



Chase

Kathy

Holly



Passion For Style, Commitment to **The Highest Standards**

By Meghann Dibrell

As the preeminent salon in San Antonio, K. Charles & Co. has not only raised standards in the world of beauty, but in environmental leadership and responsibility. As an Aveda Lifestyle Salon, K. Charles & Co. focuses on building a brand with a vision to do business consciously and sustainably. Their innovation and emphasis on education has enabled them to grow successfully, and there are now three K. Charles & Co. locations, serving the Stone Oak, Alamo Heights, and Bulverde areas.

Kathy Thalman, founder and CEO of K. Charles & Co., grew up in the cosmetology business watching her mother build a progressive salon in a suburban area of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Thalman moved to San Antonio in 1980 and, after working as a stylist in an Alamo Heights salon for three years, opened the first K. Charles & Co. in 1984. She was determined to build a business with two major goals in mind: to provide a rewarding platform for talented stylists to shine, and be a leading example of community involvement, locally in San Antonio and around the world.

Destined to follow in her mother's footsteps, Thalman's daughter, Holly Zapata, trained at the original Aveda Institute in Minneapolis before returning to San Antonio to work in her mother's salon in 1990. With a background in construction management, Thalman's son, Chase, also joined the business in 2004 as its systems manager. "I think having a family business adds a lot of warmth, humility, and humanity. Each one of us brings different value to the team and we each have our strong points," says Thalman.

Zapata took the lead in redesigning the salon's educational training programs, which in turn affected the entire salon's atmosphere. "Under her education leadership, we decided that to do business correctly, we had to have a vision and a culture, and we had to have a set of standards by which we were going to operate," says Thalman. "We knew early on that in order to be successful, we needed a comprehensive training program in the salon; this led us to our next venture – our own Cosmetology Institute."

The Aveda Institute San Antonio opened at the historic Pearl Brewery complex in 2005. Offering education to those entering the cosmetology field, Aveda Institute San Antonio has quickly become one of the best institutes in the U.S. and abroad with more than 1,000 graduates since its opening. With 99 percent of the stylists at K. Charles & Co. being hired from Aveda Institute San Antonio, the salon can offer clients the highest level of professionalism and experience.

"With our educational training, it makes for a more consistent application of the services we provide and the type of salon we want to be," says Zapata, now Director of Education for K. Charles & Co. as well as Aveda Institute San Antonio. "Since our clients know there is consistency in our training, we can service them without ever having to turn someone away because one of our stylists is not available."

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— Kathy Thalman, Founder & CEO

stylists at any time," says master stylist and Stone Oak salon manager Chris Bentsen. "Since all of our stylists have been through the same training, we are all able to offer consistent service." Clients can also often benefit from more than one person's expertise at once, as stylists often consult with each other and assist one another on the same client.

K. Charles & Co. offers three levels of stylists from which customers may choose: junior, senior, and master. Bentsen says that stylists at all three levels are guaranteed to provide the same quality salon experience because of the extensive training and apprenticeship programs each stylist completes. Working as a stylist at K. Charles & Co. requires a commitment to ongoing education and research to ensure clients are receiving the best service with the most current looks at any given time.

"This industry is constantly evolving. What you learned yesterday is going to become old hat tomorrow and if you're not constantly staying on top of what is cutting edge in this industry, not only in the United States but around the world, you're going to be left behind," says Thalman. "We put a lot of emphasis, time, and a lot of our budget toward education for our staff."

With a foundation in education and an eye for trends, K. Charles & Co.'s professionals are able to work with each client to find their best personal look with a variety of services from cuts and hair color to facials, manicures, and pedicures.

"Our stylists have great consultations with customers," Zapata says. "They come to us to hear options from a professional. We work as a team to find new ideas and trends and it becomes fun because we can offer those variations."

Thalman is extremely proud of her entire team at K. Charles & Co. and the Aveda Institute because of their strong commitment to community involvement and service. Determined to make a difference in the world, K. Charles & Co. has become involved in several community initiatives including raising donations for the San Antonio Food Bank, hosting Walk for Water, and, recently, providing school supplies for a school in Afghanistan.

The Aveda Institute also works with the Fisher House, a home-away-from-home for the families of wounded warriors receiving treatment in San Antonio, to provide discounted salon services to military heroes and their

caretakers once a month. "We really support our military," says Zapata. "This program has been great for our students. They see the injured warriors that come over here, and it really puts a good perspective on what we can do for the community."

Their service to the community extends to their commitment to conserving natural resources and being conscious of their human footprint left on Earth. The salon exclusively uses botanically-based Aveda products that are never tested on animals. They have worked with City Public Service to install low-flow hoses in all of their shampoo sinks and the Aveda Institute San Antonio uses 100% Windtricity. Everything possible is recycled, including coloring foils. Thalman and Zapata's steadfast commitment to the environment has permeated the entire company from top to bottom.

"If you set certain standards and that's what you live by, then the people who want to work with you are people who have the same philosophy," says Thalman. "I know that's what sets K. Charles & Co. and the Aveda Institute San Antonio apart from any other salon. We draw people who have a passion for the industry, a love for their community, and a need to exist in a way that benefits our world. We have a lot of warm-hearted, self-giving people who are extraordinary at what they do."



K. Charles provided school supplies for this school in Afghanistan.

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