

Published September 17, 2008

**Chartreuse A Woman's Endeavor To Save Our Skins**

By Sophie Braccini



Lavande Spa and Boutique Manager presents Chartreuse beauty products Photo Sophie Braccini

When she became a mother, Laurie Walter of Lafayette started paying more attention to the labels of the care products she was buying for her child and her home. Then one day she read "Not Just a Pretty Face; The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry," by Stacy Malkan, and learned that what appears on these product labels is not strictly regulated the way the Food and Drug Administration regulates food, and some ingredients are left off the label. Not content to ignore what she couldn't see, Walter decided to research products thoroughly and ended up deciding to create her own when she discovered that even some well-marketed environmentally friendly products could endanger her family. "I now have the responsibility for the health and well-being of my three sons," says Walter, who admits to worrying as well about what kind of future her children will have on our over-taxed planet. A Tufts graduate and former business consultant, she felt she had the knowledge and motivation to make a difference for consumers. When she started to research products that wouldn't harm her family, Walter discovered that the term "fragrance" on an ingredient list is a proprietary element, the components of which may be kept secret by manufacturers. "When Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) researchers tested thirty-one fragrance products, they found that more than half the products contained ingredients listed under the EPA's Toxic Substance Control Act. Since perfume can enter the body through the skin or by inhalation, many of these chemicals are readily absorbed and accumulate in the body's fatty tissue," explains Walter. Another ingredient often found in cosmetics is DEA (diethanolamine), a chemical that is used as a wetting agent in shampoos, lotions, creams and other cosmetics. DEA is used widely because it provides a rich lather in shampoos and keeps a favorable consistency in lotions and creams. DEA by itself is not harmful but while sitting on store shelves or in your cabinet at home, DEA can react with other ingredients in the cosmetic formula to form an extremely potent carcinogen called nitrosodiethanolamine (NDEA). NDEA is readily absorbed through the skin and has been linked with stomach, esophagus, liver and bladder cancers. "I am not in the business of tearing down other companies," says Walter, "but I do try to get people to read beyond the marketing fluff and packaging. I try to give them the tools to read product labels for themselves." And with her own line of products on the market, with ingredients that are fully disclosed, Walter feels confident they won't be disappointed. The name "Chartreuse" comes from a Crayola crayon shade of yellow green that was created in 1972. Associated with a spunky pink, it creates the fun and crisp image of Walter's

products and web site. "Many organic items have a dull image," says the young entrepreneur, "I wanted to create an attractive and elegant packaging for these quality goods." Thus the company's motto: "Be Distinctively Green." Walter goes beyond packaging. Her operation is contained within her garage at this time, and ranges from enhancing bulk natural soaps with essential oils, to creating completely new products like the "Sassy Shopping Bag" that she designed when she couldn't find what she wanted on the market. The "eco-chic" purse contains six grocery size foldable shopping bags, and room to put the keys and wallet: no more excuses for forgetting those green bags at home or in the car. Her line of products also includes household cleaners, organic body and facial care products, recycled gift-wrap and notebooks. The way Walter distributes her products is in line with her sustainable vision of life. She has started to build a network of Consultants who sell the products on their own schedules, growing as their network expands. In addition, she is working with local retailers and has an agreement with Lavande Spa and Boutique on Mount Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette. More information can be found on the web site [www.ChartreuseProducts.com](http://www.ChartreuseProducts.com)



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