



PORT TOWNSEND & JEFFERSON COUNTY LEADER

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Healthy skin, healthy business: growing a business from scratch

By Frank Reddy, Leader Staff Writer

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Fessler holds up a block of beeswax, a product used in much of the company's skin care products, at the Herbalix Warehouse. – Photo by Frank Reddy

If Mike and Liz Fessler could use just a couple of words to describe the essence of their skin care company, those words would be "from scratch."

That seems to be the underlying idea behind the Port Ludlow couple's large stock of products, from deodorant to skin moisturizers. After recently going international with their business, it's safe to say that philosophy is working.

The couple boasts 40 individual representatives who sell Herbalix Restoratives to stores around the country, and they traveled to a trade show in Anaheim, Calif., just a couple of weeks ago to market their product for European representation.

Liz said success came when the couple discovered their "specialized niche" within the skin care industry. The company buys individual ingredients for each product in bulk so that they can oversee everything that goes into their products.

"Many skin care companies put ingredients in their products that can be quite bad for the body," Liz said. "Our job is to make sure there's an alternative to all the stuff on the shelf in the grocery store."

Mike the mad scientist

Liz said her husband, Mike, is the "mad scientist" behind the production of their skin care products. Mike's science and engineering background helped him formulate many of the company's top items.

Mike ties the strings of his smock and marches through the Herbalix warehouse on South Point Road, inspecting the machinery and wiping the slightest smear from each unit.

"It's almost like surgery," Mike said. "Everything has to be sterile and clean here. We control what goes into the product, and that's what makes our skin care line so good."

During a tour of the warehouse with The Leader, Mike snapped the lid off a canister to reveal the orange glow of what looked like beeswax. "It's virgin palm oil," he said, smiling. "It's all from scratch, A to Z."

Virgin palm oil is one of the main ingredients in several of their products. Other "from scratch" ingredients include goat's milk, coriander seed and olive leaves. The company uses raw materials from around the world.

Drawing off toxins

One of their more popular products is a deodorant that sucks the toxins out of your armpits while you sleep. "People think it's strange to put on deodorant before you go to bed," Liz said, "but that's when your organs can most efficiently dispose of toxins. While you're sleeping."

Some items in their skin care line are popular because of the company's commitment to purely organic ingredients. Liz said she got a letter from one customer with an autistic child. "The letter said Herbalix products are the only thing that worked with her child," Liz said. "Autistic children have profound sensitivity, and because we control everything that goes into our products there are no mystery chemicals to worry about."

"When you get a letter like that," Liz said, "that makes this all worthwhile."

For more information about the local company, visit www.jpurdurga.com. Herbalix products can be purchased locally at Uptown Nutrition on Lawrence Street.

(Contact Frank Reddy at freddy@ptleader.com.)