

TOGETHER TONGANOXIE THRIVES

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Promoting all-around health in community

By Shawn F. Linenberger
slingenberger@
tonganoxiemirror.com

Caitlin Roberts was preparing for an exciting 2020.

Her business, First Response Wellness, was expanding, as it moved from its previous location near the U.S. Highway 24-40 curve in Tonganoxie to a larger space on the east side of town near the highway in January.

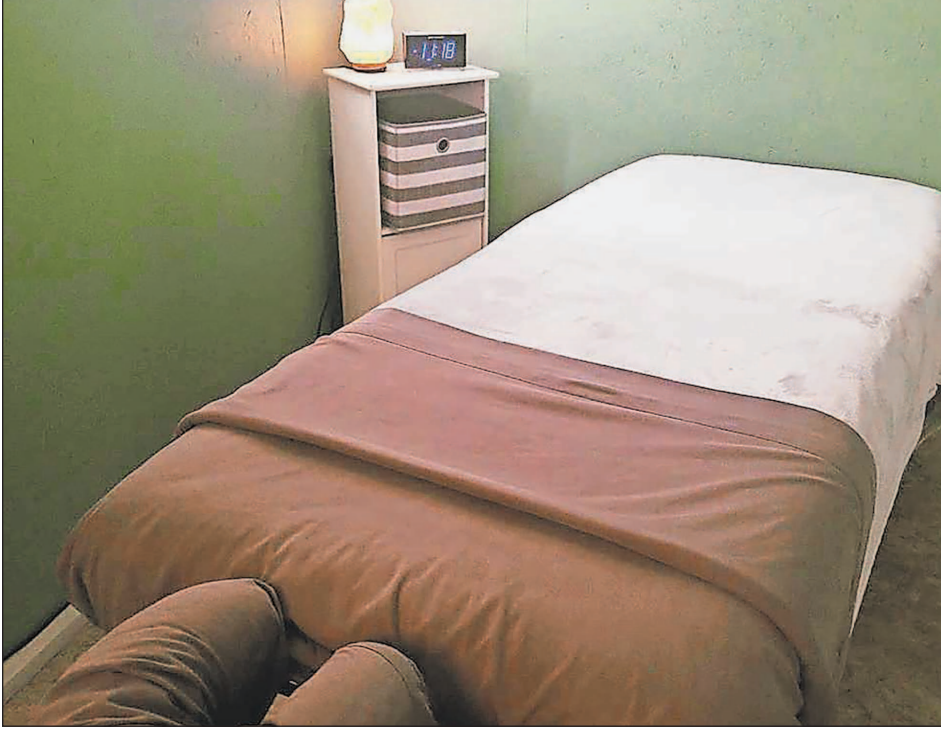
The COVID-19 pandemic had other plans, but now Roberts and her staff are working to accommodate current clients while offering more community programs and welcoming new potential clients and guests.

The business, which offers massage therapy and other wellness resources, officially opened back up Monday.

"Doing the math, we've been closed more weeks than open," Roberts said.

That soon will change at the new location, 1202 Front St.

Roberts expects to be booked up the first three weeks of June with clients trying to get back into a routine with massage sessions, but she plans to continue to provide more programs and workshops as more time passes.



Contributed photo

HERE'S A LOOK at one of the rooms at the new First Response Wellness location, 1202 Front St., in Tonganoxie. Massage therapy resumed Monday, with more offerings planned moving forward.

There is a retail space with wellness products and then two individual treatment rooms.

There will be four treatment rooms total once those remodels are complete.

There also is a manual massage chair for customers who would prefer no-contact therapy, whether preferring it due

to the pandemic or personal preference.

"This is a way to provide some therapeutic relief without forcing them outside their comfort zone," Roberts said.

She's also planning educational classes for the community, including sessions for children.

"Let's learn about some movement and how

movement really is good for your joints and all of that," Roberts said, explaining what some of the classes might cover.

On the nutritional side, there are products and education on the benefits of supplements.

And, she's looking to incorporate some make-and-take classes into the mix.

"People love the different roll-ons and bath balms and perfumes and colognes," Roberts explained.

Customers might also get to create bath soaps or a detoxing bath soak.

Birthday parties with a wellness focus, whether for youths or adults, is something else she looks to offer.

If social distancing restrictions allow, she is eyeing July for when to start some of those options.

First Response has four staff members, but could add more massage therapists. Dawn Moore also is a message therapist alongside Roberts, while TanishaLee Moore is manager and Tonganoxie High alumnus Emily Williams is reception specialist.

First Response Wellness is open Monday through Saturday. Hours might vary as everyone gets settled back into operations.

With not providing massage therapy the last couple months, Roberts and Moore will do fewer sessions so their bodies, too, can ease back into a regular schedule.

Roberts grew up in Wichita where her father's family settled. She

graduated from Wichita's Kapaun Mt. Carmel and then went to Washburn University in Topeka. Her mother graduated from Bonner Springs, so she was familiar with the area. She's actually lived in the Tonganoxie area since 2012.

"I really loved the community and loved the area," Roberts said.

Some might remember her as an intern and then a reserve officer with Tonganoxie police for about five years.

For Roberts, her business is called First Response for two reasons. It's a nod to her first responder family and a focus on their wellness, but it's also first response as it relates to people personally: how they can respond to life's stress and challenges, highs and lows through various treatments and natural products that also boost the immune system.

"And bring something to them that they may not be able to get elsewhere and stay involved in that and stay connected with them," she said.

For more, call 913-702-7279 or visit firmwellness.com or First Response's Facebook page by searching for First Response Massage.

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