

Hair

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salon, Versacchi Studios, in Owings Mills, which became the home base for her hair technology.

Renée's Parisian Hair Enhancement Collection is a patented technology that uses a simulated scalp to apply partial or full human hair enhancements. These hair pieces, often called alternative hair, can be customized by texture, color, length and cut. These decisions are made with a stylist who is trained to implement Renée's hair collection. If the desired hair is not readily available, a design template and head measurements are sent to a manufacturer. A client can expect a wait time of six to eight weeks for the order. Once the alternative hair is delivered and styled, the piece can be clipped on or worn as a cap on the scalp.

Within the past three years, Renée has taken her hair enhancements outside of her Versacchi salon walls. Her network has expanded to 18 partner salons across five states, including Soft Images Studio at Candle Day Spa in Frederick. She's taking baby steps in growing her Maryland-based business, but her hair innovation could mean a nationwide network of salons in the future.

Daniel "Danny" Knight, owner of Soft Images Studio, is a believer.

"She thinks more comprehensively. She's thinking about curriculum," Knight said of Renée teaching other stylists as a part of her Art and Design of Alternative Hair Couture classes.

"I don't look at myself as a hair dresser," said Renée, who is inspired by the renaissance era from her background in painting. A quote from Leonardo Da Vinci ("Where the spirit does not work with the hand, there is no art") is on her www.sherrirenee.com homepage. "I look at myself as a hair architect because it requires a lot of engineering in addition to having vision."

Seeing a Parisian Hair Enhancement up close is an otherworldly experience. The ultra-thin scalp, ranging from a strip of material on the crown of the head to a full cap, appears life-like, almost like you're holding a second skin. Tiny hair follicles protrude out of the scalp, and part lines are designed so the right amount of hair falls on either side. The human hair that falls from the scalp is lightweight and has the bounciness of natural hair. And, somehow, the knots that secure the hair to the base of the simulated scalp cannot be seen.

"She doesn't share this with anybody, but know this: The knots are invisible," said Knight, who first learned about Renée's technology three years ago.

Renée's hair enhancements can be difficult to understand, but what's clear is how her products affect people's lives.

"I do a lot of chemo wigs, and unfortunately that is a growing



Staff file photo by Sam Yu

Daniel "Danny" Knight of Soft Images Salon works on styling Joyce Stup's hair recently.

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— DANNY KNIGHT, of Soft Images Salon

community of people," Knight said. "I get referrals from the cancer treatment center here in Frederick. There are very few people that do what I do in Frederick, and that is custom work [implementing Renée's technology]," Knight said. "Our business is built from custom designed hair. It's not a one size fits all. It's not a one color fits all. It's not a one density or length fits all. It's created specifically for the individual."

As a stylist for over three decades, Knight experienced mo-

ments where he felt limited to what he can offer his clients who wanted hair extensions. "Hairlines are the biggest problem in adhesive-based products. Let's face it. If it's attached to a baby-fine hair that's struggling, if you pull [the extension] off and pull [a client's hair] out, that hair ain't coming back. ... Now your hairline is receding."

He found that sometimes the hair would grow back, but in many cases it did not. Providing healthy hair enhancements is something Knight now feels he

can do at his salon.

For his client Margie Davis, who wanted more volume, Knight was in a challenging position. "There's no way for me to add a volumizer to her hair — a blow dry and flat iron, a mousse, a hair spray, all those things couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together," he joked. "I had to pull from my bag of tricks. My Sherri Renée bag of tricks."

Though Davis has a full head of hair, she feels she finally has the fuller hair she always wanted. "I don't look at myself as a vain person, but I never liked my hair," said Davis while she sat with her new hair enhancement in Knight's chair. She mentioned frequently dying her hair in her quest to find the right look. Now, her bob has fuller bangs with golden-brown hair that gleams. "It makes me feel like I look on the outside the way I feel on the inside. I love it. ... If I didn't tell people, they wouldn't know it wasn't my hair."