

SkinSpirit's *Second Act*

AS THE MEDSPA EYES EXPANSION, WE SIT DOWN WITH CEO LYNN HEUBLEIN TO TALK ABOUT HER PHILOSOPHY TOWARD GROWTH

BY KATIE SWEENEY

IN 2002, DR. M. DEAN VISTNES PITCHED LYNN HEUBLEIN, ONE OF his clients, an idea. “I had been getting laser hair removal and microdermabrasion in his office, and I found that my skin looked better,” Heublein recently told *Haute Living*. “I didn’t have to worry about my bikini line. I didn’t have to worry about ingrown hairs. To me, it was liberating to be able to get rid of these things that bothered me.” Vistnes proposed that the two join forces to open a new type of medical spa in Palo Alto. It would be a place where a high-quality product—non-invasive facial and body treatments—was backed by expert science and impeccable customer service. SkinSpirit, a destination for youth-enhancing skin and body procedures that focused on giving women the confidence to feel beautiful, was born.

“We offered all the things that Dean had in his plastic surgery office,” Heublein reminisces. SkinSpirit’s services included facials, microdermabrasion, laser hair removal, Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), and a novel treatment called Botox. “One of the things that I have to credit Dr. Vistnes with is that he could see in 2002 that there was an incredible amount of money and investment that was going into this category, in terms of new products and services. When we started, Botox had just been FDA-approved for cosmetic procedures,” Heublein says.

Although it was an instant success, the duo was hesitant to scale SkinSpirit. Instead, they focused on understanding their consumers, what they were looking for, and how to create an exceptional experience. “We built the experience

to be one that had the ethical, scientific, and medical standards that only a doctor like Dean could bring. Plus, the customer service, the competence and the reliability of what the procedures could do for you,” Heublein explains. With no background in the medical or skincare fields, she taught herself about the industry by learning from Dr. Vistnes, speaking with the vendors who supplied items like Botox, and by trying every procedure. The cofounders spent five years perfecting their model and only when they felt ready did they open another location. “We believe that a high-quality product and serving the customer is at the heart of the value that we provide, and we know that we have to do that methodically and steadily, not in a super high growth way,” Heublein says.

Two years ago they launched their first San Francisco SkinSpirit, in Presidio Heights, and now, 17 years after starting the business—“we decided that we wanted to continue to grow, but responsibly”—Heublein and Vistnes have finally announced an investment partner and expansion plan. Over \$25 million in financing from Northwest Bank and PWP Growth Equity, Perella Weinberg Partners’ middle market private equity group, funds SkinSpirit’s new Bay Area locations (in Noe Valley, Burlingame, and Oakland’s Montclair Village) and executive hires. “We were super picky about who we wanted to work with. We didn’t want to work with someone who was going to push growth for growth’s sake. We needed somebody who could buy into our philosophy and grow staff in a quality way,” Heublein says. With the wellness category booming and the medical aesthetic market expected to double by 2025, SkinSpirit is ensuring that they are a leading pioneer in the industry. “People are trying these services at younger and younger ages, and we didn’t want to be at a competitive disad-



Lynn Heublein

PROFILE



vantage in terms of access to capital,” she says.

Heublein and her highly trained team will continue to internally test each product and treatment before green-lighting it for customers. By letting staff experience the latest in skincare technology, it ensures that they provide the best care for clients. Heublein prefers that her employees recommend favorite procedures and share real experiences—a transparency that’s lacking at other medspa facilities. She values the opinion of her 200 team members and this mutual respect has created a long tenure of employees. “I love our staff. We have an amazing team,” she says. “We work very well together. I love that community, and I really love that we have so many success stories within our company in terms of people who have started as admins, and then they become medical assistants, and then they become nurses.” A happy team makes for happy clients, and as a mother, work-life balance is important to Heublein. “It’s part of our culture to have work-life balance and to make the enterprise sustainable because we’re mostly women. We have a lot of moms. We’ve benefited from people staying with us for a long time.”

Heublein is using the expansion as an excuse to breathe new life into the brand. “We’re updating our look and feel in our new clinics. Then we’re also going to be redecorating our existing clinics next year, to bridge the gap.” Besides a new look, there will also be new treatments—the latest state-of-the-art technology for the face and body. A wide variety of new fillers have come on the market with each one focusing on a different part of the face, from cheeks to forehead. “What’s good for your lips isn’t necessarily the best thing to help you with lower face definition,” she says. “The manufacturers are looking at the face and saying, ‘How can we innovate and improve the results of different areas of the face because they require different things?’” Platelet Rich Plasma, PRP or more colloquially known as the vampire facial, is a new offering that stimulates the skin to regener-

ate. It helps skin develop collagen that refreshes the appearance—and it can also help those suffering from hair loss. Injecting PRP into the scalp will increase hair follicle regrowth. Coolsculpting is also incredibly popular, and Heublein predicts that its predecessor, Emsculpting, will be even more successful (see sidebar for more information on this therapy).

By carefully curating treatment and procedure offerings, Heublein is meticulously ensuring success for her business. “Slow and steady wins the race” might as well be her motto; research and development play a role in everything she does. When deciding where to open next, Heublein studied her current consumers. “We analyzed our existing locations of who our client is. We search for neighborhoods that have that same kind of consumer characteristics,” she says. Common denominators in a great location include parking convenience, nearby grocery stores, Pilates studios, and hair salons—all found near the new SkinSpirts in Noe Valley, Burlingame, and Montclair Village. “One of the reasons why we’re growing slowly is because we are figuring out where to meet the consumer where she wants to be.”

Do Heublein’s consumers want a SkinSpirit product line? “We’ve always felt that we needed to have a few more locations before it would make sense to launch our product line,” she says, explaining that to do the type of diligent R&D she is known for would cost millions. Heublein would need the science to back the product, and for now, she’s content with the new locations and building her loyal consumer base. “Whether you’re a CEO or a teacher, hopefully, you feel happy when you go to SkinSpirit,” she says. “We want to treat everybody with great respect and kindness and give them the very best experience that we can. We focus on you and me and the women in our communities—that’s the culture we’ve created at SkinSpirit, and I think it’s enduring.”



Lynn Heublein



A facial treatment

THE 411 ON EMSculpt

SkinSpirit's hottest new body treatment? It's Em-sculpting, which is available in Palo Alto and Noe Valley. The first and only FDA-approved non-invasive way to build muscle and sculpt the stomach and buttocks, Em-sculpt is a 30-minute treatment with no pain and no downtime.

Through high-intensity electromagnetic pulses, a unique device contracts the muscles. The procedure is the equivalent to doing 20,000 crunches or squats—depending on if it's placed on the stomach or buttocks. A series of four treatments is recommended for best results.

Em-sculpt doesn't hurt; however, the sensation can be weird-feeling and causes the body to contract or laugh unexpectedly. It's an ideal option for those looking to shed that last little bit of fat and get the toned and fit appearance of an avid exerciser.