

CHARLESTON STYLE & DESIGN



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NATURE VS. NURTURE

Aesthetician Stephanie McChesney educates clients about how to nurture their skin safely and holistically
by Robin Howard / photography by HOLGER OBENAU'S



Aesthetician Stephanie McChesney has been a respected expert on skin care for more than three decades, which is why, when she drops loving truth bombs about the skin care industry, people like Oprah listen. Here's her first one, delivered with the kind and gentle energy that comes from wisdom and experience: "People are having plastic surgery for the wrong reasons," she says. "You might think you want a lift, but what's really bothering you is probably something else."

McChesney is the virtuoso behind Skin by Stephanie, a medical aesthetic clinic that offers a highly individualized program of skin care products and treatments. Honesty, kindness and social responsibility are her prime motivators—she truly loves and cares about people. Her approach and technical expertise are so effective that she has a cult following. However, individualized attention is so important to her that she only keeps 50 clients at a time on her roster. Lucky for us, in January, she's expanding her successful Greenville practice to Mount Pleasant.



First and foremost, McChesney considers herself a Christian businesswoman; she grounds her work in her values and devotes portions of her profit to Set Free, an alliance that rescues children in India from slavery. It's not a stretch to say she considers her work a calling, something she discovered while doing pre- and post-operative work with cosmetic surgery patients in Charleston in the 1990s.

When she realized so many of these patients could have realized the same or better results through noninvasive means, she and her husband moved to Miami to learn from experts. McChesney eventually became the head aesthetician at one of the top destination spas in the world, the Doral Saturnia Spa, and worked with a long list of celebrities who wanted alternatives to surgery. Today, she specializes in safe, effective products and treatments that help with fine lines and wrinkles, sagging skin, and the other signs of wear and tear that life hands out.



McChesney's personal, holistic approach to her clients considers lifestyle, what they do for recreation and work, and their goals. She cares about what people put into their bodies and works to educate clients so they can make their own decisions amid persuasive marketing campaigns that mislead or overpromise and the wide availability of expensive procedures. "People are vulnerable when they feel like they don't look their best," she says. "They do things they don't need to do. People don't realize that fillers never leave your body. Before you sign waivers or do something permanent, let's look at what you're using every day and how you're going to protect your investment if you do decide to have surgery."



McChesney says the beauty industry has changed radically in the 30 years she's been practicing. "There's so much out there that's not truthful," she says. "But it's exciting too. There are a lot of intelligent people in our industry, and it's so much less expensive to find a skin care professional you trust who can offer alternatives to expensive and invasive surgeries." Her range of treatments includes radiofrequency, light therapies, chemical peels and microdermabrasions, among other treatments for melasma from pregnancy, acne, scarring from surgeries or skin cancer removal, and more.



She is such a perfectionist and so devoted to effective and nontoxic skin care that she developed a line of products, Science Ceuticals, which offers the highest standards of age-defying treatments as alternatives to plastic surgery. The line is vegan, not tested on animals, and it's free of fragrance, parabens, gluten and GMOs, and is made in the United States. The line is also "clean," meaning McChesney knows the exact source of every ingredient. "Companies can pull ingredients from other places so you never know what you're getting from one batch to the next," she says. "You might have a \$300 cream or \$3,000 of products under your sink, but you don't know what's in there."

McChesney's clients say they are relieved to know what they're putting on their skin and into their bodies. They're also happy to invest in products that give them holistic results instead of treating just one problem area. "Most people are wasting money on ineffective products because they are misinformed about what active ingredients can actually do," she says. Lucky for us, Skin by Stephanie is here to change that."

Robin Howard is a freelance writer in Charleston. See more of her work at robinhowardwrites.com.

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