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EVO SPA
Mill Valley, CA
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Top Employer honors a day spa owner who has several long-term employees, outstanding benefits and helps her staff grow professionally.

COMPETITIVE PAY, BENEFITS AND A 401K ARE common offerings among top employers. But at Evo Spa, the camaraderie amongst staff members and leadership stands out. Employees nominated founder Gail Ann for the positive culture she's worked hard to create. It's only appropriate, given that her greatest passion is inciting it in others. "When I see a spark, I want it to shine as brightly as possible," Ann says.

She opened Evo Spa in 2004, in the same shopping center where she'd long owned a skincare salon. The facility's name might as well stand for "truth," as it radiates there. "Being honest with each other is a great gift. It puts us on a path to becoming the best that we can be," says Ann, who's been in the industry for 30 years.

The spa's employees have learned to thrive on Ann's straightforward approach. "It helps us reach our full potential, which is her goal," spa director Jennifer Grunebach says.

Likewise, Ann expects her staff to speak up. She holds open forums in which she encourages them to tell the



Gail Ann

truth—not what they think she wants to hear. "Someone once asked, 'What if it makes you angry?' I responded, 'It might for a minute, but then, we move on to discussing the issue and finding a solution,'" she says. Airing concerns about subjects that could potentially distance the team has instead made it stronger.

Ann also gets kudos for active listening and taking action. "When we talk, she takes my feelings into account," massage therapist Jennifer Rae says. "I know I'm being heard."

This level of communication is under constant improvement. A coach recently taught the team how to do it better, and the spa's management holds team-building workshops. Vendors also visit to educate the staff about new products and services. Employees attend off-site events, including nutrition and skincare workshops.

What makes Ann most proud is knowing that "these amazing people are here because they want to be part of our evolving community." —Teresa Hale

COURTESY/EVO SPA