



THE Inside Story OF SkinSpirit

SKINCARE CLINIC & SPA



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PHOTOS BY DAVID ART WOOTEN

SKINSPiRiT SKINCARE CLINIC & SPA PROVIDES SPA SERVICES TOGETHER WITH MEDICALLY SUPERVISED SKIN CARE. WE OFFER SUPERIOR NON-INVASIVE MEDICALLY SUPERVISED PROCEDURES, WHICH CAN RANGE FROM MICRODERMABRASION FACIALS TO LASER HAIR REMOVAL. THE LIST OF OUR SERVICES INCLUDE SUCH THINGS AS CELLULITE TREATMENTS, BOTOX® DERMAL FILLERS, AS WELL AS PIGMENTATION TREATMENTS, SKIN TIGHTENING, AND RESURFACING.

SkinSpirit Skincare Clinic & Spa, Inc. offers several lines of hand-selected skin care products that customers can sample in our retail lounge featuring such products as Skinmedica, Dermaquest, and Skinceuticals. Two of the major multi-specialty health care companies, Allergan, Inc. and Medicis Pharmaceutical Corporation, acknowledge SkinSpirit as one of the country's leading distributors of their products. We do so many procedures that we have some of the nation's most experienced staff. Our clients recognize that our national reputation and achievement is one more validation of our quality.

The course of my life that led me to SkinSpirit was not a direct path. I graduated from Stanford Business School in 1991 with an MBA. Following graduation, I pursued a career in high tech beginning as the vice president of marketing and technology for an entertainment software company and then spent a decade as president and COO for a company that developed and marketed Voice Over IP software. The position was both intellectually stimulating and financially rewarding, but I finally reached a point where I realized that I was not pursuing my passion. I had been living in the fast lane, working long hours, and neglecting my personal life, so I decided to take a break and for a year did nothing except take care of myself.

I was in my late 30s and for the first time had sufficient free time to pay attention to my personal appearance, which included taking advantage of the services of Dr. M. Dean Vistnes — a Stanford-trained plastic surgeon. For a year, Dr. Vistnes continued to give me treatments, enhancing my appearance with such things as laser hair

removal and Botox. I developed great admiration for the quality of Dr. Vistnes' treatments and came to respect the values, integrity, and high standard of ethics that governed both the conduct of his business as well as his personal life.

Dr. Vistnes knew that I had a background as a top executive, so one day he shared with me his vision of opening a medical spa. When I told him that the idea sounded interesting, he asked me if I would consider joining with him on the project. I had imagined that my time off from the world of technology would be a sabbatical, but the year was coming to an end, and I realized that I had no interest in once more immersing myself in that pressure cooker world. When Dr. Vistnes suggested that I consider partnering with him, it occurred to me that the medical spa industry was one in which I could put my mind, body, and spirit, so I told him that I would partner with him in bringing his vision to pass.

One of the compelling reasons for taking the plunge was my awareness of the fact that Dr. Vistnes and his staff operated his business with a people-centered style rather than profit-centered. I was especially attracted by the fact that Dr. Vistnes continually met or exceeded all my expectations. He could have cut corners, maximizing revenues, while still conducting a very successful practice. However, Dr. Vistnes shares my personal philosophy that excellence is its own reward.

Because Dr. Vistnes and I were both engaging in the business with passion, we took whatever steps necessary to ensure that every part would be carried out to the highest standards of excellence — offering clients extraordinary levels of quality, both in treatment and in customer service. One of the beautiful things about running a private company is that we were free to make the best decisions for clients and ourselves. Conducting the emerging SkinSpirit business to the highest standards generated a sense of excitement for Dr. Vistnes and me that spread to the staff members as they began coming aboard. This sense of shared excitement was one factor that ensured our success.

Dr. Vistnes and I developed SkinSpirit one step at a time and were determined not to get into the marketplace until we had all the pieces in place, knew what we were

doing, and could do the job right. We spent an entire year reflecting upon the services we would offer, identifying procedures and policies, and locating an ideal place for our first skin care clinic and spa. We built the business from the ground up, making each decision with consumers in mind, striving to create services and environments that they would consider ideal. One of the most important parts of the plan came together when we successfully faced the challenge of recruiting the most highly qualified people to fill the staff positions and then training them to conduct each part of the business to the highest level.

We opened the first SkinSpirit location in Palo Alto in May 2003. We were at the cutting edge of an industry that was destined to grow substantially. We were pioneers — among the first to build a program from the ground up that would integrate spa services with medically supervised skin care. We successfully implemented the people-centered business style we had planned. From the beginning, we have executed a policy of developing the same quality relationships among the members of the staff and between the staff and clients that Dr. Vistnes and I had formed with each other. We focus on people rather than profits — aiming to provide the sort of quality experience that will compel our clients to return.

We spent the next several years polishing the business model and perfecting systems of quality control and training. We didn't open our Walnut Creek location until 2008, at which point we felt that we were ready to launch a second location without stretching resources and cutting corners. As it turned out, however, because of external circumstances, we couldn't have chosen a worst time to start the new skin care clinic and spa; we held our launch party on the same day the Lehman Brothers announced their bankruptcy.

The autumn of 2008 was a bad time for business. However, we were fortunate that we had done our homework and, therefore, were able to maintain our superior quality of service even during that dreadful period of economic decline. Our mature systems, quality control, and our highly trained and motivated staff enabled us to survive when other businesses might have failed. We provided the same quality of service and

high-level customer experience at both locations through such things as rotating personnel between the two sites permitting us to pair new hires with seasoned staff members.

Getting the Walnut Creek site off the ground was a struggle but we persevered and after the first six months began to pick up some traction. Now, after three years of operation, the Walnut Creek site is thriving. The amazing staff, wonderful services, and convenient location have fueled powerful word of mouth awareness from our satisfied clients and, as a result, we are experiencing robust growth. In the fall of 2010, we opened our third location in Mill Valley without any of the challenges that had accompanied the Walnut Creek opening.

We have achieved a level of success that has elevated SkinSpirit to the ranks of the industry leaders. Our goal is to be the go-to place in this region for these kinds of services by continuing to provide services at a world-class level of excellence. Our three locations serve to put one of our sites within an hour's drive from almost anyplace in the Bay Area. Some of our clients drive from Sacramento and Stockton. They are willing to make that kind of trip because of the quality services that we provide. We even draw clientele from as far away as New York and Chicago.

SkinSpirit has 60 employees. We are taking care of ourselves. Everyone of us is a high performer, but none of us are married to the job; we do our best when we are not overworked. The business is providing exactly the lifestyle and rewards that I previously found missing from my former technology profession. It has provided an outlet for my entrepreneurial passions and for my desire to engage in activities that bring me into contact with others. I have a sense of happy fulfillment by giving our clients services that really do improve their looks while increasing their sense of well being and self-esteem.

We offer potential clients complimentary consultations and no-cost assessments to help them make decisions about which treatments they need. Come by and see for yourself.

For more information, go to www.skincare.com, call 925-952-9200, or email Info@skincare.com. Send comments about the article to editors@86mag.com.



To read about our featured women entrepreneurs please refer to pages 14-19. Cover shot taken at Scott's Seafood Restaurant Grill and Bar located at 1333 N. California Boulevard in Walnut Creek.