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## Dream Realized: Nadwa Yono Survives, Thrives in Small Business

After immigrating to Michigan from Iraq, Yono has owned her own salon and spa for almost 20 years.

By Timothy Rath  
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With business moves as creative as the fanciful hairstyles, color, and services she offers, [Nadwa Yono](#) has established [Nadwa Hair Spa in West Bloomfield](#) as a home away from home for locals who love health and beauty.

It may not have ended up this way for Yono's clientele, along with untold numbers who have seen her interviewed by local and national media for her expertise, had she not strayed from home in the first place.

Growing up in a strict Chaldean household after her family migrated to the area from Tel Keipeh, Iraq (10 miles north of Mosul) in the mid-1970s, Yono made her first cuts as a vocational training student at [North Farmington High School](#), without permission from her parents.

"Back then, hairdressing was not a thing for a girl in a Chaldean family to do. Girls had been told that they would stay at

home and start a family," Yono said. "I was scared of what they would tell me, so I didn't tell them what I was learning."

The second youngest of nine, Yono had immigrated to the United States at age seven in 1970. For three years, she lived without her parents as they waited for their own chances to move, in search of safety and freedom.

"Those years without my parents, I was living here in Michigan with family, but I'd definitely say I was forced to think independently," Yono said. "By the time they moved here, I did some language translating for them. So, the experience made me grow up in a hurry."



Her interest and experience grew, too. She became a cosmetologist at 18 (long after telling her proud, but skeptical family about her work) and at 21, was chosen from a field of applicants to work under the [well-respected British hairstylist](#) Trevor Sorbie and teach others at a series of national shows and seminars.

However, thanks in part to a "natural drive" of hers as a Chaldean to start her own business, Yono moved on to forge a new path. Yono opened a 5,200-square foot salon and spa in the [Novi Town Center](#) in 1994 with just eight employees. Not only was it a challenge to fill the space with clientele, Yono said, but attitudes regarding those services offered had made it difficult to open in the first place.

"My goal was to see what everybody was doing and what they weren't doing," Yono said. "I said, we'll do everything from head to toe that had to do with skin and body. Nowadays, there are plenty of

places like this, but back then, some called it a 'massage parlor.'"

For 14 years in Novi, Yono built up her clientele but didn't cease to innovate. When she moved to the Boardwalk Shopping Center in 2008, Yono was ready with new hair attachment services for women with thin and thinning hair.

"There's something in particular that makes seeing a customer happy with their hair attachments, where, in some cases there is no hair, really rewarding," Yono said.

Moving to West Bloomfield in 2009, soon before the recession hit, created its own set of challenges economically for Yono.

However, with 22 employees working in the heart of West Bloomfield's small business community, Nadwa Hair Spa figures to be a staple for quite a long time — seeing as she hopes to one day pass along the business to her children. Think of it as the "American Dream," totally realized and thriving.