

# Two Great Articles About Dr. Bronner's

## TODAY'S **localnews**

Serving the communities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos and Vista

FRIDAY:: 10.06.06

### UNITING HUMANITY, ONE BAR AT A TIME



Pedro Hernandez places bottles to be filled with peppermint soap on a conveyer at Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap in Escondido. The company, which has been making soap since 1960, is the subject of a documentary film that will be screened Tuesday at the Mill Valley Film Festival in the San Francisco Bay Area. — Don Kohlbauer | Union-Tribune photos

## Soap Opera

*Documentary about Escondido entrepreneur  
'Dr. Bronner' to debut at Bay Area film festival*

By Darcy Leigh Richardson | darcy.richardson@tinews.net

His beliefs have been read on soap labels everywhere from New York City to Japan and Australia. During his lifetime, people called him eccentric, entrepreneurial, charismatic and just plain crazy.

He changed people's lives from a small warehouse in Escondido.

The story of Emmanuel Bronner's mission, to unite all of humanity under a philosophy of peace, love and understanding, also is the story of an extraordinary company, Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap.

A documentary about Bronner's life, his family and his Escondido based company will debut at the Mill Valley Film Festival in the San Francisco Bay area on Tuesday.

The 88-minute film, "Dr. Bronner's Magic Soapbox," was pieced together over four years and was edited down from 120 hours of footage.

The film's director and co-producer, Sara Lamm, stumbled across one of Bronner's bottles of liquid soap in a friend's shower in New York several years ago. She found the label, which contained excerpts of Bronner's



Dr. Bronner's Lip Balms, Seen here cooling down before the lids are attached, are among the many organic products the company makes

30,000-word "Moral ABCs," so interesting that she decided to adapt the text for a performance piece. The labels include wise words from ancient Jewish sages and Mother Teresa, both of which were Bronner's obsessions.

Lamm contacted Bronner's son about her idea. Ralph Bronner, 70, who lives in Menomonee Falls, Wis., donated boxes of soap to her small theater company.

Ralph came to New York City in 2002 to perform a piece about his father at Lamm's theater. Lamm met him at the airport with a video camera.

"It was my first film, so everything was a challenge," Lamm said. "It's a tricky thing to make a

documentary. You want to get it right. I was dealing with a family story and their livelihood." Calling Ralph "an incredibly energetic person," Lamm said she found working with the family a pleasure. "They run the business with an eye for the common good." Lamm said. "The story will be one all people can connect to." Ralph said he is the "family spokesman." He is proud that the company creates products that don't need millions in advertising dollars. Ralph also is proud of the company's employee retention.

"We had our first retiree last year at 70 years old," Ralph said. "We share our profits with our workers. We treat the workers the way they should be." The elder Bronner recruited Escondido native Gail Tripp in the 1970's to help him perfect his ABCs despite her inability to type. Tripp, who now does orders and sales for the company, said Bronner changed her life. "He would come and do his "Moral ABCs" at the old Fireside (Restaurant). Anybody who would come and listen, he would buy them dinner," Tripp said. "I had no teachings at home. He taught me that life was meaningful and I could do anything I wanted to." Lamm hopes the spirit of Bronner's message is contagious so the film will get a DVD distribution deal.

"People love the soap and people wonder what's going on with that label," Lamm said.

"This (film) will open their eyes to what's possible and how to run a business."



Escondido native Gail Tripp, Responsible for orders and sales at Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap, Was recruited by the company's founder, Emanuel Bronner, in the 1970s to help him with his "Moral ABCs."

#### Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps

P.O. Box 28

Escondido, CA 92033

(760) 743-2211

(760) 745-6675 Fax

[www.drbronner.com](http://www.drbronner.com)

#### Ralph Bronner

W172 N9335 Shady Lane

Menomonee Falls, WI 53051

(262) 255-5511

(262) 257-0414 Fax

# Two Great Articles About Dr. Bronner's

Menomonee Falls, Wis.

## Express News

YOUR FIRST SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS, SPORTS AND ADVERTISING

VOL. 15 Issue 48

November 27, 2006

### A Difference Voice

*Falls resident makes case for 'constructive capitalism'*



Ralph Bronner entertains and informs during a presentation before the Falls/Sussex Youth Leadership group Nov. 16. — Photo by Thomas J. McKillen

By Thomas J. McKillen  
Managing Editor

If any participants in the Fall/Sussex Youth Leadership program were tempted to not pay full attention to Ralph Bronner during his presentation Nov. 16, his opening sentence likely dispelled that option.

"Constructive capitalism is where you share the profits with the workers and the earth from which you have made it — we are all brothers and sisters," Bronner said.

Bronner spoke at Menomonee Falls Village Hall boardroom to a group of approximately 27 high school students. Falls/Sussex youth Leadership is a combined program between the Menomonee Falls and Sussex area chambers of commerce.

Bronner — a Menomonee Falls resident — then described a journey started by his father Emanuel, who came to America in the 1920's. Emanuel Bronner eventually created a product called "Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap" but not before supposedly causing a disturbance at the University of Chicago in 1947 in a dispute over free speech and then being sent to an insane asylum where he was subjected to electroshock therapy. After six months Emmanuel Bronner made his way to California where he started the soap company.

"If I have any message for you kids who want to go out and help in the world — 'Don't be normal,'" Bronner said.

The company now has a staff of 30 employees where salaries start at \$30,000 while providing health insurance, a 15 percent set aside of retirement and profit sharing. The company sells more than five million bottles of soap with little marketing effort and has revenues of more than \$15 million. In addition, 40 to 70 percent of the company's profits are returned for charitable efforts.

More than selling soap, Bronner has a broader message of individuals making a difference in many ways. Among the examples he cited:

A section of Philadelphia where graffiti "taggers" and residents joined with an artist to create murals on walls. The artist has completed more than 2,400 murals. One mural showed several hands linked together. The murals are designed and painted by people in the neighborhood;

A woman who bought approximately 1,000 acres near Monticello, Wis., and converted chemical treated farmland to natural prairie. There are now 350 buffalo roaming on the site;

A woman who in 1972 had a rising career as an actress, appearing in the Clint Eastwood film "The Rookie." However, the woman opted for a different path, and adopted approximately 43 children with various disabilities.

"Is that normal?" Bronner asked after describing these people.

Patch Adams, a physician who was

the subject of a Robin Williams movie, who sought to use humor and warmth while treating patients in the poorest area of Appalachia. Ralph has become a close friend of Patch and has spoken at his "Gesundheit Institute"

Bronner's path to his current mission took him through many unlikely places, as he rarely knew his mother and lived in 16 different homes.

"I've woken up on a chicken farm in Indiana and in an orphanage full of rats in Chicago. I didn't know it was supposed to ruin my life," Bronner said.

He also offered a critique of almost universally accepted mores. While Bronner himself is a UW-Milwaukee graduate — and has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award — he also quoted his father's description of what PhD stood for: "Pile it higher and deeper."

"I am not against people going to college. I am against them thinking they are better because they went to college," Bronner said, noting that the executives behind corporate scandals at Arthur Anderson, Worldcom and Enron all attended universities. Bronner indicated that he would want more emphasis on apprenticeships and trades.

He told the story of his barber, a woman who was so embarrassed in high school about her future profession that she replied "don't know" when asked about her future.

"Go out in life and do whatever you want as long as it helps spaceship earth," Bronner said.

He later recalled a comment he made while at a Kenosha class for disruptive students of how they could help the world: Do the dishes for their mom.

"Doesn't that help the earth? Many problem kids have a single mother who's overworked. She's on the way home from a full-time job. She's got to figure out what she's going to cook and collapses in bed at night without a hug," Bronner said.

He then recalled washing dishes for three years in the 50's "and never got a tip." As a result of that experience, Bronner has given tips to the dishwashers.

"That small thing is an invaluable gift," he said.

Bronner later put his love for folk music and Wisconsin to work and sang what he described as the unofficial state anthem.

"Up in Wisconsin, up in Wisconsin/ the weather isn't very nice/Up in Wisconsin, up in Wisconsin/You got to fish right through the ice." After several verses he went back to the refrain. Following the third verse, everyone — students and adults — were singing along.

Several times Bronner emphasized "two words for life":

"Stay Human."

"That is so incredibly tough as you go up the ladder," Bronner said.

While stiff and distant as the session began, the students gave Bronner hugs afterwards.