

Keeping your skin healthy

□ Entrepreneur offers all-natural skin-care products

By Edna Manning
for The Saskatoon Sun

Tammy Bessant was inspired to start her own home-based business, EarthWear Face & Body Products, when she realized how difficult it was finding skin care products that are truly all natural.

"About 10 years ago, I started having problems with my skin," Bessant said. "I didn't know why and the doctors and dermatologists couldn't tell me why. I changed my diet and started looking at what I was using on my body. I also began doing research into natural skin care."

Bessant soon came to understand there are many ingredients in skin care products that we should stay away from. The main ones are parabens and sodium lauryl sulfate and sodium laureth sulfate. The latter two are commonly used in cosmetic cleansers, toothpastes, shampoos, bubble baths as well as in garage floor cleaners, engine degreasers and car-wash soaps. It is an inexpensive detergent, also known as a surfactant, used for its lathering effect. It removes oil from the skin and can cause skin and eye irritations. Parabens, largely used as preservatives, have been linked to breast tumors.

"I started purchasing 'natural' products, but became aware that many which claim to be natural still contain some of these harmful ingredients. That's when I decided it was time to make my own. I started with a face cleanser and face lotion—that was all I needed."

Pleased and encouraged by the results of her first products, Bessant excitedly told her friends. Word spread and soon she was getting phone calls from strangers wanting her products. That was the beginning of a successful business for the North Battleford entrepreneur.

"I want to be there for the people who care and want to know more. I feel it's important for people to know what they're putting in and on their body. Our skin is a gateway to our system and anything we put on it will absorb into our body, just like a nicotine or a pain patch that we put on our skin to administer medication," she says.

Bessant's goal is to make and supply people with healthy, safe, non-toxic and chemical-free products they can use every day with confidence. She is currently making a line of face creams, a facial cleanser, an after-shave, a facial exfoliant, numerous bath products, as well as body lotions, lip balms and a bug deterrent. All of her products are prepared under scrupulously clean conditions using all-natural ingredients. She uses no pre-made bases; everything is made from scratch. Her products contain no sodium lauryl sulfates or sodium laureth sulfates; no parabens or artificial colours or fragrances, no chemicals, and no toxic ingredients. For example, the Almond &



Tammy Bessant is selling her all-natural skin-care products at the Saskatoon Farmers' Market and through mail orders — Photo courtesy Rosanna Parry Photography

Lavender Hand & Body Lotion, a favourite among her customers, is made from organic aloe vera juice, certified organic Saskatchewan beeswax and almond oil infused with lavender flowers.

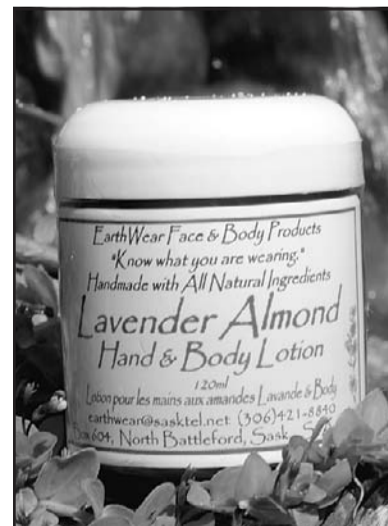
"The essential oils I use are not added for fragrance," Bessant explains. "The ones I choose to put in each product, I choose for beneficial properties they have — the health benefits they contain. Lavender, for example is beneficial for most skin conditions. It is a cell rejuvenator, and helps prevent scarring and stretch marks."

Bessant prepares her products in small batches for quality control purposes. Because her products don't contain harsh preservatives, they do not have the shelf life like those that do. She recommends they be kept in the fridge. "Use a clean tool to remove the lotion from the container and make sure your fingers are very clean. Dirty hands can introduce bacteria into the lotion, decreasing its shelf life."

Not all of her ingredients are or-



Left: Bessant's rejuvenating face lotion
Right: Bessant's lavender almond hand & body lotion



—Photos courtesy Tammy Bessant

ganic, Bessant notes. This is partly because some organic ingredients would be difficult to locate; also cost would become prohibitive.

"I believe to label something as organic, every single ingredient

used should be organic. I have some organic ingredients in some of my products, but the whole product is not organic. It's all natural, which is a big step in eliminating the chemicals and toxic ingredients from the

products we use on our body."

EarthWear Face & Body Products meet Health Canada standards. "I had to notify them of my products and note the percentage of each ingredient that goes into each product. It was very time-consuming, but for me as a person who is serious about my business, it was worth it. My customers can use the products with confidence, and I can sell them with integrity and pride," she says.

Bessant encourages people to do their own research, ask questions, study and be label-readers. She recommends a book called *A Consumer's Dictionary of Cosmetic Ingredients* by Ruth Winter, for anyone concerned about what they use on their body.

Bessant is currently selling her all-natural products at the Saskatoon Farmers' Market, through Sangster's at The Centre at Circle & 8th, and mail orders across Western Canada. For more information or to order, visit her website at www.earthwear-body.com, call (306) 421-8840 or email earthwear@sasktel.net.