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Many Nature's Gift Customers Find Shop's Oils Essential Indeed

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MADISON—Trying to make an authentic biblical anointing oil got to be a bit much for Beth Werner of Rochester, N.Y.

“My husband and I were making anointing oil from the original biblical recipe in Exodus. We were not entirely happy with the first batch, and I began to realize that all oils are not created equal.” She said with a smile. “Anyway, I started searching the Web so see what was available.”

What Werner found was Nature's Gift Aromatherapy in Madison.

The National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy gives several definitions for aromatherapy. One of the definitions describes the practice as a “natural, non-invasive treatment system designed to affect the whole person, not just the symptom or disease, and to assist the body's natural ability to balance, regulate, heal and maintain itself by the correct use of essential oils.” The association's Web site says aromatherapy also can be defined as “the art and science of utilizing naturally extracted aromatic essences from plants to balance, harmonize and promote the health of body, mind and spirit.”

When Werner found Nature's Gift in 1997, it was run out of Marge Clark's Madison home. Clark said her successful online business has motivated her to open a retail store. The store, at 314 Old Hickory Blvd.

E., carries a wide variety of products related to aromatherapy, some of which cannot be found online.

“What really happened was out-of-state clients wanted to come by when they came through town, she said. “They couldn't come through because everything was in my house. Then we had in-state customers that wanted to come by and pick up their orders, but there was really nowhere to come to.”

Clark said she was forced to find a bigger space. “Well, we had really outgrown my house,” she said with a laugh. “My staff was inhabiting every room except my bedroom, and if they'd had their druthers I suspect they would have stored things there, too.”

Belva Cunningham, a local massage therapist, says she's thrilled to have the store in the Nashville area.

“It is so nice to be able to smell the oils,” she said, “You could be spending a lot of money, and it's nice to be able to test drive it first.”

Testing the oil may not be a bad idea, because a 15 ml bottle of oil could cost \$7 to \$400.

Clark says the retail store gives her staff more room to work, gives customers a place to visit, and lets the shop carry more merchandise.

“We have several non-oil products that are available here that are not

sold on the Web site,” she said. “They are things that definitely complement aromatherapy. We have all of the aromatherapy accessories, as well as soaps and bath salts and things like that.”

Anne Alukonis, an associate at the shop, said she searches the far corners of the world for the jewelry, clay, wood and fabric products she provides to the specialty store.

“I go to the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic to buy things,” she said. “I also get things from as far away as Zaire, Mongolia, Tibet, Thailand, and I also have a local artist who supplies me with things.

Clark said she thinks the physical location will add to her online sales. “Well, we might pick up local customers,” she said. “See, Tennessee customers get a double whammy, sales tax and shipping. Out-of-town customers don't shoulder both burdens.”

Werner said she makes it a point to visit the store when in town. “We're actually planning our vacation next year around that very visit,” she said, “that's how much we want to see the next chapter in the life of Nature's Gift.”