

Benefit

The Lifestyle of Giving

Nov/Dec 06
\$4.95

Season of Service

Our guide to holiday
volunteering

A New Light

Looking eye-to-eye with
the City's homeless

Red Hot

What we'll be
wearing when the
firemen come

Plus: Joe Montana
scores for the Little Sisters
• Alice Waters plants a
garden for change • Magic
Theatre's Cinderella story

Richard
Goldman

Philanthropist of the Year

Parents of ill children at UCSF Children's Hospital get the chance to relax with the help of Radiant Renewal's spa-to-go

By Pisha Wayne
Photographs: Eric Richmond

Blissful Moments



LUXURIOUS NEUTRAL-TONED FABRIC is draped across every surface in the room. Soothing new-age music plays softly in the background, and intoxicating herbal aromas fill the air. As Angelina Umansky prepares a facial bed for her next client, it's easy to think that this is a treatment room at Spa Radiance, her well-known beauty retreat. Yet just a few short hours ago, this was a typical conference room at UCSF Children's Hospital, featuring fluorescent lighting and sterile decor.

The clients Umansky and her staff are treating today are not the San Francisco elite or A-List celebrities like Michelle Pfeiffer and Sharon Stone who patronize Spa Radiance. Instead, they're the stressed-out parents of children who have been hospitalized for weeks or more.

Today marks the inauguration of "Radiant Renewal—Spa To Go," an ongoing program created by Umansky and Spa Radiance for patients and their families at UCSF Children's Hospital. Members of the Spa Radiance staff, who are among the best estheticians and therapists in the city, are volunteering their time and talent to administer facials and massages to the parents of seriously ill children, and high risk moms-to-be on strict bed rest at the hospital.

The inspiration for the program came from a tense mother who came to Spa Radi-

ance while her terminally ill child was staying at the hospital. Per her husband's request, she was to take some time for herself. Yet, typical of parents of sick children, she felt guilty for leaving her child's side. Umansky's empathetic staff jumped right into action. "We thought of UCSF immediately, because we already have a sponsorship relationship with them," says Umansky.

"I've never seen a group that pulled something like this together so quickly," says Kimberly Scurr, the Director of the Pediatric Heart Center and Perinatal Services at UCSF Children's Hospital. "We have so many families in crisis here that need some help, and this group is so committed and determined to make a difference. They're an amazing gift to us, our patients, and their families."

Because the well-being of the child is directly

related to that of the parent, programs for parents are a vital resource at Children's Hospital. "We consider the family to be our patient," says Scurr. "We realize that when a child is sick it affects the entire family. So this kind of treatment for the parents is extremely helpful."

So helpful, in fact, that all of today's appointment slots for Radiant Renewal were filled in less than one hour. "Clients" include parents like Michael Tyler, whose son is being treated at UCSF for a recurrence of leukemia. "We have been here 11 weeks. It's the most stressful [experience] we've encountered during any of the hospitalizations he's had, and we've been battling this for fifteen years," Tyler explains. "When my son is this ill and in this much discomfort, I'm here 99.9 percent of the time. The only time I'm out of the room is to go to the cafeteria to get some coffee and come back."

Tyler is like many of the parents at Children's Hospital, who are always on alert for changes in their children's conditions, and rarely leave the hospital. After his 30-minute back, hand, and foot massage, the physical change Tyler experienced was a pleasant surprise to him. "It relieved a lot of tension and made me more relaxed and calm in the hospital than I think I've ever been," he says. "It's amazing because you don't realize how high your stress level is until you feel it reduced."

Most important, Radiant Renewal left Tyler emotionally revived. "I've had massages before, so I knew what to expect physically," he says. "But the outreach, the emotional part, that someone's here to do something that benefits you and indirectly benefits your child—that's really huge."

Other parents expressed similar gratitude. "I'm really appreciative," says Anna Strain, who opted for a facial by Umansky. Strain's three-year-old daughter has been in and out of Children's Hospital for more than a year for bladder cancer treatment. "I've been to spas before, and they made it feel like I was 'away.' It was very relaxing and didn't feel like I was in a waiting room."

Says pregnant patient Jenna Marie Doyle, "The stress of a hospital stay is bad enough, but when you're dealing with the life and death issues of a child or a pregnancy that is at risk, that stress is massive. Having Spa Radiance come in to take my mind off my situation for a brief time was a wonderful surprise and a blessing."

"It's nice and relaxing," agrees Dominic Ballew, whose three-month-old daughter is undergoing a series of brain surgeries. "Human touch is an amazing therapy in my opin-

ion, so it's just a good thing. How often do you get your feet rubbed, you know?"

The healing power of touch is exactly what Umansky wanted to bring to the parents today. "Touch is very underestimated these days," she says. "Even a half an hour of calming down can be worth more than what medicine can offer."

Umansky's holistic approach to health is rooted in her heritage as a third-generation esthetician, having learned about homeopathic skin care from her mother and grandmother. In fact, in the 1960s her mother, Galina Rovner, was one of the first women to offer European facials in the United States. For Radiant Renewal, Umansky and her staff perform organically-based skin care because "we really want to concentrate on all-natural treatments," she says. "I think a lot of the issues we have with our bodies are because of bad chemicals."

Among other treatments her team is offering at UCSF are Hungarian facials, a Spa Radiance trademark. "They open the pores using paprika instead of steam," says Umansky. "Paprika also brings blood circulation to the surface, and blood is what brings oxygen and nutrients."

Although the inspiration for Radiant Renewal was recent, Umansky's commitment to giving goes back to her childhood in Moscow. "The reason I'm here is because of charity. I'm from Russia, and concerned organizations had to get together

to bring Russian Jews into America. So I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for somebody else's charity. My feeling is that if you have the time—and we all have time to give—concentrate on what touches you as a person. I'm a mom, for example; I understand moms."

In the waiting area outside their makeshift spa, the volunteers are giddy with excitement over the events of the day. "Once the first parent came out and we saw how he felt, it wasn't even a question of if we'd do this again. We can't wait," says Volunteer Coordinator Pamela Cianci.

The Radiant Renewal volunteers are already planning their next spa day at UCSF, when they plan on giving makeovers, makeup tips, and manicures to some of the 41 teens at the hospital. "It's such a vulnerable age to get sick," says Kimberly Scurr. "Teenagers have a lot of issues around body image and mortality."

Umansky also hopes to leave a lasting impression on the teens. "One day they are going to be healthy, and they'll have makeup tips to help them look great," she says, adding with a smile, "Teenagers put way too much makeup on."

As for a lasting impression on today's parents, Umansky used her far-reaching influence in the beauty industry to create goody bags reminiscent of an extravagant shopping trip. Companies donated several high-quality organic skincare products, including Luzern Laboratories, Eminence, Acqua, Jane Iredale Cosmetics, and Hydra Flight Skin Care for Air Travel by Dr. Richard Glogau of UCSF.

Amid the flurry of activity outside the makeshift spa, a nurse comes in carrying a sad-looking little boy hooked up to intravenous bags filled with medicine. "His dad is getting a massage, and he missed him," she says, as he buries his face in her shoulder. "I told him he was right here and he'll be out in just a minute." **B**

"It's amazing because you don't realize how high your stress level is until you feel it reduced."