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People



Jennifer takes Manhattan

● beauty



"How you look is important," says Rodan (left, in her Piedmont, Calif., office with Fields). "If you don't look good, we take it seriously."

Saving Face

Developed for adult acne sufferers, Kathy Fields and Katie Rodan's Proactiv line is an unblemished success

Dermatologist Kathy Fields was checking a potentially cancerous mole on the chest of the woman standing before her. But she was having trouble getting past the patient's face. "She was hard to look at," Fields says, "because she had so much acne." The mole proved to be benign, but Fields asked the woman to make another appointment, this

time to deal with her blemishes. "She began to cry," Fields says. "She told me she had begged her doctor to help, but he dismissed her, saying, 'You're married—what do you care what your skin looks like?'"

It was incidents like that one, which occurred a decade ago, that prompted the San Francisco-based Fields and her close friend, fellow dermatologist Katie

Rodan, to take action. In 1995 the duo launched the Proactiv skin-care line, one of the only acne products specifically targeted to adults. Today, with the help of round-the-clock infomercials featuring grown-up glamor girls and acne sufferers—like Vanessa L. Williams and Stephanie Seymour—Proactiv's pimple potions are the best selling in the U.S., with 3 million users.

To be sure, plenty of Proactiv users have yet to receive their driver's license (the causes of acne—clogged pores, hormones, genetics—are the same at any age). But Rodan and Fields, who met in 1984 as dermatology residents at Stanford University Medical School, say that by aiming their skin-care line at adults, they're hoping to erase both

the spots of adult acne—which afflicts some 25 million Americans—and the stigma. “The attitude had been that acne was something people got over when they grew up,” Rodan says. “We knew it could still be a painful, serious problem.”

It was for Seymour. “Proactiv worked miracles for me,” says the model, who started experiencing breakouts at 21. Her dermatologist recommended Rodan and Fields’s products. The results were so impressive that Seymour, 33, became a product spokeswoman. “I’m never without it,” she says.

Unlike other zit zappers, which typically focus on spot treatment, Proactiv—which costs \$39.95 for a two-month supply and is available through an 800 number as well as on the Internet—uses a combination of medicines to treat the whole face. An exfoliating cleanser with benzoyl peroxide unplugs pores and kills bacteria, while a toner with glycolic acid sloughs off dead skin. To prevent further bacterial buildup,



Selma Blair takes Proactiv to the set.

With acne, Seymour says, she “suffered.”

Williams now pitches Proactiv.

FROM LEFT: DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE; DAVILA/RETNA; GLIKAS/IMAGEDIRECT

there is a leave-on lotion with benzoyl peroxide. Says New York City dermatologist Patricia Wexler, who ordered the line for her two teenage daughters after “trying everything” to no avail: “The system makes sense, and it really works.”

Rodan and Fields—whose second skin-care line (this one to treat facial redness and brown spots) will be launched in the next few months and will be available at upscale department stores—have always appreciated the value of looking good. Rodan grew up in Los Angeles, the only daughter of Harry Pregerson, 78, a federal appeals court judge, and his

wife, Bernadine, 74, a microbiology professor. As a teenager Rodan “used to ride the bus to the beach and bake,” she says. “Now I know how bad that is.”

Fields grew up in Waukegan, Ill., one of four children raised by Maynard Fields, now 82 and a retired optometrist, and wife Blanche, 77, a retired real estate manager.

Although Fields always knew she wanted to practice medicine—“The kids used to go to their dad’s office,” Blanche says, “and pretend to be doctors”—“Kathy and I did our nails and shopped” while at Stanford, says Rodan, whom classmates dubbed Rhinestone Rodan. “But we were also working really hard.”

They relied on that discipline during the six years it took to develop Proactiv. Starting in 1989, Rodan and Fields spent long nights (and \$60,000 of their own money) huddled over Rodan’s kitchen table, trying to find the right mix of medicines. Their finished product line was rejected by several companies (including Neutrogena) before a California infomercial and distribution company, Guthy-Renker, agreed to market it. “At first,” Rodan says, “we were like, ‘We can’t do infomercials! We’re nice girls!’”

These days Rodan—who shares a five-bedroom Oakland home with her husband, Amnon, 47 (an MBA who is Rodan and Fields’s manager), and daughters Elana, 15, and Daniela, 13—and Fields—who lives in a three-bedroom San Francisco townhouse with husband Garry Rayant, 53, a periodontist, and their sons Richard, 7, and Mark, 4—are often recognized from their infomercials. But the women, who each have scaled back their practices to two days a week, don’t mind the attention—even if it means obliging strangers by checking their zits. “That’s what it’s about for us,” Rodan says. “We want to help.”

- Galina Espinoza
- Maureen Harrington in San Francisco



“We love inventing things,” says Fields (rear, behind son Mark with, from left, Amnon Rodan, Richard Fields, Daniela Rodan, Katie and Elana Rodan at the Rodan home).