

mindfulness

BY GEORGETTE GOUVEIA

For Ronit Raphael, the beauty of the inner landscape is as important as that of the body.

As founding president of L. Raphael Geneve, she has created a skincare system and group of spas worldwide to nourish the latter. But she also encourages mind and spirit through her Seven Foundations of Beauty, her Teen Program and her quest to end child abuse.

We first encountered L. Raphael when we visited The Four Seasons New York for WAG's December "Fascinating Rhythms" issue. Having had a superb spa adventure, we just had to meet the woman behind it. So when an opportunity arose to visit with Raphael at her Four Seasons locale, we leapt at it. And we were not disappointed.

She is as warm as her employees and as uplifting as her treatments. Perhaps that's because she believes in seven principles of beauty that unite mind, body and soul at her spas so that "beauty radiates from within." They include medical testing for optimum health; nutrition; physical activity; age management through her treatments and skincare lines, tailored for men and women at different stages of life; noninvasive treatments to help enhance appearance and confidence; stress management; and leisure time.

"This needs to be a philosophy of life," she says. "People don't take themselves seriously, and they don't treat themselves well."

Even if you don't have more than 15 minutes, take time for a walk, she adds. Raphael practices what she preaches – doing yoga, boxing and Krav Maga and walking when she can in a peripatetic lifestyle. She has spas in her native Israel at The Jaffa Hotel in Tel Aviv, the Hotel Martinez in Cannes and the Montage in Beverly Hills; the Beauty Lab in Almaty, Kazakhstan and the Temple of Beauty in her hometown of Geneva.

"It's very elegant, not too flashy," Raphael says of the seven-floor townhouse, which has 20 treatment rooms, two consultation rooms, a yoga and Pilates studio, a bronzing room and a hair salon. L. Raphael also brings its private spa service to homes, offices and yachts in the United States, Australia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Oman, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

As is the case with some luxury skincare lines, a skin problem offered the impetus for its beginnings. Raphael was an 18-year-old with minor acne when she tried a chemical peel that left her with second-degree burns. But that only fueled her desire to find out everything she could about the science behind skincare.

In 2003, she created L. Raphael, ultimately teaming with the late Meir Shinitzky, who served as chief scientist and head of research and development; Paolo Giacomoni, research and development expert; and Raphael Gumener, the organization's chief medical officer.

It was a case of skincare specialist, heal thyself. Today, Raphael says, her scars are very faint. There is certainly nothing visible to us as we chat with her.

Given the company's origins, it's no wonder that Raphael, a mother of three, developed a teen program to help those at an age when body image becomes so important to develop healthy attitudes toward self-care.

But her protection of the young doesn't stop there. Noting that the United Nations reports that one out of every six children, some 220 million worldwide, are sexually abused each year, Raphael launched the Global Army Against Child Abuse in 2013, dedicating a minimum of one day a week to address the issue. The organization's goals are to appoint a minister in each country responsible for the protection of children; implement compulsory educational programs on prevention and protection for first through 12th grades; develop complementary programs for parents, teachers and social workers; and legislate harder punishments for convicted rapists and abusers, especially family members of victims.

To this end, she has partnered with organizations that specialize in child abuse research and prevention such as The Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in Maryland and Child Lures Prevention in Vermont to create curric-

ula for grades 1 through 12 globally and teamed with the Israeli Association of Rape Crisis Centers to create the animated short "Tom's Secret," so children won't fear reporting abuse.

When Raphael addressed the U.N. about this issue, she was surprised to discover that her youngest child, Serra Raphael Leitersdorf, who had accompanied her, was going to give a speech on the subject as well.

"I was so proud of her," Raphael says. At first, though, she had her reservations about one so young (13) addressing such an august body, but someone at the U.N. told her, "It's good that young people stand up for their rights."

Raphael is helping them do just that. **WW**
For more, visit l-raphael.com and toms-secret.com.

Ronit Raphael.