

Interview with Whitney Smith, Massage Board Member

Whitney Smith began serving her first term on the Board of Massage in late 2023. Discover more about Whitney as a person, board member, and massage therapist.



Q: How long have you been doing massage, Whitney?

A: Fifteen years. I attended Northwest Massage Connection in Tacoma. I live in Eatonville, but I work in Enumclaw at Megan's Massage and Esthetics.

Q: What caused you to seek board service?

A: I wanted to help uphold the standards of massage therapy in our state—to make our career better for us and other therapists. I want people to remember we are healthcare *professionals*, and deserve to be treated with respect. I *am* accountable, and want to be *held* accountable in the health care world.

Q: Did you have a job/career before becoming an LMT? And why massage therapy, do you think?

A: Yes, I was a farm hand and worked on a farm growing up. But I also had a natural touch for massage.

My high school senior project was called, “Why Insurance Companies Don’t Cover Alternative Medicines” [such as massage]. My mother had a friend who was a massage therapist, and my mother tried to use as much herbal medicine as she could in our family. So it was an interesting research question for me.

It ended up being a harder project than I thought, because I had to call insurance companies for information, *then* pretend to be someone looking for care, and *then* try to get answers. What I found, at least back in 2008, was that if a treatment wasn’t deemed “medically necessary,” and the company didn’t think it was necessary, then they weren’t going to pay for it. More “proof” was needed. And if I didn’t have a paid plan with them, they often wouldn’t give me answers at all.

One thing I love about our state, is that we now *do* cover stuff like that [massage] now.

Q: What is your favorite type of massage to give? To receive?

A: Definitely deep tissue treatment massage. For both.

Q: Do you have a specialty?

A: My neck work, especially for migraines. My husband has severe chronic migraines, so I've gotten a knack. I would love to learn more about cranial sacral work as well.

Q: Do you have an area you would like to devote study and training to?

A: Animal massage. I grew up on a small farm, and would go to my aunt's to ride horses. I would love to get the certification for large animals! Then I could charge my clients for massaging them AND their animals (laughs). I didn't know how great the need was, until I talked to a few clients who own large animals, especially horses.

Q: What are some things in your life that give you joy and that you are passionate about?

A: I love being outside, hiking, being in nature, and spending time with my extended family. My husband and I love hiking at Mount Rainier. I'm very lucky to be able to see the mountain from my home.

Q: What would a friend say is something that describes your personality?

A: Uplifting. Respectful. Bubbly!

Q: Anything quirky or different about you that stands out?

A: Hmm. My family has been in my town (Emunclaw) for about 100 years. My great-grandfather died in a Landburg Black Diamond coal mine collapse, and my other great-grandpa started the local towing agency, Fred's Towing. So, I'm working in the same community where I grew up, and where my family has been for several generations.

Q: What would you like to accomplish in your time on the board?

A: I hope to continue to help the massage industry to advance and to continue to help keep the public safe.