

## Introducing ACG NJ's 2018 Corporate Growth Award Honoree

### *An Interview with* **Lydia Sarfati** CEO **Repêchage**

*Conducted by Sally Glick, President, ACG New Jersey*



When Lydia Sarfati launched Repêchage more than 35 years ago, she knew she wanted to shake up the skin care sector. “I was energized by what I was learning about the revolutionary idea of adding seaweed to skin care products,” she said. And it was this energy that she drew on to change everything about the industry.

On July 23, 1980, Lydia Sarfati introduced the Four Layer Facial® to beauty professionals and national and international press. Vogue Beauty Editor Andrea Quinn Robinson volunteered to be Lydia’s model, a good omen for the tiny company with no sales force, no advertising budget, and no marketing plan. There wasn’t even a shout out on social media such as we have grown accustomed to today.

Nonetheless, within a year, the Four Layer® Facial and 12 at-home Repêchage products were available in 75 salons. Consumer and trade publications raved about Repêchage. In fact, when a well-known Korean actress mentioned the product on air, the Korean Home Shopping Network was bombarded and sales of the product remarkably spiked to triple digits in response to the unsolicited testimonial.

#### ***Unique product; unique harvesting***

Lydia’s commitment to create the most beautiful products that also produced results stemmed from her own experience with the sea. “Repêchage was an idea that actually took shape during my travels in the 1970s. While I was in Israel I discovered that the farming community was using seaweed as a bio stimulant and fertilizer so that even in a dry climate farmers were able to grow an abundance of fruits and vegetables.”

Since it has no roots, seaweed feeds through osmosis, absorbing minerals and vitamins from the sea water, becoming a dense concentration of vitamins and minerals as well as macro elements, phytohormones and amino acids. After she met with seaweed harvesters and marine biologists all over the world it became evident that seaweed was the most complete and natural source for health, beauty, and wellness, and was going to be the focus of this innovative skin care line. At the core of her unique approach is the use of rich, pure, seaweed filtrate – a complex derived by a proprietary extraction method that creates a fluid containing all the rich seaweed phyto-nutrients in their most potent form.

Backed by scientific research on different species of sea plants, Lydia created an extensive product line based on the unique properties of several species of seaweeds, with each species influenced by the oceanic regions where they grow. “Traditionally using seaweeds harvested from the Brittany Coast of

France, I am proud that Repêchage now also uses seaweed sustainably harvested off the coast of Down East Maine,” Lydia notes. Once dried, the seaweed is packed and sent to their ISO 9001 certified manufacturing facility in Secaucus, NJ, where an exclusive method is used by Repêchage chemists to expel the intercellular fluid from the fibrous seaweed tissue, while retaining the activity of the vitamins minerals and other elements, converting the pure filtrate into small batches. It’s this unique step that sets Repêchage apart from every competitor. After six months the liquid reaches its full potency and is then incorporated into the Repêchage products.

### ***Unique packaging***

Lydia carefully points out that along with everything else that is distinctive, even the packaging and delivery are innovative. Their signature treatments are packed to bring the freshest product to every client, with facial kits that take the guess work out of applications, offering a unique uni-dose system with pre-measured steps and instructions to assure highly effective results. For the salon and spa owner, it ensures perfect inventory control so that they reap the profits of every single service. And this innovative uni-dose system doesn’t end at the spa or salon. In 1996, Lydia created Rapidex® Marine Exfoliator to provide a controlled application process after observing that clients were over-exfoliating their skin.

### ***A success story***

The success of this product line is easily documented by recognizing that Repêchage products have garnered over 70 awards since 1980. Within just one year of the launch of Repêchage, the company and products were being featured in Glamour, Elle, the New York Times, Vogue and on the Today Show. Known for her ground breaking concepts, and honored as a “Legend” for her role in skin care, Lydia set about building an international business.

As Repêchage took the skin care community by storm during the decade that followed, skincare education for beauty professionals became a priority. By 1981, they introduced their famous Four Layer Facial in Japan and by 1989 they pioneered the street level skin care concept when they opened their first Repêchage Treatment Center and Day Spa on Third Avenue in NY.

With a commitment to changing the skin care industry through innovative approaches focusing on full service distributors that relied on strategic alliances with other professionals in the hair and nail market, the awards kept piling up. In 1990 their incredible success was on display when they celebrated their tenth anniversary by opening their new 15, 000 square foot loft-space office. Over those first ten years they had grown to roughly ten times the original size, while introducing more new products and expanding into more areas.

With her own personal history as a backdrop – having arrived in the United States at the age of 17 – Lydia’s journey has been stunning.

In 1997, Lydia and Repêchage were presented with the prestigious Crystal Award in recognition of her contributions and achievements in the field of esthetics. And the Cinderella success story continued when, in 2001, Repêchage was granted the ICMAD’s Cosmetic Entrepreneur Award for Leadership. At about that same time, they built their current 50,000 sq ft manufacturing, research, development and training facility in Secaucus.

In 2005, Lydia authored her first book, "Success at Your Fingertips" and in 2009 they received the Seventh Annual "Top Women in Business" Networking Award. Since then the products have been extended and recognition has grown to international dimensions. That same year Lydia was presented with the Chevalerie "Knight Award" by Intercoiffure Mondial as the **first and only skin care professional** to be recognized by the organization for outstanding contributions to the industry!

Dr. Oz featured Repechage on his show in 2012 and new products kept evolving through their intense commitment to working with biologists, focusing on preserving the ecology as well as on extraordinary skin care processes. Most recently, Lydia was honored at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Outing hosted by the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County in August 2017.

In 2018 the company was selected by the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG NJ) – New Jersey chapter as an honoree at their annual Corporate Growth and Awards Conference, selected because of its reputation as a game changer!

One of the ways that their success is tied to their innovation is captured by the essence of the product. Repêchage means "second chance" – which carries with it two important references. First, women who use the products say "It feels like my skin has been reborn," because their skin has a second chance. Also, fishermen often use the word repêchage, or re-pesce (re-fish) reflecting on their practice of repeatedly casting their nets out to sea. In this way, the name and the product make the connection between skin and sea.

How exciting for New Jersey that this remarkable company is headquartered right in Secaucus!

