

## Salon Concepts offers space to independent stylists, manicurists

By Jeff McKinney • [jmckinney@enquirer.com](mailto:jmckinney@enquirer.com) •  
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**OAKLEY** - Brent Van Lieu and his business partners have found a niche that technology and the Internet have not been able to snip into.

They provide fully equipped suites for hairstylists, manicurists and massage therapists to offer their services as independent operators.

"A computer can't cut your hair, and won't be able to," says Van Lieu, an owner of Salon Concepts LLC based here.

The concept has grown since developer Van Lieu, investment manager Brian Wade and physician and entrepreneur Dr. James Ellis started the business about three years ago.

Van Lieu says the trio will invest \$1.4 million to open three new locations in Mason, Anderson and Florence by late summer. Those sites will join locations in Montgomery, Oakley and West Chester.

He says the three existing locations have 70 independent salon owners and only nine suites open. The new locations will add 75 suites, doubling capacity to meet demand, Van Lieu says.

All together, the partners are shooting for eight locations in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky by year's end.

They also plan to expand into two other Midwestern cities, but have not yet narrowed the sites, Van Lieu says.

For weekly rents of \$250 to \$500, operators can lease single or double suites that range from 100 to 220 square feet. They include charcoal gray cabinets with granite black countertops, hardwood flooring, black swivel leather chairs and a shampoo bowl.

"It's a reflection of the level of quality that our salon owners and clients deserve," Van Lieu, 39, says.

Mia Williams, manager of Salon Concepts, says hair care remains a top priority for women regardless of economic conditions. A growing number of men also are requesting salon services, including facials, massages and pedicures, she says.

For operators, Salon Concepts offers a different business model than traditional salons, Van Lieu says.

Operators run their own businesses, allowing them to set their schedules, carry products they select and determine pricing. They do everything from start to finish, including the hair wash. Van Lieu says operators share a laundry area and a break room, but other services, such as a hair washing station, are provided in the individual suites.

All operators have a key to access their suites at any time of day or night, and customers set

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appointments directly with them. They also "keep their retail markup instead of paying it to the house," Van Lieu says.

Angela Berger, owner of Studio 16 Salon, moved to the Oakley site after working for a Hyde Park salon for 15 years. In addition to being her own boss, Berger says, her private suite allows her to offer clients a personal touch, yet not worry about paying for utilities or cleaning services.

"It's the best way to have your own business with the least amount of overhead," Berger says.

Henrietta Carr, owner of Nails by Henrietta, says the Salon Concepts Oakley location gives her greater exposure to offer services to a wider clientele.

She opened her business in February after working for nine years at a salon in College Hill.

"Many people don't know that there are African-American professional nail technicians," she says. "This location allows me to show there are some."

#### **Salon Concepts LLC**

**Owners:** Brent Van Lieu, Brian Wade and Dr. James Ellis

**Headquarters:** Oakley

**Established:** 2007

**Locations:** 3235 Madison Road, Oakley; 9797 Montgomery Road, Montgomery; and 9274 Centre Pointe Drive, West Chester.

**Employees:** Three

**More information:** 513-533-3700 or [www.salon-concepts.com](http://www.salon-concepts.com)

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