

By **AMBROSE CLANCY**

**T**abitha Nothaft was up against it.

Near the end of last year the Center Moriches stay-at-home mom was watching her once-successful Internet business hurrying due south. She was going through a bitter divorce and heading into a brutal custody fight for her kids. Paralyzed by stress, she couldn't predict how she'd handle going out into the work force to support herself and her children after being at home for years. Running on empty financially and emotionally, she knew she couldn't face it alone. She sought help.

A financial advisor? No. A shrink? Not a chance.

Nothaft sat down with a psychic.

A future job opportunity was seen by the psychic and Nothaft was told not to be afraid to take it. The job would get her finances straight and prove she could support her children. Sure enough, a job appeared a month later, offering good money with hours allowing her to get her youngest off to school and be home when his day ended.

"I wouldn't have had the confidence to take the job without it being foreseen," Nothaft said.

During the custody battle, the psychic told her not to worry, all would be well. Not long after, it was discovered that her ex-husband's lawyer was sleeping with a witness and key evidence was thrown out.

Clairvoyance, wisdom from the spirit world or just shrewd personality evaluation and/or life counseling? No matter what you think, Nothaft is convinced the happy changes in her life happened because of a power beyond this reality.

These days she's not alone. Two successful Long Island psychics, Dawn Joly, who has an office in Smithtown, and Mary Occhino, who can be heard five mornings a week on Sirius Radio's "Angels on Call," said business is booming.



# TALKING TO ELVIS

And other benefits of the  
Long Island psychic business

New clients seeking financial advice, worried about their jobs or losing their homes have increased 50 percent, both women said.

Dawn Carr, founding member of the American Association of Psychics and Mediums, said nearly 100 percent of her members have seen a marked increase in business over the past year.

"It has to do with the economy," Carr said from her office in Massachusetts. "I've seen an increase of about 40 percent seeking financial counsel, which is in alignment with a majority of our members."

Carr added that 20 percent of people who have contacted her have never before sought the services of a psychic or medium. (She defines a psychic as having powers of clairvoyance and a medium as one who communicates with the dead.)

Lisette Coly, executive director of the Eileen J. Garret Library of the Parapsychology Foundation in Greenport, is not surprised. "Right after every war and during every time of economic uncertainty, there's always been a sharp rise in interest in psychics and mediums," Coly said. "Anytime there's something in the public consciousness that doesn't make sense, like the aftermath of 9/11 for example, or anything really traumatic, people out of desperation reach to things they would not necessarily have looked at before."

Coly should know, presiding over the library, which contains 12,000 books – some as ancient and rare as a book on magic printed in Latin in 1562 – and receiving more than 100 journals annually. There's also an extensive collection of audio, video and film recordings in the library.

The library's presence in Greenport – it was formerly housed in Manhattan – allows the Suffolk village to be mentioned in the same breath as Cambridge, England, and Freiberg, Germany, as housing the greatest collection of psychic phenomena documentation in the world.

There's a new trend in the psychic business to attract a new audience, said Carr, who will be giving "readings" this August in Stony Brook. Many psychics have shunned turbans and casbah décor for a business-friendly look.

"It's so archaic – lighting candles,

casting spells, dressing in robes," Carr said. "That's not the way we want to present the profession."

Joly – who counseled Tabitha Nothaft – has an office in Smithtown that seems like the setting of any other business. There's a reception area and Joly greets visitors in her office by coming around from behind a desk where a laptop sits.

It's then you'll notice the life-sized cutout of Elvis Presley. "He speaks to me," Joly said. "He tells me what's going on. I couldn't ask for a better friend."

There's also an altar of sorts of Native American objects, including the odor of



**Smithtown psychic Dawn Joly**

burning sage. Long Island is a place with powerful and active Native American spirits, Joly said. "They were here, and they're all around us."

Prices for readings vary from psychic to psychic, but Joly said her rates were on the reasonable end, especially for a down economy. She charges \$95 for 30 minutes and \$145 for a full hour. She also does group and family readings with special rates.

Joly is not in the happy-talk business when it comes to people's finances, she said. "I tell clients, 'They know what's going on up there,'" she said, pointing to the ceiling. "Some people come and it breaks my heart when I have to be honest with them about their jobs or their houses."

Bruce Cocchi, Joly's business manager, was formerly in the restaurant, catering and music business. He books shows

for Joly in the area, including cocktail parties charging anywhere between \$50 and \$75 a person. Marketing Joly is simple because of a vast database of clients and constant referrals of satisfied customers, Cocchi said.

"It doesn't take as much to promote one of Dawn's events as it would if you had a '50s band or bringing in a comic because this is such a unique, niche thing," Cocchi said.

Although many people go to psychics as a form of entertainment or for comfort, there are dangers involved, according to Robert Bornstein, professor of psychology at Adelphi.

"There's the danger one runs if a psychic is a manipulative or dishonest person," Bornstein said. "This is a marginal enterprise where one can easily get bilked."

The other danger: A person might make disastrous financial, legal or medical decisions. "It could cause some people to disregard better information," he added.

Occhino, also known as Mary O, heads a one-woman psychic/medium industry, with her morning radio call-in program airing Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., three published books and sold-out seminars conducted around the country.

Every morning 15,000 people phone in for a chance to speak with her, Occhino said. Sirius spokeswoman Hillary Schupf couldn't put a number on Occhino's audience but said the phone lines for Mary O's daily show are full every day. Since Sirius is subscriber-based, there are no ratings for individual programs, Schupf said.

Lately callers seeking financial help have overwhelmed those seeking counsel on affairs of the heart, Occhino said. "I've had to yell at people over the radio that if I hear another question about finances I'll kill myself," she added.

Like Joly, she's straight with people, she said, and will tell people they will be laid off or lose their homes if that's what she's "seeing" or "hearing."

The future according to the radio seer? "By November everyone should be breathing easier."

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