

Earth Angels

THE HEALING POWER OF BEAUTY

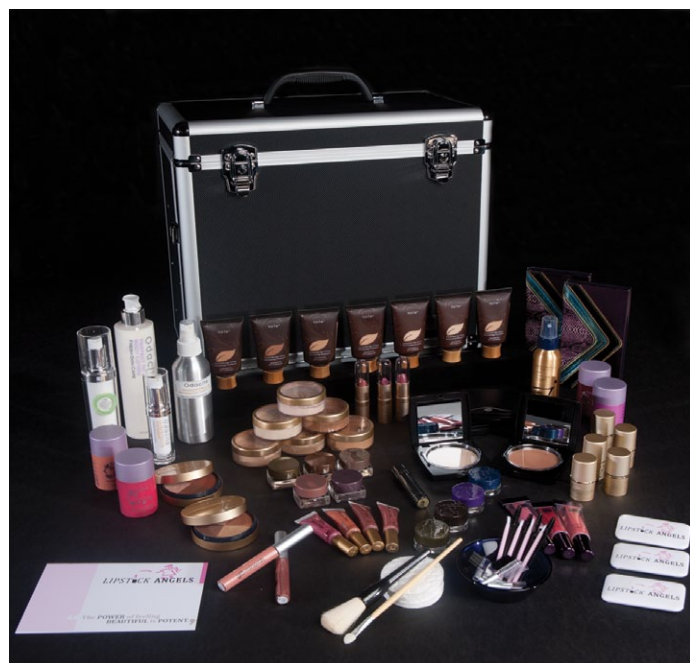
Whoever said “beauty is skin deep” clearly never met Renata Helfman. The renowned celebrity makeup artist, long-time natural product advocate and former owner of Vert, the first green beauty emporium in Los Angeles, just launched the Lipstick Angels Foundation (lipstickangels.org). A nonprofit that rolled out at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in LA, Lipstick Angels was created to boost the spirits of hospital patients with much-needed eco-pampering.

Helfman—whose “day job” includes beautifying celebrities like Molly Sims and Jennifer Jason Leigh for print, film and TV—cared for her two ailing grandmothers during respective bouts of cancer and, after her own health scare, learned about the toxic chemicals in many cosmetic and skincare products. After that life-changing event, Helfman made it her mission to demonstrate that nothing is lost in going natural and that green beauty products can be glamorous. Creating a nonprofit that combines her candy-striper impulses with her eco-beauty knowledge was a logical next step.

Through Lipstick Angels, top makeup artists set up shop in the hospital three to five times a week. They draw often-depressed patients out of their rooms for makeovers, hand massages and little gifts of eco-makeup and skincare. Key to the program is Helfman’s own carefully vetted makeup kit filled with organic and natural goodies donated by green brands like Jane Iredale and tarte, among others. “We’re using healthy, beneficial, really yummy natural products,” says Helfman. “The patients notice how great they smell and feel, like when you eat something that’s completely organic and natural—you know the difference.”

A break in the institutional gloom is welcomed by everyone from patients and their family members to hard-working nurses. But the beautifying itself has real value too. Just ask Valérie Grandbury, who founded her organic skin-care line Odacité (which she donates to Lipstick Angels) after surviving breast cancer. “Feeling beautiful and forgetting about the disease for a moment really helped my morale,” says Grandbury. “This has nothing to do with vanity. It’s about feeling ‘normal’ again. That was a big part of my healing process.”

Helfman hopes to expand the program to involve more hospitals, makeup artists and partners nationwide. From the first day, when she worked with a 16-year-old and a 92-year-old patient and saw how much more comfortable they felt when their visitors arrived, she knew that Lipstick Angels could make a difference.



“Whether I’m putting makeup on a patient or an actress, it just feels good,” she says. “I love when someone feels really beautiful when they leave my chair. Beauty is such a powerful tool to really uplift.” lipstickangels.org

—Nora Zelevansky