

A true Boise original

HOLLIS BROOKOVER PUTS HER RETAIL ROOTS TO WORK MAKING LUSCIOUS SKIN-CARE PRODUCTS

BY CHEREEN LANGRILL

Hollis Brookover grew up understanding what it means to pitch in. Her family owned a popular women's clothing store called Brookover's, and, in those days, people who owned their own businesses didn't let family members sit on the sidelines.

Brookover's parents grew up in the Depression era, and they didn't waste resources. So when help was needed around one of the stores, Hollis and her brother were called on first.

"They never hired anyone to do something that they, my brother or I could do," Brookover says. "I look back on that kind of fondly because it gave me a great work ethic."

Brookover carried that work ethic into a new business, launching Morningside LLC and its first product, Originals, in 2004 after moving back to Idaho a couple of years earlier. She has recently added an all-natural line called Simple Originals. And her products are now available at Albertsons, along with other SuperValu stores, such as Acme and Jewel-Osco.

The idea to launch the Originals line came from Brookover's love of high-end body care products.

"I was looking for good, quality products that didn't have specialty-bath shop costs," Brookover says.

Morningside produces lotions, body washes, hand soaps, body butters and scrubs, among other products. In addition to the Originals product line, Morningside also markets products under the names Simple Originals (all-natural body care) and Lumiere bath products. There is also a line of Morningside body care products made for the kitchen to keep hands soft and clean while working in this busy room. Brookover managed to have it all when it came to the final product — quantity and quality.

Prices for a 16-ounce Simple Originals product range from \$5.99 to \$6.99.

BOISE VALUES

Brookover, a third-generation Boise resident, grew up in a retail family. Her grand-



PHOTO BY DEBORAH HARDEE

Hollis Brookover launched her first body care line, Originals, in 2004 and now offers other lines, too.

father, Samuel Brookover, opened Brookover's in Downtown Boise in 1917. As the business grew, Brookover's stores could be found throughout town. Her father, Gordon, later took on the store's management duties.

Hollis Brookover grew up working in the family business, helping at the store until she left Idaho to attend Smith College in 1978.

A longtime Brookover's employee purchased the business in the mid-'90s, and, in 1998, Brookover's closed.

"I want to build the same kind of company my parents built with integrity," she says.

She applied her business savvy when considering a retail business of her own. Many women love to use high-quality body care products, but those women are often managing busy lives. Sometimes they don't have time to make extra trips to specialty stores to get the body care products they love.

She thought about marketing her products in grocery stores, where women could shop for everything they need under one roof. Fred Meyer was one of the first stores to sell the Originals line in 2004. Others followed.

"I'm thrilled, because I don't have time to go everywhere," she says.



COURTESY OF THE BROOKOVER FAMILY

Hollis Brookover is a third-generation Boise retailer. Her grandfather started Brookover's, a women's clothing store, in 1917. (See more historical photos at IdahoStatesman.com/Treasure)

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

Morningside products are made inside Mariposa Labs in Garden City, where Brookover has an office and works with a staff to develop new products and produce the current lines. Brookover works with a chemist to ensure each product is safe while also meeting the company's high standards. She describes her philosophy as one of balance: She wants safe, affordable ingredients. Morningside doesn't use animal-derived ingredients or test on animals. Ingredients are listed on the company's Web site because Brookover believes consumers should have easy access to ingredient lists. All Morningside formulas and ingredients are FDA-approved.

Brookover tests the products out herself to make sure they meet her standards. She likes the idea of having a lotion that smells good, for instance, but doesn't clash with perfume a woman might be wearing. She will apply one of her lotions while wearing perfume to make sure it isn't overpowering.

Product labels are designed to become part of a home's decor. Brookover worked with graphic designer Amy Rediker of Boise's Big Bird Graphic Design to produce lovely labels that look great in a kitchen or bathroom. Rediker says Brookover brings a unique and much-appreciated energy to the projects they work on together.

"She's a wonderful idea person," Rediker says. "She's extremely creative and has great taste."

AN ORIGINAL

People who know Brookover describe her as inspiring, adventurous and passionate. She is especially passionate about children and has spent years as an advocate for education and quality of life issues.

Brookover's interest blossomed in the 1980s, when she returned to Idaho on a break from school and approached then-Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus to see if there was a project she could do for him. She asked for something challenging, and he responded by asking her to do a follow-up study regarding the status of prosecutions and sentencing in child sex abuse cases. Brookover re-researched 397 cases and traveled throughout the state to complete that project.

That experience inspired her in 2004 to launch Idaho Voices for Children, an Idaho chapter of Voices for America's Children.

Both organizations aim to serve as advocates for public policies that improve the lives of children.

"We should make sure they're getting quality at every stage of the game," Brookover says. "Nobody's there to speak for them."

Brookover's next goal is to establish a non-profit foundation funded by a portion of Morningside sales and private donations. The Every Child is an Original Foundation will support research and education activities that can help children in America prepare for the future. It will also help legislators and the public understand what children need to succeed, Brookover says. Brookover hopes to start the foundation in the near future as Morningside continues to grow.

It is a project that has been in the back of Brookover's mind since she launched Morningside, and she is enthusiastic about taking this next step. Childhood experiences can strongly influence what happens in adulthood. In Brookover's case, it made her develop into a woman with a strong work ethic and fierce dedication to serving her community.

"We all need to develop ourselves professionally, personally and intellectually to meet the world head on," she says.

Sally Zive, United Way of Treasure Valley president and CEO, has long admired Brookover's community involvement. In April, Brookover opened her home to a "meet the author" event featuring Heather McLeod Grant, who was in town speaking at the United Way annual meeting.

"She never has too much on her plate," Zive says. "I admire that cool, elegant, sophisticated person who is so warm she makes you feel like a friend immediately."

Zive believes that Brookover's long-time business experience and her passion for child advocacy makes her ideal to lead Idaho Voices for Children. After all, this is a woman who makes things happen, whether the issue is child

advocacy or developing an affordable product that contains healthy, high-quality ingredients.

"She's so busy, yet is pouring her personal passion into advocacy for Idaho's young children with the most realistic, business-like approach; the kind of effort that will get results," Zive says. ★



COURTESY OF MORNINGSIDE LLC

Simple Originals, an all-natural line, includes lotion, body wash and body butter. To learn more about Hollis Brookover's products, visit www.morningsideproducts.com.