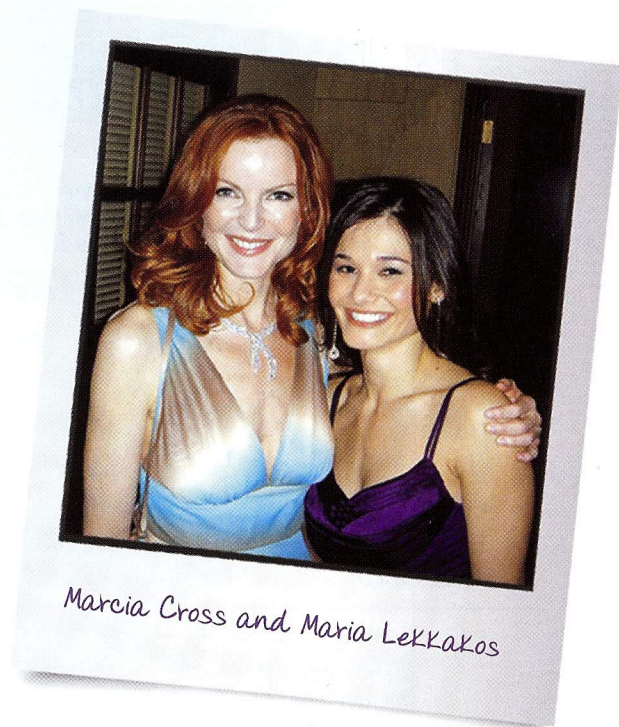


IN BETWEEN TAKES

PRETTY WOMAN MARIA LEKKAKOS KNOWS HOW TO THINK OUTSIDE THE 'PIZZA' BOX

BY CHARLENE PETERS



She looks like a stand-in for Catherine Zeta-Jones, but Maria Lekkakos has more of a celebrity connection with Julia Roberts of Mystic Pizza. Like Roberts, Lekkakos got her start flipping pizzas in her family business, Rockport House of Pizza. But, by age 21, she wanted more. So, she ran off to Kalamata, Greece, to fulfill her dream to become a topnotch esthetician. She trained at Cidesco, a well-established international beauty school where she found her calling: offering skincare and makeup to Greek movie stars and pop queens such as Anna Vissi (a.k.a. the Greek “Madonna”).

“In a blink of an eye it was gone,” she says, after Turkey’s 1999 earthquake shook her enough to send her home, back to finish her education at Catherine Hinds Institute of Esthetics in Woburn.

To make ends meet, she flung pizza on nights and weekends; weekdays were spent as a skincare specialist, building a reputation in the Hamilton community. But she longed to recreate what she had in Greece — working with celebrities, “people who have great energy,” she says.

She knew she needed to get out of the treatment room and network with celebrities to move forward in her career, but had to figure out how.

“I woke up one August morning with the idea to apply for the Miss Massachusetts USA pageant,” she recalls of her epiphany.

Many actors had followed the pageant path, she knew, such as Halle Berry, Eva Longoria-Parker and Maria Menounos. Lekkakos was determined to follow suit, meeting the pageant challenge with a business formula.

“I had to get a gown that fit good and looked good, and for my own sake, I fulfilled every criteria asked of the judges,” she says.

At age 24, Lekkakos was crowned Miss Massachusetts USA 2004, and she began networking the celebrity circuit with notables such as Paris Hilton. When she returned to the North Shore, she opened the M. Lekkakos salon, spa and boutique in Wenham, where she welcomed Hollywood East.

Today, her long list of celebrity connections includes Brooke Shields, Maria Bellow, Maya Rudolph and Salma Hayek, to name a handful of her skincare and bodywork clients.

“I love that my dream came true,” says Lekkakos, as she looks to the next movie connection.

Until then, she’s keeping busy with television celebrities, working on the sets for “Boston’s Finest” and “Quintuplets.” ■

Above: Marcia Cross and Maria Lekkakos. The Rockport native’s career as a celebrity makeup artist was jump-started when Lekkakos prepped Cross’ s skin for a photo shoot. The ‘Desperate Housewives’ star was the cover girl for the Holiday 2005 issue of Boston Common magazine.

FOR SPA INFORMATION VISIT:
MLEKKAKOS.COM

Filmed in Hollywood East

A sampling of movies made on the North Shore over the past three years (Lekkakos was involved in those marked with an asterisk):

- The Lace Reader
- Again
- Grown Ups*
- The Fighter*
- The Joneses
- Under the Boardwalk (documentary)
- Insides
- Edge of Darkness
- The Town
- Fury Vengeance*
- Knight and Day (formerly Wichita)*
- The Box
- The Invention of Lying
- Don McKay
- Surrogates
- The Ghosts of Girlfriends Past
- The Proposal