

suburban life

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A SUBLIME EXPERIENCE

Led by Kiki Calasso, the team at **Sublime Salon & Spa** in Newtown offers a warm, friendly, and elegant environment where clients come to relax and rejuvenate. **by MATT COSENTINO**

photography by **NINA LEA PHOTOGRAPHY**

Many teenagers find it daunting to map out their future. Even those who try to do so often have difficulty identifying their talents and interests needed to choose the right career path. Maria “Kiki” Calasso considers herself one of the fortunate ones. She knew from the age of 16 what she wanted to do with the rest of her life.

Calasso’s “aha moment” came in high school, when she took a part-time job with a beauty supply company. That first foray into the business sparked an interest that evolved into what she describes as “a calling.”

“It started out as a summer job, and it turned into something I loved from the minute I got there,” she says. “It’s funny because I can’t say there was one thing that drew me in; it was just the whole energy and the industry in general. It was a whole other world and I got to meet some amazing people through it. I always loved it, and I still do.”

Calasso eventually worked her way up to sales at her company. Although it wasn’t the kind of position that she envisioned for herself long term, it did afford her the opportunity to go in and out of salons through-



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—Kiki Calasso,
Sublime Salon & Spa

to me is the most important thing in our business, because we are a service industry. I take that very seriously and we always try as hard as we can to please people.”

Calasso is quick to share the credit for Sublime’s success with her staff, many of whom have more than 20 years of experience as hair stylists, nail technicians, or aestheticians. She says each member of her team stays on top of the latest trends

out the area all day long. She would pick the brains of the owners, engage the stylists in conversation, and even interact with the customers. Before long, it became her dream to run her own salon.

She accomplished her goal in 2003, when she took over an existing salon in Wrightstown and rebranded it under the name Sublime Salon & Spa. Now, nearly two decades later, she takes pride in offering clients an escape from their hectic daily lives and a feeling of rejuvenation with a fresh haircut, a manicure, or a facial.

Since taking over the salon, she has made two moves to larger spaces in Newtown as her staff and client base expanded. Today, Sublime is a two-story, full-service salon offering hair styling, nail services, massage, facials, eyelash extensions, body waxing, and makeup. Sublime strikes the perfect balance between the sophistication of a high-end salon and the warm, friendly feel of a local business that people are eager to visit again and again.

“I love what we have in our salon,” Calasso says. “I feel like it’s like a *Cheers* atmosphere. Everybody who walks in the door is welcomed, and we make sure that everybody is acknowledged and feels taken care of. Service

and tailors service to each client’s wants and needs.

“You get to see a lot of things when you work for other people, and I just knew I wanted to create a team and create a place where people wanted to be,” she says. “You have to be at work for a lot of hours in the day, so you want to be happy and you want to feel good about your environment. You want people behind you who also love your place and believe in it, because I think you have to believe in what you do. I owe a lot to my team.”

Calasso is a working owner, too, meaning she works behind a chair four days a week as a stylist. She could just focus on the day-to-day operations of the salon, but that would detract from the bonds she shares with her regulars.

“I’ve been working with some of my clients for 30 years, and you definitely build strong relationships,” she says. “Some of them started with me when they were pregnant, and now their kids are getting married.

You get really close to people and it’s nice to be able to help them. They work all week and they just want to be pampered and feel good about themselves.”

Of course, the height of the pandemic in March 2020 brought a halt to those interactions when Sublime was forced to close its doors for three months due to governmental restrictions. Like many small business owners, Calasso faced a frightening and uncertain future, but it turned out to be a blessing in a way because she learned just how much her salon means to the community.

“When we called people to tell them we were going to be opening again, they were so happy and it almost felt like Christmas,” she says. “They all were so happy we made it.”

While the salon had its doors closed, a client reached out and suggested Calasso start selling gift cards to lend their support. Calasso was “amazed” how swiftly and significantly the community responded.

“It was incredible how many people called and said they couldn’t wait for us to come back and they were hoping we made it through this,” she recalls. “I’ll never forget it. As scary as it was, it was nice to see that people really did care. They were amazing to us, so I felt very lucky.” ■

