

Taking It One Step at a Time

Amy Leavell Bransford found out her passion was perfect for business.

By Mary Welch

Amy Leavell Bransford seems to have found the perfect combination of melding all of her passions and turning it into a business. No one is more surprised about it than she is.

“I just take things one day at a time and do the next logical step – or maybe illogical step – and go from there,” she says. “I was talking to my mom the other day and said, ‘Can you believe I have my own business?’ And, she said that she always knew. Well, I wished she would have told me!”

Bransford is passionate about several things: her family, an organic lifestyle, helping others and music. Somehow, she blends them all together, because she has just opened New Moon Skin Care in the Studioplex building on Auburn Avenue. She earlier had been practicing skin care treatments at her home as well as in the home of clients.

Bransford entered the skin care business to help atone for the damage done to her own skin in her previous job as a public relations executive with two record labels. “I was working with Phil Walden and Capricorn Records, first as an intern and then doing publicity and events when he relocated it to Atlanta in 1996. I started the college radio department catalog for Capricorn.” She then went to work in public relations for Terminus Records, which also folded. (She eventually married the brother of the founder of Terminus Records.) She worked with such bands as 311, CAKE and Widespread Panic.

“I loved working for record labels, and I lived the independent Atlanta life. I was out late at night, usually at a smoky bar or club listening to music or meeting with bands. However, eventually I realized that the lifestyle was wrecking havoc on my face, and I looked for a way to change my habits.”

And, that is what led her to become interested in beauty and skin care. She enrolled in the Atlanta Institute of Aesthetics, which is a division of the Atlanta School of Massage, becoming certified in microdermabrasion. That is now her specialty.

“I really just did it for myself,” says the 32-year-old. “I wanted to learn as much about skin care – especially organic skin care – as I could. I wasn’t thinking of it as a career, but then I realized that I had such a passion for it that I wanted to share my knowledge, my excitement with others. I worked in a spa doing facials, but it wasn’t giving me everything I wanted. To me a facial is much more than slapping products on a face.”

By this time, Bransford was married with her toddler son, Miles

and eventually she settled on Juice Beauty, a California line developed by a team of women whose products are made from more than 26 certified organic fruit juices, which give more antioxidants and nutrients than products made from other ingredients, she says.

“The line has great antioxidant technology, and there are no parabens, pesticides, petroleum or artificial dyes in it,” she says. “It fits exactly what I want for myself and my clients.”

She worked from the house because she wasn’t quite convinced that she could get enough volume to justify opening up a storefront.

However, combining clients and a 2-year-old in her house was not an ideal combination. “It was exhausting,” she says. “I want it to be perfect for clients, and then I want to maintain a very clean house for my family as well. There was a lot of putting away toys. I started to think maybe it was time to venture out of the house.”

After talking with a friend, she found the space she recently moved into, and she is now officially a businesswoman. “My mom had a clothing store when I was a girl, so I watched her. And my parents have several businesses, in addition to the tree farm. I guess in hindsight I should have paid more attention to math classes. But this feels right. Right time, right pace. I’m marketing my business by word of mouth as well as through the media. It’s my old PR background. I am trying to build the brand by talking about the person behind the brand.”

Radio personality Mara Davis says Bransford is on track. “She is passionate – passionate – about skin care, giving great massages, music and being organic. She gives a great facial. I’m really seeing the difference in my face. Plus, she plays great music. You go to other spas, and let’s face it, how many different ways can you make dripping water sound like music?”

Bransford’s love of music is inherited, even mixing her own CDs to play in the spa. Her father is Chuck Leavell, the famed keyboardist for the Rolling Stones and, before that, the Allman Brothers. “Some people come to the door because of my father’s name,” she admits. “And, that’s fine. Once they’re in the door, I have to give them a great facial.”

As she embarks on her new adventure – opening a business – Bransford is intent on making sure that she has time for her family, friends, clients, music and the business.

“I’m not sure if I’ll open another spa in the future or exactly where I will go from here,” she says. “It really is one step at a time even though I have a lot of irons in the fire. I’m on the right path, for now.” ♀

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New Moon Skin Care

Photography by Sean Colkes