

Sharon Watkins, Austin icon and owner of beloved Chez Zee Restaurant



Back row: Laura Gregory, Taruna Ahuja, Madison Pilkington and Brittney Covey; Front row: Sharon Watkins and Sarah Bown with her puppy Teddy Bear

Chez Zee is one of those restaurants that were it not so accommodating and consistently gratifying, it might fit into the “Keep Austin Weird” vibe that we give so much lip service to these days. Trouble is, there’s nothing necessarily weird about Chez Zee: Very quirky perhaps, especially with the new addition of their oversized art chair made by local artist Dale Whistler; or it could be called absolutely charming, fiercely independent and wildly delicious with sinful award winning desserts made in house every day. So maybe it fits into the “Keep Austin from becoming an endless array of chain restaurants” category, but either way the one and only location on RR 2222 and Balcones Drive has, after almost 30 years, achieved iconic status in Austin as has owner Sharon Watkins.

Sharon started out in 1989 with little experience in running a restaurant and bought the then failed Chez Fred chain. She used all of her marketing experience, her former advertising business, her theatrical training

(she has a degree in theatre arts from the University of Texas) and her cooking experience, which she learned from her parents in Houston where she grew up. Both cooked great southern favorites, many of which appear on the menu such as the sweet potato pudding, chicken fried steak and shrimp and grits and chicken and waffles at brunch. But the menu runs the gamut from Texas simple to sinfully sweet to boisterous New Orleans, such as the New Orleans crunchy pecan chicken, the can’t be missed fried dill pickles and the ever favorite crême brulee French toast with warm Meyer’s Rum sauce; add some house-made vanilla bean ice cream if you’re feeling a little decadent.

Sharon has assembled a team of culinary and service experts, with experience that is hard to match in any other restaurant. The team includes Laura Gregory, who runs the private dining space with a style and panache unmatched anywhere in Austin, as well as guest favorites, Madison Pilk-

ington and Brittney Covey who have worked in management over 10 years, both starting out as servers, Taruna Ahuja, the corporate communications director, originally from India, who brings a worldly style and grace to her job, handling the many charitable donations Chez Zee gives and brings the restaurant a welcoming elegance. Sharon’s daughter, Sarah, who often works on the pet friendly patio with her beloved poodle Teddy Bear, rounds out the team doing marketing and social media. Sharon is so proud of all of the women working at Chez Zee in this still predominately male-dominated field. She has been nominated for the “I am Austin” award at the Austin Woman Magazine’s annual awards show this Thursday. She is excited about the possibility but whether she wins or not she will always be known as a strong, fierce, pioneering woman who helped create this vast restaurant landscape we now live in. For a true Austin original, this restaurant is a must visit.

Ann Walters, true artist and president of St. Theresa’s



Ann Walters was born an artist.

Her BFA from St. Mary’s College in Notre Dame led her to the fast-paced world of advertising. Her husband thrives in a similar ilk – the GSD&M executive is nationally known as a film + food guru of the marketing world – but Ann quickly found that the competitive nature of ‘80s ad agencies wasn’t her bailiwick.

“A family tragedy propelled me into education,” states the dedicated educator. “I felt called to move into a helping profession where my work impacted children and families.”

This new direction opened doors never before considered. “My nature was to help others instead of beating an opponent. Faith is so important to me, and I’ve learned that fostering spiritual development makes life fuller.” As Ann’s career progressed from teaching high school theology to serving as assistant principal of San Juan Diego High School to her current role as president of St. Theresa’s, her family grew to include a daughter who is now a 5th grade teacher herself.

Although at first glance, this powerhouse administrator seems to be totally focused on promoting academic and spiritual excellence, Ann Walters never strayed far from her artist roots.

“Art reveals the mystery of spirit through visual, dance, and poetry appreciation,” she states with a pensive gaze. “The methods by which I find the divine spark in life are my painting, making jewelry, and writing.

“The true blessing of being part of the St. Theresa’s Catholic School community is that it feels like family. The care, concern and fellowship here is the strongest of any school I’ve had the privilege to



lead. The highlight of my day is greeting the students entering St. Theresa’s every morning,” she smiles. “Children need to know they are loved, that they are lovable, that they are safe. I view my role in education through a pastoral lens – caring for both the mind and the soul.”

Spoken like a true artist!



“None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of his hands.”

– POPE JOHN PAUL II, LETTER TO ARTISTS



Sullivan Physical Therapy fills a much-needed niche for women’s health



Twelve years ago, Dr. Kimberlee Sullivan PT, DPT, WCS, BCB-PMD left her position as a physical therapist at an orthopedic clinic treating backs, knees, and shoulders to open a clinic to match a need she knew existed, but was not being served. Dr. Sullivan opened Sullivan Physical Therapy, a pelvic floor specialty clinic treating individuals for bladder, bowel, sexual dysfunction, and pelvic pain. The first week, she treated seven patients. Since 2005, the clinic has grown as large as nine doctors of physical therapy treating nearly 300 patients per week, all with pelvic-specific diagnoses.

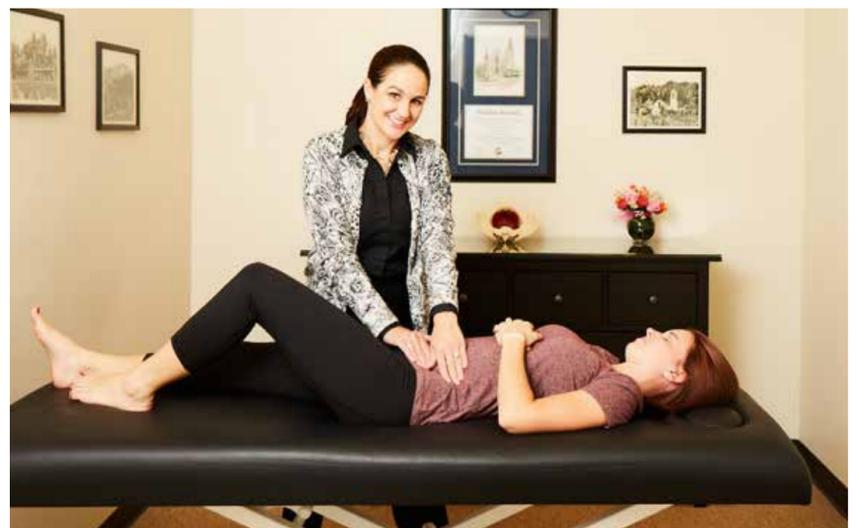
The all-female clinical and office staff cater to patients from Austin and beyond for diagnoses such as urinary incontinence, bladder frequency and urgency, pain in the abdomen, pelvis, or genitals, including pain from surgeries or episiotomies, pain with sexual activity, pelvic organ prolapse, constipation, and sacroiliac joint dysfunction, to name a few. Due to the unique nature of the clinic, some patients travel for hours to seek assessment and treatment for these troubling conditions. The physical therapists of Sullivan Physical Therapy pride themselves in providing a safe, welcoming and understanding environment in which patients can discuss symptoms and associated frustrations, as many of these conditions are embarrassing, are dismissed as “something that just happens”

when expressed to others, or deemed untreatable by medical professionals. Physical therapy is often able to look at such complaints from a musculoskeletal perspective and make sense of seemingly complicated and unrelated problems, allowing patients to potentially decrease medication reliance, avoid surgery, and get on with their lives unburdened by their symptoms.

It may seem that Dr. Sullivan took a leap of faith in opening a clinic providing such niche services. The area of pelvic health is a small discipline within physical therapy, but has been gaining greater awareness in recent years. Articles have appeared in Cosmopolitan, Glamour, and Elle among other major magazines and practitioners have been featured on Dr. Oz and Oprah to discuss the services provided by a pelvic

floor physical therapist. Although sometimes portrayed as a cutting edge discipline, similar physiotherapy has been standard of care postpartum in countries such as France for decades. By addressing strength, tension, or scarring issues soon after delivery, a woman is able to address and even prevent problems that are often dismissed as “normal” after having a baby, such as urinary leakage, prolapse, and painful sexual activity. Sullivan Physical Therapy has a vision of elevating postpartum health care in Austin to similar levels. The clinic has recently partnered with Austin Area Birthing Center, seeking to provide physical therapy services to clients directly at the birthing center location when patients report for prenatal or postpartum visits. Even without concrete complaints, patients can undergo a post partum physical therapy check up to ensure that they are healing correctly and to obtain advice on safely returning to activities after baby.

So what does seeking care with a pelvic floor physical therapist look like? Individuals can call Sullivan Physical Therapy and speak to a patient care coordinator to schedule an appointment and discuss insurance coverage; self pay options are also available. Upon meeting the treating physical therapist, the majority of the first visit is spent discussing the patient’s concerns and medical history and talking over bowel, bladder, and sexual symptoms,



often times bringing to light issues that the patient would not have thought to voice on their own. One benefit to seeing a pelvic floor physical therapist is that appointments range 45-60 minutes, allowing the therapist enough time to note congruencies in symptoms that may make finding the root of the problem easier than multiple visits to different practitioners looking, for example, only at bladder symptoms and another asking questions only about the digestive system. Physical exams may be brief on the first day to allow patients to become comfortable in the clinic and start the therapist in developing a broad view of the problem, with more in depth tests and measures performed at follow up appointments. A priority of the staff is educating patients on steps they can take to start taking back control of their bodies and work toward healing from day one. Future visits may include manual therapy, stretches or strengthening exercises along with further education on self care and resources. Patients will have activities they work

on at home in between visits to optimize healing. The physical therapists frequently collaborate on cases along with doctors, midwives, chiropractors, mental health and sex therapy to try to build a care team for patients to heal optimally. Referrals from a medical provider are needed to receive treatment, due to state regulations.

In addition to their passion for treating patients, the physical therapists frequent local events and speaking engagements to increase community and medical awareness of pelvic floor services. They have also presented to professionals such as yoga teachers and exercise instructors on considerations or modifications that can be made for those healing postpartum or managing pelvic floor conditions.

As Sullivan Physical Therapy has grown, it has garnered notoriety in its business and clinical practices. Recently, Austin Woman’s Magazine named Sullivan Physical therapy as Woman-Owned Business

of the Year in 2017. In 2016, Sullivan Physical Therapy was recognized by the chamber of commerce as the Small Business of the Year, and in 2014 the clinic was awarded the Better Business Bureau’s Torch Award for business leadership and organizational ethics. Kimberlee Sullivan herself has been awarded the Texas Physical Therapy Association’s Warren C. Smyth Outstanding Service Award in 2016 and Texas Women in Business Entrepreneur of the Year in 2015.

Kimberlee Sullivan will tell you that the clinic has grown to something wildly beyond anything that she envisioned it could be when she opened over a decade ago. However, despite growth, Sullivan Physical Therapy continues to carry the same central mission into every patient interaction—delivering high quality services and thoughtful empathetic care to those suffering with conditions that can make such a difference in a person’s quality of life.

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