

# INNKEEPER EXTRAORDINAIRE: LAURA SAVAGE STEPS UP TO THE PLATE



photo: Keith & Sadie Dogle

By Kathleen Kiefer

Laura Garnett Savage is supermom. She will shy away from that description, but her kids, husband and parents would agree with it. She's a mother of four, a newly licensed massage therapist and one of the youngest business people in Soap Lake. She works 7 days a week and since people arrive at all hours, she's available 24-hours a day. Quite a different arrangement from where she started as a maid/front desk person fourteen years ago, before she got married and had a family.

As the Innkeeper of the oldest hotel in the city she knows the legacy of the one whose shoes she fills. The beautiful cobble rock structure known as the Inn

at Soap Lake was once Thorson's Hotel and Soap Lake Products Company, the oldest building in Soap Lake and the location of the last business in town to manufacture and sell a full range of Soap Lake Products. Today it's a popular destination, visited by guests who return year-after-year, often asking for the same room. Laura, like her parents has a guiding philosophy regarding guests at the Inn and that is that they are family. The unmistakable comfort shows in the presence of visitors of all shapes and sizes sprawled on lawn chairs on the beach, sitting in shady corners reading a book, or spread out on a towel under a tree taking a snooze. It's a laid back place, just like the town.

After purchasing the

property in 2001, Laura's parents, Dick and Sandra Garnett redesigned the décor inside the hotel, 5 cottages, and 4 whirlpool suites, giving each room a distinctive homey feel. The delightful landscaping that fills the space between the back of the Inn and the beach is the work of Laura's father whose signature playful style is evident in the statues, water features, focal points, murals and other fine touches that define the peaceful qualities of an afternoon on the property. In March 2014 Dick and Sandra turned the Innkeeper reins over to Laura so they could take some time out.

In July 2015 Laura completed studies and passed the licensing exam to become a massage therapist. A perfect fit for the Inn at Soap Lake where a massage therapist or chiropractor had been in residence throughout most of its early history. It was a also a good fit for Laura who had fallen off a horse a few years ago and was advised to stay on pain meds. She couldn't do it. Her father got her an appointment with a massage practitioner. Laura experienced relief after one session and knew that being a massage practitioner was

what she wanted to do. It fell in line with her desire to help others. The same month she received her license she opened

Desert Rose Massage and Wellness at the Inn. She offers Soap Lake mud facial massage, hot stone, cupping, paraffin hand dip and foot massage, as well as whole body massage.

Several of the first restaurateurs and lodging owners in Soap Lake were Greek. The town attracts people from diverse ethnic backgrounds who come from countries where salt and mineral spa locations are common places to visit during vacations. The Inn at Soap Lake is popular lodging among people from Slavic countries. Colorful umbrellas, group singing, and the aroma of their cuisine cooking on the outdoor barbeque at the back of the Inn is makes for a distinctive ethnic experience.

When not delegating room cleaning duties, giving a massage, fixing dinner for her family or tending to the needs of one of her children, Laura is finding time to relax in a place known for its relaxing qualities. What she hasn't learned from raising four children, she's learned from her guests, mainly that everyone has good days and bad and when you work in the service industry, you have to roll with whatever comes your way. It's a lot easier when the place you live is laid back and on the shores of a mineral lake like no other.

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