

Stace Nelson-Hicks, L.Ac.

By Maria de la Torre

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Stace Nelson-Hicks likes to play a role in what is considered to be two of most women's biggest moments — marriage and motherhood.

Nelson-Hicks, a licensed acupuncturist and certified herbalist in Ventura, offers groups of five or more women the Mei Shen Celebration, a relaxation service for bridal and baby showers.

"I'm not the kind of person for party games ... If you're looking for something different, then the Mei Shen is really nice," Nelson-Hicks said. "Mei Shen is a different type of experience, much more intimate, much more focused on the guests and, obviously, the guest of honor for creating an environment to welcome this new life or new union for the bride-to-be. So it focuses the energy a little more and makes the day about the next step, beginning a new journey, basically."

Mei Shen, which means "beautiful spirit," in Chinese involves a group of five or more and combines a combination of spa techniques. The service is available only by appointment in homes or other locations in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara areas.

Each Mei Shen ceremony is different. Typically, the experience starts with an aromatherapy-anointing of five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. After the anointing, there is an herbal elixir tea ceremony, which, Nelson-Hicks said, is to open the heart meridian of participants. An acupressure massage follows the tea ceremony, then comes the Mei Shen custom acupuncture facelifts/facials.

The final part element is the flame ceremony. Here, the participants write down their wishes for the mom-to-be or bride-to-be on Ghost Money.

"It's a Chinese tradition ... burning Ghost Money as an of-



Matt McClain / Star staff

The image of Stace Nelson-Hicks, a licensed acupuncturist and herbalist, is reflected in a mirror at her Ventura office.

fering/blessing. (There is) no religious connotation whatsoever (with this service)," said Nelson-Hicks.

After the participants are finished writing the blessings, the Ghost Money is burned in a pot with herbs. The final contents then are wrapped and given to the guest of honor to be taken into the delivery room or down the aisle.

"You have your closest friends and loved ones bless you during your journey," she said.

The Mei Shen Celebration doesn't have to be for baby and bridal showers. It also can be for a general day of relaxation or to mark, for example, someone's 50th birthday.

And, she said, the Mei Shen Celebration doesn't have to be exclusively for women.

"This is for people who enjoy a blend of health, spirit and relaxation," Nelson-Hicks said.

The cost of the Mei Shen Celebration varies since not every-

one in the celebration will want something, such as, for example, an acupuncture facial.

"Because it's all individualized, it's going to really depend on what that person wants. There's a price per person charged, and it really depends on what they want, so it's by appointment," she said.

Nelson-Hicks also would like people to be more aware of Oriental medicine. "I like to take the mysticism out of the medicine. I consider myself a medical professional, not somebody who swings crystals around the room and tells you you're healed," Nelson-Hicks said.

The acupuncturist gets new patients from referrals from patients who were happy with her care.

"I also get referrals from several MDs because a lot of my patients get better and tell their doctors about it..."

Nelson-Hicks got into Oriental medicine after being a pa-

tient. "It basically changed my life. It got me into a place of wellness. I wasn't in ill health, but I was feeling sick all the time. I basically had a lifestyle disease — I was too stressed out, I was overworked, over-extended. ... Oriental medicine, as a patient, centered me and got me back on track and made me feel a 100 percent different."

Before becoming an acupuncturist, Nelson-Hicks was a publicist and television producer. Today, she is very happy being an acupuncturist and has plans to expand.

"I am developing a product line — I've got children's and moms' products," she said. "We'll see how the Mei Shen Ceremony goes ... I definitely have ideas for creating a bigger Mei Shen Ceremony."

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