

Is Greenbody Greenplanet the next Aveda?



"We're trying to carve out ourselves a niche like Horst [Rechelbacher] was 30 years ago," says Lorri Weisen, the entrepreneur behind Greenbody Greenplanet Organic Hair Care and the owner of Hairs to You Salon & Boutique (above) in Roseville.

(Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

Owner of salon develops organic hair products

BY NANCY CROTTI

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If you've seen those little kids walking around the Minnesota State Fair with sparkly neon hairdos, you've seen some of Lorri Weisen's handiwork, but not all of it.

Weisen, who owns Hairs to You Salon & Boutique in Roseville, has

operated the Fair-Do's booth at the State Fair for the past nine years. She has also developed a line of organic shampoos and conditioners that she sells through her salon and other outlets across the country.

Weisen claims that Greenbody

Greenbody

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Greenplanet Organic Hair Care products contain no toxic chemicals or surfactants used in many commercially available shampoos and conditioners. She had a chemist concoct the formulas after she became concerned about the health effects of personal care products.

That concern stems from her husband's multiyear battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which is now in remission. When her husband was going through treatment, she picked up a 2007 book called "Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry" by Stacey Malkan. The book follows a group of breast cancer activists as they ask the world's largest cosmetics companies to stop using chemicals linked to cancer and birth defects.

"I walked into my salon and I said, 'Oh my God. I'm selling this to clients,'" Weisen said. "I went on a mission and started changing things personally and professionally."

Could Greenbody Greenplanet become Minnesota's next Aveda? Horst Rechelbacher pioneered natural hair care products based on Indian Ayurvedic principles when he founded Aveda in Minneapolis in 1978. Twin Cities residents have remained loyal to Aveda products, even since Rechelbacher sold the company to Estee Lauder Companies Inc. in 1997, Weisen said.

"We're trying to carve out ourselves a niche like Horst was 30 years ago," she said.

That's not easy, because the federal Food and Drug Administration does not regulate what goes into hair products and therefore cannot control the claims made on labels, according to Weisen.

She has found that most organic shampoos

Greenbody Greenplanet Organic Hair Care

Ownership: Private

Founded: 2009

Location: 8251 Main St. NE, Minneapolis

Products: Organic, toxin-free shampoo and conditioner

Website:

<http://greenbodygreenplanet.com>

Size of facility: 300 square feet

Latest annual revenue: \$21,739

Employees: One

Projected hiring: Salesperson and a packaging/shipping/receiving worker

What's next: Developing an organic, non-toxic hair gel

tend to dry the hair and don't lather well or hold in hair coloring. The word "organic" on a label doesn't necessarily mean every ingredient is organic, she said. "For us, it's really important to emphasize that we're an organic product, but we're 100 percent toxin-free," she said.

An organic shampoo would have to perform as well as standard salon fare using nontoxic ingredients to satisfy Weisen. For example, Greenbody Greenplanet shampoos use coconut sugar as a lathering agent rather than the sodium lauryl sulfate commonly found in shampoo.

"It's got to lock in color and be color-protecting, be deeply nourishing, provide volume without drying out the hair, condition without weighing down the hair and still produce volume," Weisen said. "Shine is important [as well as] movement in the hair. You want your hair to be healthy, and this product is all of that."

Weisen contracts with a Canadian manufacturer to produce Greenbody Greenplanet products, which became available in spring 2009, and has been using them in her own salon ever since. She has also been marketing them to other purveyors of natural hair-care products.

Ann Garrity carries them on her Minneapolis-based website (<http://organicdivas.com>), and uses



the products herself. Garrity said her mission is similar to Weisen's.

"I had a health issue and realized that so many of the products that people put on their skin, even the ones that claim to be healthy or healthier, are really not," Garrity said.

Garrity's product-selection criteria are designed to ensure they do not promote cancer or cause hormone disruption. They include:

- The manufacturers' agreement to fully disclose product ingredients and to sign Malkan's Compact for Safe Cosmetics, a voluntary pledge to avoid chemicals banned by health agencies outside the United States.

- The product's receiving the lowest toxicity rating given by the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep rating system.

"You can hide a lot of toxic stuff in the word 'fragrance,'" Garrity explained.

Weisen discovered Garrity's site and approached her about carrying Greenbody Greenplanet. Garrity appreciated that Weisen was a local woman who was moved to action by her husband's health issues.

"I felt that her mission aligned really well with our mission," Garrity said. "She was the real deal." Garrity's customers have been repeat buyers of Greenbody Greenplanet products.

"That's the biggest indicator to me that it's a good product," she said. "Once somebody's had a health issue, they are militant about it. You don't have to sell them."

Garrity has also found that Weisen knows how to market her products by

blogging, attending events and supporting her distributors.

A customer did some marketing of her own, bringing Greenbody Greenplanet products into Becky Sturm's StormSister Spatique in St. Paul a couple of years ago. Sturm requested samples from Weisen.

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—Lorri Weisen,
Greenbody Greenplanet Organic Hair Care

because there are a lot of beauty brands out there that say they're natural when they're not," said Sturm, who closed the store after the recession and now operates online at www.stormsisster.biz.

Natural shampoos don't produce as many suds as standard products, which may lead users to believe they aren't cleaning as well, according to Sturm. "Those really sudsy products, those surfactants that make all those suds, are not good for us," she said.

It took the chemist eight months to develop Weisen's shampoos and condi-

tioners, which come in scented and unscented varieties. "I always try to tell people I didn't create this in my kitchen," Weisen said. "I just knew what my requirements were and what I wanted."

Eight-ounce bottles of Greenbody Greenplanet products retail for \$22 to \$24 apiece, comparable with other salon products.

Weisen's original plan was to market through salons, and she has a few selling Greenbody Greenplanet, but she has had more luck through online and brick-and-mortar retail stores, such as Moss Envy in Minneapolis.

"We decided to back off and focus on retail," she said. "When the salon industry is ready for us, we'll be there."

Other stumbling blocks to getting her products into salons include the delicate matter of hairdressers promoting natural products after selling traditional ones for years, and salon owners lacking the time to research ingredients, according to Weisen.

"That's why we're focusing on end users," she said. "Consumers are catching on, but salons are slow to follow. They're just not ready for it."

Now, she's working on producing a nontoxic hair gel, which will be free of plastic and alcohol.

"It's just nice to see some local companies do well and be honest," Sturm said. "That doesn't always happen. She's a really good businesswoman. She's very generous. I really appreciate what she's doing."

Nancy Crotti is a St. Paul-based freelance writer.