

FACE TO FACE

by kate hamilton

Are you an industry professional who would like to be featured in Face to Face? Contact Melinda Taschetta-Millane, editor, at 630-653-2155, ext. 565; send a fax to 630-653-2192 or e-mail taschetta-millane@allured.com



*Judie Tuttle
A Face Place
Battle Creek, Michigan*

While suffering from acne all her life, Judie Tuttle found it difficult to find a skin care line that addressed her needs. After retiring from her job as an administrative secretary at the Kellogg Company, she came across a cosmetology school's advertisement and immediately enrolled. With the esthetics knowledge she would attain, Tuttle hoped to finally learn how to properly treat her skin.

Seeking education from a variety of sources, Tuttle studied at the Aveda Institute in Minneapolis, trained with Bioelements, and took classes from Sylvie Hennessy and Mark Lees, PhD. Now a licensed esthetician, cosmetologist and electrologist, she actively pursues a well-rounded education. "Since 1988, I've continued to attend tradeshows, seminars and manufacturer classes, and have kept learning about the products that I offer,"

she says. "It isn't only the product line itself that is important, but also the education that is offered with it from skin care professionals that teaches people the proper way to treat their skin and perform facials."

Tuttle spends six months of the year offering a small menu of facials to her Battle Creek, Michigan, clientele and freelances while vacationing in Florida during the other half. Since 1992, she stopped seeing a need for advertising and has relied only on referrals and speaking appearances to solicit new clients. Tuttle also moved her business into her home, allowing for a more flexible schedule. "I was surprised—I didn't think people

would like it," she comments. "My clients love it because they go in and out of a private residence." Offering a certain amount of privacy, clients feel less self-conscious leaving her home, Tuttle continues.

Her decision to provide only facials is rooted in the needs of her clients. "I chose not to offer certain types of services, such as strong peels," explains Tuttle. "I understand these treatments and will explain to clients what will happen to the skin. I don't think performing them is my role, but a dermatologist's role." She often refers her clients to dermatologists in the area for additional services and consultation beyond her offerings.

Throughout her career, Tuttle has emphasized her clients' needs and what's best for them. "I simply want to help people take care of their skin without irritation. It is fun to see the skin care fads come and go—that's probably why I'll do this until the day I die."

Tuttle sends a yearly newsletter to her clientele with helpful beauty trends and information on what's happening in the

industry to remind them that she's thinking of them. In addition, clients receive a handwritten postcard on their birthday and are invited to take advantage of a product discount during their birthday month. After each treatment, a follow-up letter and flier are sent reviewing the professional service received and any comments that came up during the visit. "I develop a really great one-on-one relationship with people, because that's how I feel," she notes. "I know that I want to feel comfortable with someone who's helping me with my skin."

A primary aspect of Tuttle's business relies heavily on retail sales. "I don't have any trouble retailing, although I don't push the sales. I think up-sells are best done with a one-on-one relationship," she says. This approach reaps profits year-round in both states where Tuttle resides. She also doesn't use promotions to entice product purchase during a particular time of the year. "I've found that if you don't use promotions, then you can retail all year long because clients aren't waiting for the sales."

The products she recommends also are scrutinized heavily. Each one must pass a three-month test by Tuttle and several other advisers before it is endorsed to clients. They can elect to have their at-home products tested for pH levels as well. "I have a lot of clients bring in their products to test the pH in each. It is pretty eye-opening to see what you actually are applying on your skin," she comments.

After more than 17 years in the industry, Tuttle still looks back at her humble beginnings. "At any point, if someone had told me before I started beauty school that I would enjoy cleaning women's skin so much, I would have died laughing," she says. "I don't think esthetics is something you ever know you want to do. Most people don't hear about it. It's a wonderful field. And if you get a solid education, the sky is the limit on what you can achieve." ■