



Ashka Salon in Canton is a dream come true for Steve and Lisa Curry. The new salon, which opened in November, is in the Canton Center Crossing Plaza.

## Ashka is dream come true for couple

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STAFF WRITER

High school sweethearts Lisa and Steve Curry made their dream come true with the November opening of their Ashka Salon in Canton.

"We look to find the creative element in what we do," said Steve, a graphic artist and musician turned hairstylist.

The salon at 6529 Canton Center in the Canton Center Crossing Plaza is not a pipe dream or overnight decision.

Three years of research gave birth to Ashka, which in the ancient Middle Eastern language of Sanskrit means hope.

"We looked at salons that we felt were a model for operations and structure," Steve said.

"We chose models

that are successful."

Their salon is a corporation with a structure that allows for titles, growth and promotions, as well as training and education. "We are not just hairdressers who

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want a pretty room to work in," Lisa said.

At Ashka, employees go to Boot Camp, in which they learn a certain set of skills, such as technical and, most importantly, communications — verbal and non-verbal. "We educate in body language," Lisa said. "We have to be interpreters and mind readers."

When a customer walks into Ashka, the Currys want her to relax and enjoy. "It is their moment of luxury," Lisa said. "Women don't have the time to pamper themselves."

Enter the Ashka staff. Each client receives a complimentary head and shoulder massage, hand massage, sea salt foot soak or makeup finishing touch with all salon services.

"These are things that pamper without taking a lot of time," Lisa said. "We have to say, 'It's OK, pamper yourself.'" Having your hair done is not the only way to pamper yourself, she added.

Ashka is an Aveda salon, which means they use and sell Aveda products, chosen by the Currys "because they advocate

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ecological responsibility," Steve said.

The Currys want to make it clear this not an ordinary salon where you drop in, get your hair cut, colored and styled. The stylists will work with clients to determine what is best for their hair and lifestyle. It's more than having your hair done in a way that looks good — it's something you can't do on your own at home.

"We could be unique. We show them how to do their own hair. We'll hand them the hair dryer and brush," Lisa said, adding the salon will offer blow drying clinics.

The Currys already know that 80 percent of women want a medium-to-long layered cut. "They want to tie it back when they need to," Lisa said. "People are mostly looking for timely hairstyles."

Color is also big. "You can decorate your cut with color. For highlights, people like to go lighter. People like to have a splash of blonde. It's something to play with," Lisa said.

While offering salon and spa services, the Currys wanted Ashka to be an inviting and exciting place. When they chose their 3,600-square-foot salon, they wanted it to be functional with room to grow

and pretty with angles and arches.

The salon boasts curbside appeal with interesting colors, high ceilings and the warm, relaxing wood. All the light-colored wood furniture is on coasters, allowing for mobility and flexibility. The Currys designed their own furniture and worked with Engineered Aluminum Fabricators to make it a reality.

"We designed and they make it tangible. We are the prototype," Steve said. "We knew pretty much what we wanted."

Indeed they did. Lisa knew in high school she wanted to be a stylist. "I think it goes back to my grandmother," she said. "She was an Avon lady."

While Lisa was in the salon business, Steve went into graphic arts and is also a musician. "At that time, in graphic arts you were limited. I was looking for a creative outlook. The next thing I knew, I was enrolled in cosmetology school."

Steve relied on his graphic arts expertise to design the studio, furniture and the Web site. He also did the carpentry inside the salon.

The Currys worked together in a salon, where they learned a lot. But they wanted more. "I



Steve and Lisa Curry want to make sure the Ashka Salon offers time for pampering. Clients receive complimentary check, shoulder and hand massages.

wouldn't do a business unless Steve was involved," Lisa said.

But Steve was interested in pursuing his music with Fountainhead, his rock and alternative band. He worked for four years with record companies and played locally.

"The record companies are focusing on young, more pop-oriented bands," Steve said. "Things are so crazy right now. Record companies are closing up."

That made the timing all the better for the Currys to make their dream come true.

"We get to make people feel good all day," Lisa said. "We, to change people's lives every day."

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