

Steve Hightower Hair Artists' Studio

A Cutting-Edge Salon With a Casual Feel

BY AMELIA SANDERS

When you come to Steve Hightower Hair Artists' Studio, it's a given that you'll have access to a wide variety of spa and salon services that will be performed by a knowledgeable staff in a space that screams "hip." But what you might not expect are the innovative ways some services are offered—ever heard of a *ménage à spa*?—and that they will be performed by staffers who aren't afraid to give you a hug and call you "honey" in an environment where impromptu sing-alongs can occur at the salon's grand piano.

"I've never wanted my salon to look or feel like a [typical] hair salon," says owner Steve Hightower. "We have a relaxed atmosphere where folks don't have to dress up. I want it to be warm and comfortable." This is the contrast that clients have come to love about Hightower's salons over the 27 years he has been in business—the balance of cutting edge with casual and friendly.

The salon's accolades include being one of 200 in the country selected by L'Oréal to offer INOA, an ammonia-free, natural, permanent color that is perfect for people with sensitive skin, Hightower says. It is also the only salon in Atlanta to provide Laser Hair Regrowth Therapy for clients with thinning hair, an area that Hightower specializes in.

While having their hair tended to, clients also have access to a full-service day spa that offers a variety of services including manis and pedis, facials, body wraps, spray tanning, mink eyelash extensions and massage. But what really appeals to clients who are strapped for time is the salon's approach to delivering treatments — it's all about multitasking. For example, Hightower's *ménage à spa* ensures that not a moment

is wasted, allowing a client to have a massage and facial while waiting for her hair color to set. Or, if she just wants a facial while she's waiting on her color, the salon offers a 20-minute express treatment that can be completed without ever moving from the color chair.

Some might think that Hightower's innovative approach to running his salons, along with accomplishments ranging from styling the First Ladies' hair at the 2004 G-8 Summit to 12 years as a platform artist educating other stylists, are the result of attending cosmetology school and spending years learning from other hair masters. Actually, that couldn't be further from the truth. Instead of attending cosmetology school, Hightower pursued a degree in art with a focus in sculpting and painting. It's this experience and what he learned as a child working side by side with his mother at their home in Alabama that has most heavily influenced his work.

"My mother taught me how to do hair on the car porch," Hightower says. "She did kitchen hair, and got the color and perms right from the Piggly Wiggly."

From mama's car porch, Hightower went on to do hair for the drama department at his college and then behind the scenes at fashion shows and in his apartment while working as a professional model.

As for working at other salons, it only took Hightower a few years to get the itch to open his own location. These days he divides his time between his salon off of Piedmont Road and a second location in Sea Island, Ga. But, what's so refreshing about Hightower is that no matter how successful

he's become, he has never forgotten his humble roots. This is evident in everything Hightower does—whether he's working with clients or the nonprofit organization that has been near and dear to his heart for seven years, Childkind.

Actually, if it weren't for the success of his salons, Hightower wouldn't have been able to contribute all that he has to the organization, he points out. For example, every Christmas, with help from salon clients and friends, Hightower fulfills the wishes of the medically and developmentally disabled children served by Childkind.

"These children don't know why they're sick or why Santa Claus doesn't come see them," he says. "My clients have loved fulfilling their wants and needs lists."

This year, Hightower is also hoping to host a "sophisticated" spring fashion and hair benefit to raise money for the organization. "Since Childkind doesn't receive the publicity that larger, more well-known organizations do, it's my goal to make the public more aware of it," he says.

To learn more about Steve Hightower Hair Artists' Studio or to make an appointment at the Atlanta salon, visit www.stevhightower.com or call 404-264-9006.

