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At Newbury Street spa/salons: It's a man's world

By CHRISTINE McDOONVILLE

They landed on Newbury Street, tentative and uncertain. One was about to get his first-ever pedicure, the other a facial.

But just a few hours later, Gerry Ramsey of Roslindale and Shaun Grady of West Roxbury practically floated out of the Barbershop Lounge.

"I'm sold," said Grady, a 25-year-old construction worker who had just had his feet soaked and scrubbed.

"Unbelievable," added Ramsey, 29, the owner of a window-washing company.

Men's grooming has hit Boston like a wave. In the past year, several men's grooming centers have opened their doors, as long-established spas and salons have begun setting aside certain nights and treatments for men only.

Traditional barbershops have begun expanding their services, and shaving cream companies have begun producing fancier, more expensive lotions.

"Guys are really into this," said Kelly Tarlow, manager of High Street Men's Grooming Center on Newbury Street in Boston.

Three Boston-based investors opened the shop in November. Now, after a busy six months, they are thinking about opening other branches, in Boston's Financial District and in the suburbs.

And over at the Barbershop Lounge, the custom-made black leather barber chairs have been filling up for weeks.

"Business is good," said Bruce Miller of Newton, one of the lounge's owners. He and partners Frank Hoff of Ipswich



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATTHEW WEST
PAMPERED: At the Barbershop Lounge, Jackie Truitt gives a pedicure to Shaun Grady, a construction worker from West Roxbury.



and Ron Luccio of Milton decided to open the shop — which offers haircuts, shoe shines, back waxing and sports massages — after visiting men's salons in other cities.



LOOKIN' GOOD: Gerry Ramsey of Roslindale, a window washer and demolition man, looks in the mirror. Ramsey, above, gets a facial from Stephanie Acciaccia at the Barbershop Lounge on Newbury Street. He shoots pool there, too, with Sean Grady.



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Men's spas: pedicures, pool tables

On a research trip in Manhattan, Miller had his first-ever pedicure. Impressed with how his feet felt afterward, he called his wife.

"I said, 'Honey, you won't believe this,'" he recalled, "And she said, 'I know. Women have been doing it for years.'"

The Barbershop Lounge has been designed with men in mind. The decor is black leather and red suede and the magazine racks are filled with Gentlemen's Quarterly and Golf Digest.

Pedicures are done in a private room, and there's a pool table in the back for patrons.

All this style and service doesn't come cheap. A haircut and scalp massage is \$45, and a hot towel shave costs \$30.

But for Grady, the men's space makes it worth the price.

Grady says he's stopped in to his neighborhood nail salon for a manicure in the past.

"But I always feel a little weird walking in," he said. "I'm a lot more comfortable here."

Meanwhile, up on the second floor, a very relaxed Ramsey was having his face deep cleaned.

"Man, I can't believe this," he said, as steam drenched his face.

Downstairs, his fiancée waited by the pool table.

Marianne Campagna, a hairstylist from Norwood, came to see what the lounge was all about.

She left impressed.

"It's a great idea," she said. "They don't always admit it, but guys love to get pampered."