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A Career That Keeps On Giving Joy

by Linda Sechrist

Julie Campbell, owner of Natural Nail Care Clinic, in Naples, began her career as a nail technician after graduating from high school. “It’s hard for me to believe that it was 32 years ago when I was living in Virginia,” she recalls. “The state allowed me to complete an apprenticeship in place of the formal nail technician school requirement. The 2,000-hour apprenticeships are still arranged today through the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. I completed my apprenticeship at a local nail salon, and then did the book study aspect so that I could pass the nail technician written and practical exams to qualify for my license.”

A career as a nail technician appealed to Campbell. “I’m a very social person and I love people. Initially, I worked as a receptionist in the nail salon and could see that the girls were always laughing and chit-chatting with clients. It felt more like a party atmosphere than a workplace, and I wanted to be part of that. I was so enthusiastic and asked so many questions of the owner that she suggested I look into the apprenticeship program so she could teach me how to do nails,” says Campbell.

Campbell’s business consisted mostly of doing artificial acrylic nails until around 1998, when a nail tech friend began trying different products to remove her acrylic nails. They were very damaged by the time she found Mavala, the line of products that I use today. “My friend’s nails got so healthy with Mavala that it became the only line she used in her shop. She trained me how to use them. The gentler product lines that we have today hadn’t yet made a big splash in the nail market,” says Campbell who jokes that only “tree-huggers” were interested in them then.

In 2003, Campbell was diagnosed with stage 4 non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a cancer that forms in the bloodstream or lymph system, which carries immune cells throughout the body. “I was shocked when doctors at MD Anderson, in Houston, Texas, told me that it was caused by my working with acrylic nails, inhaling the toxic fumes 10 or 12 hours a day for



Julie Campbell

so many years, as well as inhaling the fumes from the acetone in which clients soaked their acrylic nails,” she says.

Initially diagnosed as terminal, with only two or three weeks to live, Campbell responded surprisingly well to chemotherapy. “I didn’t have the energy or the time to wrestle with the fact that there had never been and still aren’t any ‘may cause cancer’ warning signs on the products I was using, but I did have the time to tell any of my nail tech friends about what caused the cancer. Two of them also developed the non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma after 20-plus years of doing acrylic nails.”

When the cancer responded so well to treatment, Campbell wrestled with the idea of not returning to the nail business

until she queried her doctors that were confident that the Mavala products she’d been using for several years hadn’t caused the cancer.

Campbell believes that published studies revealing information about the toxins in personal care, hair and makeup products are the result of increased public interest in more natural products. “It’s why people seek out my salon. They keep returning because our salon atmosphere is family friendly, casual, social and fun,” she says.

More than half the salon’s clientele has been coming for 10 years or more. “All of my nail technicians have longevity. The most senior technician has been with me 12 years, and the least for six. We enjoy great working relationships with each other and our clients, who have often become friends with each other. They hang out together outside the salon, play golf and go out to dinner. Despite all the trials and tribulations I’ve had with my health, this is still a career I thoroughly enjoy because it gives me the perfect outlet to do what I most love—be with people and form relationships,” enthuses Campbell.

Natural Nail Care Clinic is located at 12820 Tamiami Tr. N., Ste. 4, in Naples. For appointments, call 239-254-8788 or email Naplesnccc@comcast.net. See ad, page 22.