

## Group Aims To Bring FDA 1,000 Consumer Requests for Detoxified Cosmetics

By Ryan Nelson  
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Tampa, Fla.-based Best in Beauty - half public watchdog, half "affordable" product vendor - has delivered one consumer photo album based on its "WTF?" campaign and plans to drop another on FDA's doorstep in an effort to have toxic substances removed from cosmetics.

Tara Lee, creator of BestInBeauty.com, is of a growing consumer element that believes questionable chemicals such as lead and formaldehyde - even in trace amounts - have no place in personal-care products.

The mother of two "with over 12 years of experience in the beauty and entertainment fields" has launched an initiative - "Labels for Life" - to educate the public on potentially harmful ingredients in cosmetics and teach shoppers to read ingredient labels.

"As a whole, as a society, we're really becoming a lot more educated in regard to environmental awareness [and] to the foods we eat. You just go through the grocery store and you'll see people looking at the labels and monitoring good fat and bad fat, cholesterol and calories," Lee noted in a June 2 interview.

"I'm just trying to do the same within the cosmetics industry - to bring that same awareness," she said.

Best in Beauty has made use of social networking sites including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to engage consumers.

The group encourages visitors to download its "WTF?" advertising and share with friends; the ads ask, "Want toxic free?" and invite consumers to "find out what's really in your makeup."

Consumers also are urged to participate in the site's "Message in a Mirror" undertaking by writing an anti-toxins message in lipstick on a mirror and taking a photo that can be posted online and/or mailed to regulators.

May 8, in time for Mother's Day, Lee presented an album of 38 such images to FDA. She says nearly 200 consumer images have been collected in total, and more than 350 people have joined the group's Facebook cause.

Best in Beauty intends to wait until it collects 1,000 consumer images to make its next delivery to the agency.

Directed to <sup>1</sup> [TakeAction@BestInBeauty.com](mailto:TakeAction@BestInBeauty.com), consumer messages have included "I'm not a chemist. I have 2 trust U!" and "Ingredients 4 pretty people should not be ugly!"

Another message was scrawled on the side panel of a car: "Gas is not the only thing leaded – WTF!"

Best in Beauty aims to use revenue from its beauty store to support a national advertising campaign featuring the top five images it receives from consumers.

The ads could launch to billboards, magazines and television beginning in the fall, Lee indicated.

### **One Stop For Safety Info/Shopping**

Best in Beauty is designed to be a one-stop destination for consumers to learn about the personal-care industry and cosmetic ingredients and labeling and to shop for products Lee and her team have screened for safety via "extensive research."

Product formulations sold at the site are cross-referenced against the Environmental Working Group's "Skin Deep" ingredient safety database, Lee said.

Featured brands include Dropwise, Ecco Bella, Ferro Cosmetics, Holy Mud, Goddessy Rx, Occomeia, Pristine Beauty and Soley Wellness.

Best in Beauty currently offers free shipping, which "is my way to give back," Lee added.

Among the "most harmful" ingredients targeted by Best in Beauty are phthalates/fragrance, propylene glycol, formaldehyde, hydroquinone, petrolatum/petroleum, mercury, mineral oil, lead, colorants/synthetic colors and sodium lauryl sulfate/sodium laureth sulfate.

The group recommends a mnemonic device to help consumers remember the chemicals of concern - "Pretty Products For Healthy People Minus Many Lousy Chemical Substances."

Lee says she was inspired to create Best in Beauty in 2007, around the same time as a highly publicized recall on lead-containing children's toys, when she read the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics' "Poison Kiss" report on lead in lipstick.

The Campaign claimed that 61 percent of the brand-name lipstick products it tested contained lead in excess of FDA's limit for candy.

The American Council on Science and Health went on to name "toxic lipstick" the No. 1 unfounded health scare of the year (<sup>2</sup> ['The Rose Sheet' Jan. 7, 2008](#), p.4).

Lee says her purpose is not to alarm consumers. "I don't want this to be a scare tactic" or suggest that "all the products you're using are bad for you and you should only buy ours."

"Best in Beauty simply wants you to consider the products you use daily - often more than once a day - and to be aware of the chemicals they contain. Then think about the number of chemicals your body is exposed to over a lifetime," she said.

The fact that the European Commission has banned more than 1,300 ingredients due to toxicity concerns, compared with FDA's 10, speaks to the need for "proper regulations" in the U.S., according to Best in Beauty.

"Most people do not have a degree in chemistry and cannot define words like 'cyclopentasiloxane,' and they can't always carry a 'toxic ingredients list' when shopping," the group notes.

*-Ryan Nelson*