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It Just Makes sense

by Karyn Reagan

SeneGence

Founder **Joni Rogers-Kante** understands the importance of helping women and children in hardship—**she was one.**

While most 24-year-old men might cringe at the sound of Mom telling that baby story one more time, Alan Rogers—the son of Joni Rogers-Kante, Founder and CEO of SeneGence—must simply endure. After all, it was his infant innocence that inspired the formation of his mother's company.

Rogers-Kante reminisces about the times when her son would reach his baby fingers up to her freshly made-up face while she was feeding him. "Those close moments are some of the most cherished times of motherhood," says Rogers-Kante. "But I would usually have to reapply my makeup before leaving the house, since those sweet little hands managed to remove or smudge most of it."

Instead of simply reflecting on those memories, seven years later Rogers-Kante found herself using them to form the foundation for her survival and ultimate success. Due to divorce, she was suddenly a single mom with little income and an uncertain future. Like many others who suffer a similar plight, Rogers-Kante was forced to live off the charity of friends until she found her footing. "It's a scary place to be," she says. "But I remembered the idea that had been birthed when dealing with makeup that rubbed off—create a line of cosmetics that stays on all day, no matter what."

Company Profile

Founded: 1999

Headquarters: Irvine, Calif.

Founder and CEO: Joni Rogers-Kante

Products: Skincare, anti-aging, cosmetics and body care

The
Make Sense Foundation™



Coincidentally, Rogers-Kante had a friend in the midst of divorce at the same time—and that friend had income. “Carmen Holladay graciously allowed me to live with her,” she says. Rogers-Kante was also grateful to still have some income, as she had been a successful distributor for another direct selling company since before her separation. There, she developed a love for the industry and its ability to provide tools for women in difficult situations to support themselves while raising their self-esteem.

Making It Happen

During that time Rogers-Kante learned the ropes of starting a direct selling company. “With a place to live and my idea for a business, I was free to devote my time to developing a plan,” says Rogers-Kante. The novice bought business plan software and went to work creating a company. “Once I figured how to turn the computer on, I stumbled my way through the rest,” she says.

Her persistence paid off, and four years later, in 1999, SeneGence International

was launched. The company started with six patented long-lasting lip colors, lip gloss and remover and was among the first to offer women products that stay fresh and colorful for 18 hours without budging or smudging. After just nine months, SeneGence was offering a total of 18 lip colors. In the first year, this debt-free, privately held company recorded \$1.3 million in sales, jumping to \$3.5 million in the second year. “SeneGence is currently in 11 countries with a distributor force of under 5,000 in the United States,” Rogers-Kante says.

As the product line grew, the company also added an anti-aging benefit to the products. “SenePlex Complex is the proprietary anti-aging formulation exclusive to SeneGence,” she says. “All SeneDerm and creamy SeneCosmetics contain this one-of-a-kind kinetic enzyme that fights the signs of aging by renewing your skin from the inside out an average of 23.3 percent more rapidly, which in turn reduces fine lines and wrinkles by an average of 55 percent for 100 percent of our consumers.”



Joni Rogers-Kante

The Reason Behind It All

While Rogers-Kante and Holladay, Operations Manager and current Director of the company's charitable endeavor, the Make Sense Foundation (MSF), were planning the future of SeneGence, an underlying motivation drove them. They desperately wanted to help other women and children



SeneGence Founder and CEO, Joni Rogers-Kante (right), created art with distributors and their children to be auctioned off in benefit of the Make Sense Foundation.

“While devising the business plan for SeneGence, I simultaneously wrote a plan for a foundation through which we could give to organizations that help those in the dark time of their lives.”

—Joni Rogers-Kante



Kiss For a Cause LipSense lip color and MakeSense™ liquid foundation.



SeneGence Distributors participated in the Relay for Life to help raise funds for the American Cancer Society.

in need—both financially and emotionally. “While devising the business plan for SeneGence, I simultaneously wrote a plan for a foundation through which we could give to organizations that help those in the dark time of their lives,” says Rogers-Kante.

In 2002, the Make Sense Foundation was launched. Recipients of MSF funds must be legal nonprofits that support women and children in need. “I was one of the women who needed to be supported at one time,” says Rogers-Kante. “And I believe in the ability of women to create a better world. After all, we are the main influence in forming the outlooks and behaviors of our children, who in turn influence society.”

Each quarter, organizations interested in becoming recipients are invited to fill out an application to be considered by the foundation board. SeneGence distributors are encouraged to find qualified charities and often have the privilege of presenting checks to their favorite organizations from the MSF. “One of the unique aspects of our vetting process is that every charity we give to is linked, in some way, to one of our SeneGence distributors,” Rogers-Kante says.

A Constant Stream of Charity

Funds for the MSF are raised in several ways. SeneGence sponsors at least four events each year to provide fundraising opportunities. One of the most popular is dubbed PIT (Princess In Training) Stop. Each year for

The Kiss For a Cause LipSense, a blue-based fuchsia shade limited-edition lip color, is brought back biannually in an effort to raise money for a selected charity.

Rogers-Kante’s birthday, she organizes a two-day celebration giving distributors the opportunity to participate in several events, including professional training in glamour and makeup artistry skills and business. For the January 2012 event, a professional artist was invited to teach the attendees painting techniques, which they then applied to ceramic pieces after a dinner at Rogers-Kante’s home. “The exclusive pieces of art will be auctioned to raise funds for the MSF at the annual seminar held for distributors later in the year,” says Rogers-Kante.

A portion of the sale of each order of liquid cosmetic foundation and the SenseCosmetic Makeup Brush Collection is automatically given to the MSF, as well as a portion of the profit from other products and tools that distributors order for their business use. There is also a Kiss For a Cause LipSense, a blue-based fuchsia shade limited-edition lip color that is brought back

biannually in an effort to raise money for a selected charity, which is nominated by the MSF’s Board of Directors. Most recently, 5 percent of the wholesale price of each tube of Kiss For a Cause sold was donated to the American Breast Cancer Foundation.

For each new distributor kit purchased, \$5 is donated to the MSF, and employees and distributors may opt to have donations given to the foundation directly from their paychecks. Up to \$75 is also given to the MSF from the sign-up fee of annual distributor training events held by SeneGence leadership. “We have built in a constant stream of funds moving into the Make Sense Foundation,” says Rogers-Kante.

Some distributors create contests competing with each other to sell certain products in their specific geographical areas. Then they donate an agreed-upon portion of the proceeds of those products to the MSF.



During the holiday season, SeneGence offers a line of holiday greeting cards called *Petite Picassos*. "Every Christmas season we invite children and young relatives of distributors to submit artwork for our *Petite Picassos* holiday cards," says Rogers-Kante. "All proceeds from these cards are donated to the MSF. It's a fun way to involve children and raise funds at the same time."

Also, each year distributors and employees donate gifts and gift cards to local children as part of the annual Holiday Toy Drive. Past recipients have been the Hillview Acres Children's Home and Families Forward Organization.

"As you can see, many activities and events are happening throughout the year in order to drive funds into the MSF," says Rogers-Kante. The MSF has held a golf fundraiser where SeneGence distributors could enjoy a day of golf while raising funds for the foundation. Rogers-Kante has also participated in a bowling event to benefit women and children in need, and distributors once gathered in Laguna Beach, Calif., for seaside yoga, donating a portion of the proceeds from this event to the MSF.

A Peak at the Results

Working Wardrobes® is another recipient of MSF generosity. It is a nonprofit organization based in Orange County, Calif. that empowers people in life crises to confidently enter the workforce with career development and wardrobe services. "Just coming up with something to wear to an interview can cause heartache for women who have nothing," says Rogers-Kante. Last year, the MSF collected clothing donations on behalf of Working Wardrobes during their annual MSF Awards Banquet. Distributors from the United States, Australia and Canada contributed gently used business-appropriate clothing to donate to Working Wardrobes. "The event and the clothing drive were both a success. There were racks of clothes donated," Rogers-Kante says.

Although the main focus is supporting women and children in need, the MSF has also responded to the desperation of those suffering from the devastating effects of natural disasters. In response to the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti, SeneGence created a collection of products called the *Solutions for Haiti Collection*. Twenty



percent of the proceeds of sales went to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund, established for the relief and support of the people in Haiti.

When Hurricane Katrina left unprecedented destruction in its wake, SeneGence distributors were among the heroes who gave a helping hand to their fellow citizens. They put into action the care and concern that flows through the company and the MSF. One Arizona distributor and her husband, an optometrist—Priscilla Markham and Dr. John Markham—donated their time and expertise to help examine the 1,000 New Orleans residents evacuated to Phoenix. Most of them had lost their glasses or never had the chance to grab them. Other distributors responded by freely replacing lost product to their clients and using profits from their sales to give to those in need.

Another charity that receives funds from the MSF is the Brave Hearts Camp sponsored by the People's Burn Foundation in Indianapolis. According to their website, the camp is for children who are burn survivors. It offers them an opportunity to heal from physical and emotional scars by providing an environment for them "to just be kids." They are reminded that "although their skin was burned, their hearts and minds were not." And most of the camp counselors are firefighters. Although there are several similar camps across the country, Brave Hearts goes the extra mile by providing focused counsel on inner healing that is provided to families for an entire year.

The program name was chosen because it reflects the children who attend. *Brave* describes the courage demonstrated by the kids, and *Hearts* is an acronym: Heal

through Encouragement, Acceptance, Respect, Togetherness and Sanctity.

It's a Personal Thing

A need among women that isn't often discussed or remembered is a little more personal than some. And it was brought to the attention of a group of SeneGence distributors through the volunteer efforts of an organization called The Flying Samaritans, which operates free medical clinics in Mexico. Doctors, dentists, nurses, translators, pilots and support personnel fly to clinics in private aircraft. While conducting their work, the medical personnel noticed that women receiving treatment were often wearing undergarments that were in shreds, being held together with tape, string or staples. "Some of the SeneGence distributors, affectionately known as SeneSisters, got together with a goal to collect enough unmentionables for one clinic," says Rogers-Kante. "Their efforts were so successful that the project known as *Senorita's Secrets* collected enough undergarments to cover all of Baja, Calif."

To date, over 30 qualifying charities from coast to coast have received funds from the MSF. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been contributed through in-kind support and cash donations for women and children in need across the United States. "The goal for MSF is to become a global entity and one of the go-to foundations in the world of philanthropy," Rogers-Kante says. "We feel that giving back to the community and others in need is the only option." *DSN*

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For more information, please contact: