, perhaps the most enticing offering is the 20,000-square-foot **Wellness Center**, which features six treatment rooms; two Pilates studios; a nail cove; a physical therapy and acupuncture room; a dedicated yoga and meditation room; a spin studio; a fully outfitted gym; two squash courts; a retail boutique; men's and women's



locker rooms with whirlpools, steam rooms, and saunas; and a great hall with a stone fireplace that is the site of fireside yoga in the winter and more than 60 fitness classes per week during the busy summer season. Along with traditional spa services, including massage, skincare, and nailcare, the spa features a variety of unique options that truly make it stand out, including Saltability Himalayan salt stone massage, HydraFacial skincare services, Tibetan singing bowl sound therapy, traditional Buddhist mindfulness instruction, chakra clearing, soul-focused readings, acupuncture, physical therapy, and more.

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Joanna Roche

PHOTOGRAPHY: KRISTEN KELLOGG (JOANNA ROCHE)

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All of this takes place under the careful leadership of wellness director Joanna Roche, a wellness and luxury-marketing expert with a long career in the spa industry, including time as an executive vice president at New York City-based public relations firm Pierce Mattie and as a leader at Canyon Ranch in the Berkshires. Here, learn about the secrets of the Wellness Center's success, the challenges of running both a seasonal and membership-based business, and how Roche's leadership over the past three years has led to an annual increase in revenue of \$250,000.

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To what do you attribute the spa's success over the years?

A. Our members are very sophisticated and travel the world, and our success is a reflection of our talented staff and the ability to offer something for everyone.

What sort of changes did you incorporate into the spa upon your arrival, and how has it changed the focus of the spa?

A. Taking this amazing location and facility and “growing it up” from a gym and spa to a wellness center has been my greatest creative joy. Our members were ready and hungry for a chance to experience programming comparable to the places that have inspired me, such as Canyon Ranch, Travaasa, and Miraval. I worked at introducing wellness through new services and programs, special events, guest staff, and hiring one-of-a-kind healers. On day one of the job, I got an email from seven ladies who wanted to know who was going to teach their Pilates mat class over the summer. I called my friend, Karen Lee, and she moved to Nantucket and started the Westmoor's Pilates program. I'm fortunate to have a great network, and it's really benefitted the club.

What are some of the most exciting new offerings that you've introduced to the spa?

A. This year, we introduced the MLX Quartz Spa Table from Gharieni. It's one of eight tables in the U.S., and the only other one on the East Coast is in New York City. What an opportunity for me and my staff to innovate healing. We trained a diverse cross section of staff—a yoga teacher, a Pilates instructor, an acupuncturist, a massage therapist, and a chakra healer—on both the table and the singing bowls. And then the magic happened. We all practiced on each other, shared feedback and experiences, and came up with some amazing collaborative offerings and ideas to take a healing modality and stretch it to offer both customized experiences but also deeply unusual ones. So we now offer acupuncture with singing bowl therapy, chakra clearing with singing

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CLOCKWISE: Pilates, sessions on the quartz bed using the singing bowls, and HydraFacials are among the spa's many offerings.



PHOTOGRAPHY: KRISTEN KELLOGG

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The inviting outdoor pool is a popular relaxation spot for members.

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bowls, and there is a massage that also incorporates the bowls and Himalayan salt, all of which take place on the table.

We have also been quite fortunate to collect an eclectic group with different yet compatible styles that support our members' efforts to stretch and grow while on Nantucket. Rebecca Justo, who is an expert on chakras and has pioneered soul-focused healing, is simply an exceptional healer. Acupuncturist Erica Marrero joined the staff this year and brought with her an idea that really took off—acupuncture happy hour, which includes green tea and nine needles for relaxation for 30 minutes, and we regularly sell out. Another gem is Jami Lower, who really embraced and took on our teen programming. She came up with sports clinics for speed and conditioning, and we aimed that at high school and college athletes needing to keep up training for the summer. It filled a niche that was left after kids aged out of camp, and we've noticed that parents who model healthy living have kids who aspire to do the same.

How does running a membership-only location differ from running a more traditional spa?

A. When I worked at Canyon Ranch, we had a 50 percent return guest rate, so half the house was familiar with our program, so it wasn't like coming from a spa that had low repeat business. I learned that in a club of 480 member families, roughly 2,000 people, the Wellness Center had a core group of 200 super users who were really wanting more, so we figured out how to grow it. In the first year, we

went from 27 classes a week to 45, and this year we are at 60. We've grown from one full-time and two on-call massage therapists to four full-time and three on-call therapists, and the overall staff has grown to 45 in the summer. In terms of retail, I only buy things that no one else on Nantucket sells. Of course, there are a few exceptions, but that's my rule of thumb—it has to be special. I try to pay attention to details and things that make a member experience memorable. For example, my staff makes two kinds of "detox water" daily. We came up with the recipes, and the members love the extra care.

How do you attract new and repeat clients and encourage them to visit?

A. It's tough to get members to the Wellness Center who don't already have an attraction to health or fitness, but we advertise and offer entry-level activities like functional training assessments or facial packages. Our meditation class has attracted people who have not visited before. Lama Yeshe Palmo teaches traditional Buddhist meditation and is one of only 100 western lamas and is an ordained Buddhist nun.

What have been the biggest challenges in growing the business?

A. The seasonality of Nantucket is tough, especially for recruitment and retention of staff, simply based on the vastly different economics of the seasons. And we have a finite ability to grow with a fixed membership before we have facility limitations.

How do you make retail sales a priority among your staff?

A. Incentives, coaching, and badgering. This summer, I tried to give away a bottle of wine a week to the person who made the most effort, not necessarily the most sales but the one who made the effort.

What ongoing challenges are you facing, and how are you overcoming them?

A. On Nantucket, it's housing for the seasonal staff, keeping a clear point of difference from other clubs, and making sure that I absolutely have the best massage staff, fitness instructors, and wellness professionals. We are working on long-term housing solutions, we meet regularly about marketing, and I am constantly on the lookout for talented folks.—*Julie Keller Callaghan*

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