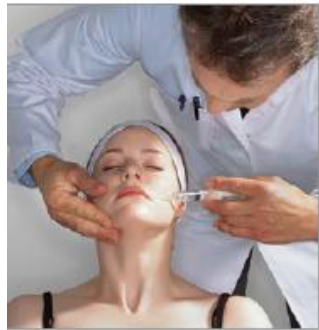


A close-up photograph of a woman with light brown hair pulled back, wearing bright red lipstick. She is looking into a mirror, and her reflection is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a spa or beauty salon setting with a white wall and a light-colored object in the foreground.

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Cover
*photography
by Helena Palazzi*

CENTRAL VALLEY, CA
body del sol MEDICAL SPA



BY MELANIE SACHS

AYDE MENDIBLES IS LIVING PROOF OF what you can do when you pursue education and then take passion and persistence into the business arena. Once she had completed her bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Phoenix, she finished the spa management program at the University of California, Irvine. After earning her esthetician license, she started her business while continuing to educate herself in the medical esthetics field.

She spent 2009 unsuccessfully applying to banks for a loan in the middle of the recession in a very tight credit market. After finally securing a loan, she was able to make her dream of having the first green spa in the Central Valley of California come true. Within months her busi-

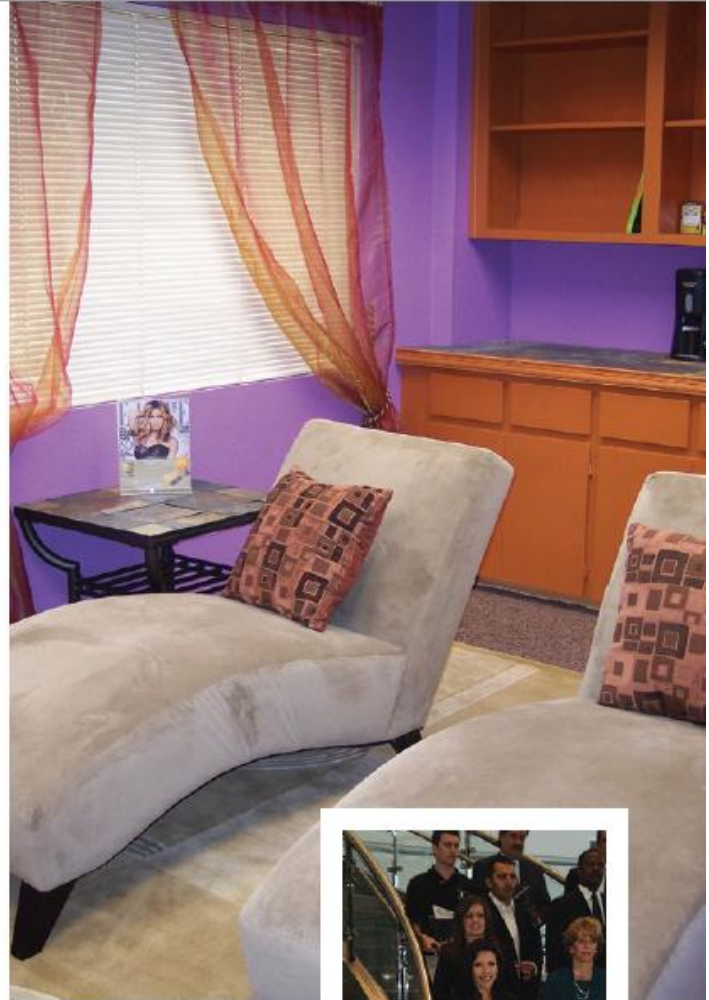
ness, Body Del Sol Medical Spa, which is in a former plastic surgeon's office, was up and running.

Eco-friendly roots

Mendibles started down the green path right from the beginning. Her business plan was written on recycled paper and presented in recycled binders. The Central Valley of California is very hot climate wise, and her original idea was to use the sun to provide all the power for her business. When she started researching solar power, she kept coming across "green" ways to do business. Mendibles was intrigued by the ideas she encountered and soon found she wanted to do her part.

"We all unknowingly contributed to the state the environment is in right now. I may not be

MENDIBLES' EXTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO SERVICES, TECHNIQUES AND INGREDIENTS HAS HELPED HER BRING TOGETHER NATURE AND SCIENCE TO PROVIDE THE MOST ADVANCED RESULTS IN REJUVENATION IN A SUSTAINABLE AND LUXURIOUS ENVIRONMENT.



able to change it on my own but I feel better doing something about it. I may be the first green spa in the Central Valley but hopefully not the last. I am hoping to influence other spas and other companies in the area to become green as well," says Mendibles, director of spa operations.

One-stop shop

Advertised as the "first green spa in the Central Valley," Body Del Sol Medical Spa joined the Green Spa Network and community green forums in the area. Fresno is in a traditional farming area, yet the city is rapidly growing. It is the second largest metropolitan area in the Central Valley after Sacramento. Clients have

been amazed by simple things like disposable drinking cups made from corn.

Clients also love that this spa is a one-stop shop for many different services so they do not have to drive around in the heat. They can spend a day, a morning or just an hour or two receiving multiple services all in one place. This makes it very convenient for clients, saves them gas, keeps the environment just a little cleaner and boosts sales. Mendibles and her daughter Veronica would spend one day out of every month getting their nails done, hair trimmed and facials. Now they and their clients can receive everything from eyelash extensions, spray tanning, airbrush makeup, chemical peels, medi-

continues

Ayde Mendibles accepting Mayors Business Recycling Award presented to Body del Sol Medical Spa

cal grade microdermabrasions, facials, sports massages, steam showers, tub soaks, hair removal, injectables, fillers, and hair and nail services under one green roof.

Teamwork

Being a self-described "spa lover before she was a spa business owner," Mendibles loved exploring day spas and medical spas in California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii and Mexico to derive the best of the best and bring it to Body del Sol Medical Spa. Turning this extensive and thoroughly pleasurable research into services, techniques and ingredients has helped her bring together nature and science to provide the most advanced results in rejuvenation in a sustainable and luxurious environment. She took time to handpick her staff, who she says are "truly masters of their craft." Being green was part of the interview process, and she says they all wanted to be part of the solution.

Her plans moved forward and she used eco-friendly paint throughout the spa, swapped out all electronic ballasts and fluorescent lights for environmental-friendly lighting, and printed business cards on recycled cardstock. Things continue to change as staff constantly comes up with new ideas.



Bit by bit

The spa's biggest challenge was finding a bank that was willing to lend money. Mendibles had hoped to literally build her spa from the ground up. She ended up leasing an existing building. Her initial vision was to use all recycled and environmentally friendly building supplies, install solar panels and so on, to be a truly 100-percent green spa. The building she leased, although it was older, had sufficient insulation, tile roofing, sound proofing and mostly tile floors. Although she did not get to be as green as she initially wanted, her spa and staff are still very nature-friendly.

When asked if it was realistic to be green, Mendibles says it is not that difficult because with just little research you can find many eco-friendly everyday products. She says that you must realize that they do cost a little bit more, but it is better for the environment. Like many members of the Green Spa Network, she encourages everyone to start small and work your way up to expand to other green practices and products. She strongly feels that as long as you are doing something, every little bit helps. ■

NATURAL HEALING

For Mendibles and her spa, every little bit helps. The spa and staff have moved toward the nature-friendly direction with these steps:

- The spa uses organic products: skin care, nail care and hair care.
- Medical product lines use recycled packaging.
- Staff recycle all product containers and use paper and plastic products made from recycled materials: menus, business cards, flyers, envelopes, file folders, paper towels, toilet paper, paper plates, plastic cups and trash receptacle liners.
- The spa uses zero VOC (volatile organic chemicals) paint in every room and in the lobby mural.
- Lighting was replaced with energy-efficient ballasts and fluorescent tubes.
- All appliances are high-efficient Energy Star rated.
- Linens, wraps and robes are either organic or recycled cotton.
- Bath and shower towels are all energy-saving Quick-Dri towels, which reduce the dry time by 33 percent compared to cotton towels.
- Spa slippers are made from recycled rubber.
- Staff cleans with cleaning products and detergents that are eco-friendly.
- Most of the carpeting was removed and the concrete exposed, allowing the floors to "breathe," which greatly reduces mold growth and trapped allergens. Concrete is a healthier choice for allergy sufferers.

Melanie Sachs, a certified Ayurvedic life counselor, healer and teacher, is sought after by some of the world's leading spas and beauty schools. She has published *Ayurvedic Beauty Care*, and is recognized internationally



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