

# The business of beauty is looking good

Living in the provinces is no impediment to looking and feeling great, if the success of a local beauty salon is anything to go by.

**Wendy Shailer-Knight** talks to a Palmerston North businesswoman whose passion for making women feel good is paying off.

**P**ania Ryan Beauty Retreat has won a coveted business award from French skincare giant Decleor – for the third time – as well as chalking up a sales incentive for a Fiji-made skincare range.

The salon was awarded Decleor's Supreme Award for Excellence for 2014 at a conference and awards dinner in Auckland in February.

The salon's founder and director Pania Ryan says that to be eligible for the Decleor award a salon has to be continuously training staff in an ever-changing industry and maintaining high standards of customer service.

But it also has to increase sales turnover in Decleor treatments and products by an incredible 30 per cent on the previous year. The fact that Pania Ryan Beauty Retreat managed this in a challenging economy is an achievement in itself, Ryan says.

She says to win the award the Palmerston North business also edged out big city salons from the main centres – with much higher income brackets – proving that great things can come from the provinces.

"For us, to have industry recognition, to be achieving excellence for our team and for our clients in Manawatu, that's what's really important."

But the woman who started her beauty salon in the city 30 years ago

## French skincare company ages well

Decleor is a 40-year-old company based in Paris that was founded by a team made up of a beautician, doctor, physiotherapist, shiatsu teacher and aromatherapist.

Decleor skin and beauty therapies are from natural ingredients and are oil-based. It was the first brand to use the term "aromatherapy" in cosmetics.

Decleor facials and skin treatments performed at salons around the world incorporate therapeutic massage and relaxation techniques, said to improve the efficacy of the product ingredients and physical health.

When aromatherapy boomed in the 1990s, so did Decleor.

In 2000 Decleor became part of the Shiseido group, extending into the Asian market. According to its website, it is considered the world's largest cosmetic aromatherapy brand.

The French manufacturer also has an ethos of sustainability, planting thousands of trees and improving the living conditions of the people in a region in Madagascar where it sources ingredients such as ylang-ylang, vanilla, cardamom, cocoa butter and apricot.

with a passion for making women feel good says that even more importantly, the award means customers are happy and the products and services are working.

"It's a reflection on our team: They're loving what they're doing, customers are loving it and obviously we are delivering results."

"Skincare for us is about people looking after themselves. We're empowering women to feel good about themselves, and because the award is sales and technique driven, it confirms the quality of the product and the salon."

"We have to be able to deliver amazing results to get these sales."

Ryan says it's a fascinating industry to work in that it is constantly developing.

Her customers are men and women; people from all walks of life.

Some come in weekly and are like part of the family.

"A lot of customers have been with me for the entire time I've been in business."

Customers often ask for help with their complete look: from choosing glasses frames to makeup.

Having hair salon Silver Scissors next door makes the Coachman Hotel location something of a one-stop-shop for weddings and special events, too.

Ryan is passionate about the beauty therapy industry, but says there is now a definite split between customers who want instant results, like surgery or Botox, and other injectables, and those who want a more natural, holistic approach to beauty.

She has always been firmly in the latter camp and thinks a groundswell is building towards the natural approach.

"There are so many scientific reports now concerning possible carcinogens in some products. People are wanting a healthier lifestyle. We want results but want to be healthy at the same time."

An example of this shift is the in-

creasing regulation and decreasing popularity of sunbed use. But some still follow the call of beauty at any cost.

Ryan believes part of the problem is that the current role models for young woman are a bit "offbeat".

"TV stars are our role models. But there are far better ones to choose: We need to look at women doing great things in science, government and social work rather than someone on a TV reality show."

Pania Ryan Beauty Retreat prefers to go much deeper, pampering clients with treatments that relax and revitalise, and offering only products with proven results and safe ingredients, she says.

Ryan, who's been in the fashion and beauty industry her entire working life, started out training in therapeutic massage and aromatherapy.

Now she manages her staff of six in the small, intimate setting of the Fitzherbert Ave salon.

But it's this early training in the power of natural ingredients that has influenced her choices in what brands to use – brands like Decleor and Pure Fiji.

"For me Decleor is a natural-based product, well established and hugely respected," says Ryan, who has offered Decleor treatments for 20 years in her salon.

The salon was one of four in New Zealand to win the award.

In announcing the awards, Decleor NZ director Anne O'Brien said the top four Decleor salons nationwide showed "outstanding excellence" and had to demonstrate top-quality service standards, professional presentation and continuing growth.

Pania Ryan Beauty Retreat also won the Decleor award in 2007 and 2009.

Ryan says the French skincare company often uses the salon as a business model for other retailers.

Ryan also topped the country in sales for Pure Fiji skincare products and treatments over the past year.



Close to nature: Pania Ryan's natural, holistic approach to health and beauty at her Palmerston North beauty salon is not only bringing in the customers, it's filling up the trophy cabinet as well.  
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