



Only Hope?: Ron Dorfman, left, and Jonathan Carson at Skywell in Santa Monica.

'Star' on Rise In Moisture Farming

Skywell plays up ties to sci-fi in promoting water condensers.

It's not a lightsaber, but the new gadget from Santa Monica startup **Skywell** might make spark nostalgia for "Star Wars" fans. The company makes machines – also called Skywells – that extract drinking water from ambient air.

That's the same idea behind moisture farming, the occupation of "Star Wars" hero Luke Skywalker and his family. Skywell even includes an image of Skywalker in company presentations.

"What was his job? He was on a moisture farm," said **Jonathan Carson**, Skywell's president. "1970s science fiction has become 21st century reality."

Pulling water from the air is low-tech stuff – think of a common dehumidifier – but Skywell's trick, said **Ron Dorfman**, the company's chief executive, is that its machines are designed to produce water you'd actually want to drink.

That's because they use ice-cold coils to condense water vapor in the air into liquid, which is then filtered and treated with ozone and ultraviolet light to kill germs. The amount of water a Skywell produces is a function of humidity and temperature, so a machine in Santa Monica would likely generate about five gallons in a day, while one in Las Vegas would produce less, Dorfman said.

Carson; Dorfman; and **Eric Kurtzman**, a managing director of the company, started looking for customers earlier this month. The 10-employee company is focused on businesses for now. Skywell leases its

machines for about \$90 a month and sells them for nearly \$3,000.

That's pricey, but Skywell's executives say they're banking on demand from environmentally conscious customers who will buy into the pitch that this kind of technology can alleviate water scarcity, cut down on the use of plastic bottles and provide water that's cleaner than tap water.

Of course, those green benefits come with a big tradeoff: A Skywell uses about as much power as a large refrigerator, eroding much of the environmental benefit.

Still, Dorfman said a Skywell is, on the whole, better for the environment than bottled water and healthier than tap water.

"There is an energy component to it, but our ability to provide water and reduce plastics, and the health benefits, far outweigh the energy," he said.

– Andrew Edwards

Memberships Make Cut At Salon

Society uses monthly fees to keep prices out of customers' hair.

A salon with a name like **Society** sounds exclusive and pricey, but L.A.'s first and only membership-based hair salon is anything but.

Founder **Sam DiVine**, 24, landed a gig as an assistant at celebrity hairstylist **Sally Hershberger's** salon after taking a 9-month stylist's course fresh out of high school. (Hershberger is famous – or infamous – for her \$800 shag haircut.) There, DiVine snipped **Mark Ruffalo** and **Kate Hudson's** locks. But when she'd meet, say, regular people and give them her busi-



Locked In: Sam DiVine at Society in West Hollywood.

ness card, their faces fell. "They'd look at the name on my card and say, 'Oh... I can't afford that,'" DiVine said.

So the young entrepreneur set out on her own, recently opening **Society** in West Hollywood. In addition to traditional services, it offers a membership model. There are three levels for women, ranging from \$80 to \$180 a month, and one \$60-a-month offering for men. All include unlimited services – even color.

DiVine formed **Society** with business partners

Ashley De Azevedo and **Bridget Toscano** in response to what DiVine calls a "broken" salon industry. Not only does **Society** attempt to take business back from trendy dry bars (the services also include unlimited blow-outs), but it's designed to give women and men an affordable yet high-end experience.

"We're giving them access to that transformative feeling every day," DiVine said. "And you don't feel guilty when you walk out of the salon."

– Cassie Paton

DIY Approach Blooms at Flower Shop

Fleurish puts together build-your-bouquet bar to stem expense.

Brentwood flower shop **Fleurish** is backed by an upscale celebrity florist, but its aim is decidedly down market, letting customers make their own designer bouquets for less.

At the do-it-yourself flower bar, which will open Oct. 15, customers will be able to browse over 10 different floral designs on an iPad, choose the bouquet they'd like to make, and then have a host bring the flowers and supplies to their table.

The shop was co-founded by **Alex Frost**, **Allyson Arons**

and **Amy Marella**, who has worked for celebs including **Tom Cruise**. Marella's designs are pricey – wedding installations start at \$7,500 – but **Fleurish** arrangements have price tags ranging from \$35 to \$100.

Frost, chief executive of **Fleurish**, said the idea was to create a different type of flower business, one that would give consumers more control and a fun lesson in floral design as well as a still-affordable alternative to the \$10 supermarket bouquet.

"You either go to **Trader Joe's** or **Whole Foods** and buy something, or go to the full-service flower shop," he said. "Fleurish is something in between those."



Marella

The 3,000-square-foot location on San Vicente Boulevard will have 20 iPad-equipped workstations where shoppers can view tutorials and choose their designs.

Fleurish will also offer floral kits that include flowers, supplies and instructions that customers can use to make arrangements at home. Frost said **Fleurish** plans to open 10 more locations by next year. It's also exploring franchise opportunities.

"It's really a play on the DIY market," he said. "They're getting something very stylish and, at the same time, we'll help them assemble it and save money, too."

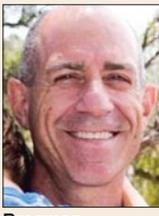
– Sabrina Hudson

Lawyer Joins L.A.'s Farm Team

His life might not exactly mirror "Green Acres," but L.A. native **Jerrold "Jerry" Bregman** could feel as if he's starring in a reprise of the old TV show.

Bregman, 51, had been a bankruptcy lawyer for a high-powered New York firm, but a year ago he, his wife and their year-old twin sons moved out of their posh Central Park West apartment and moved to a farm.

OK, so the "farm" is really a one-acre horse property in Agoura Hills, and the Bregmans have no horse. But he said the situation feels similar to the premise of the 1960s sitcom.



Bregman

Actually, the reason for the move was a serious one. Bregman's mother, **Joyce**, was dealing with some serious heart issues, and he decided he wanted to be near. The new place is minutes from Bregman's mom, dad and brother.

"It was one of these moments in life where decisive action was necessary without regard to what appeared to be pretty severe short-term consequences," Bregman said.

Luckily, Bregman's wife, **Jenn**, totally backed the decision.

"She's an incredibly supportive, patient and talented mother," Bregman boasted of the former criminal defense

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CHARLES CRUMPLEY

attorney.

After the move, he took a few months off then landed a job as a partner at **Ezra Brutkus Gubner** in Woodland Hills, a position he said affords him the flexibility to spend time with his family.

Most importantly, his mom's health has improved. "She's thriving now, relatively speaking, and we're very grateful," Bregman said.

Top Tribute

Local public affairs strategist **Coby King's** passion for hiking has taken him in an unexpected direction: leading a campaign to

get a peak in the Santa Monica Mountains near Malibu named after his hiking icon.

King, 53, runs **High Point Strategies**, a public affairs and lobbying firm in downtown Los Angeles. He's also a long-time San Fernando Valley resident and is the current board chair of the **Valley Industry and Commerce Association**.

But at least once a week, King takes early morning hikes in the local mountains. It's a passion he's had since his early 20s. After he climbed **Mount Whitney**, he got into "peak bagging," or climbing to the top of specific peaks. He found a guidebook to hiking in the Santa Monicas by **Milt McAuley**. He soon climbed every peak in McAuley's guide.

"That guide really spoke to me; you heard Milt's love of

the mountains in his language," King said.

After McAuley died in 2008 at age 89, King searched for a fitting tribute. There was one peak in the guidebook that had no name, only its elevation: **Peak 2049**, located in Malibu Canyon and featuring a distinctive sandstone outcropping. King set out to get the peak named after McAuley through the federal Board of Geographic Names. He got permission from McAuley's family.

"They were grateful that I, as a stranger, was willing to do the work to preserve his legacy," he said.

King plans to submit the application to the board by the end of this year, with supporting letters from local elected officials. A year from now, he hopes



Taking Hike: Coby King.

the trail to the peak will have a plaque in McAuley's honor.

"This whole effort is a way for me to combine my two driving passions: hiking and political action," King said.

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