

# DR. BRONNER'S FAMILY CARRIES ON!

There have been many articles on Dr. Bronner and his wonderful soaps. Dr. Bronner passed away in 1997 and his family is doing more than ever with his ideals, soaps and projects. Here is a wonderful article on Trudy Bronner, CFO for the company. She was interviewed after a presentation for a Master Class at her alma mater, The University of Redlands in California.

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## Class in Session

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### Magic Formula

Students hear merits of ethics.

By Monique H. Henderson

**P**lenty of business leaders and professors have told Cally Boman-Dunham '02 about the importance of running an ethical, employee-oriented company.

But the international relations and business major has never been particularly inspired by those messages.

"Lots of people talk about the concept of business ethics—about treating people well and treating the environment well," Boman-Dunham said. "But, I've never really seen people that have actually done those things. They just talk."

That changed in March, however, when the senior participated in a Master Class lead by Trudy Bronner '65, owner and chief financial officer of the Escondido-based Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps.

"When you hear her talk, you can tell she really believes in the idea of ethics—really applies it to her business," Boman-Dunham said, toying with a bottle of the all-natural, biodegradable soap widely popular among outdoor enthusiasts. "That's what got my attention."

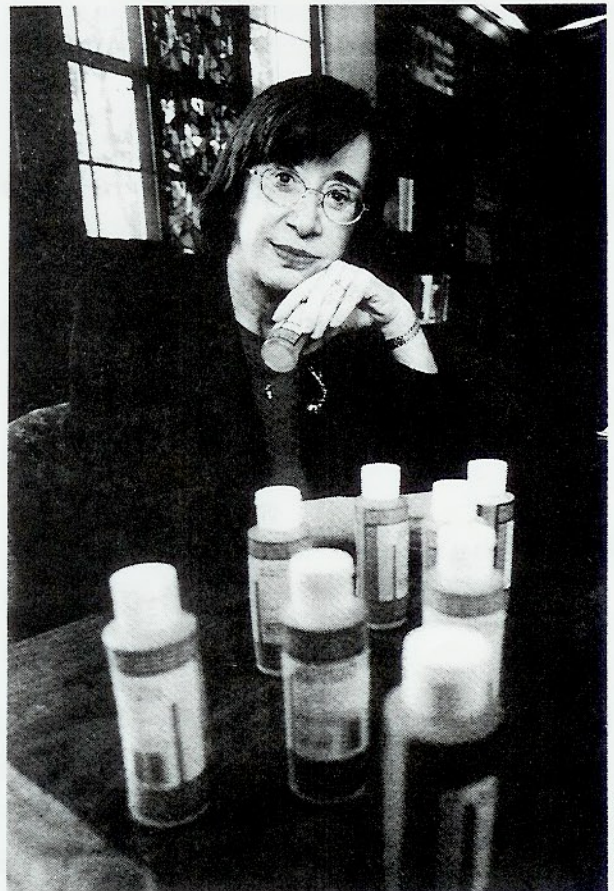
Master Classes give students an opportunity to learn from outside professionals who are leaders in their respective fields. In many cases, visiting "masters" lecture, while at other times they lead students through a series of learning activities.

Bronner's growing company, which manufactures the top-selling soap in the natural marketplace, stands as proof that business leaders can

be socially responsible and still turn a robust profit.

At least 10 percent of the company's annual, pre-tax profits are donated to civic causes, including an orphanage in China and well-digging projects in impoverished Ghana villages. Support also is provided to a woman who adopts disabled children.

In 1998, the company gave the Boys & Girls Club of San Diego County a land grant of more than 1,000 acres to build a camp.



Trudy Bronner, CFO for Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps.

After seeing a particularly profitable year in 2001, the company gave 24 percent of overall pre-tax profits to charity.

"We could keep more of the money," Bronner acknowledged. "But we really don't need more than what we already have. We make nice salaries. We drive nice cars. I take a nice vacation every year. Do we really need more? No!"

The company's 16 full-time employees benefit from the company's generous, socially responsible approach. The lowest-paid employee earns about \$42,000 a year. A generous retirement package also is provided to workers, with the company contributing 15 percent of each employee's overall salary into a retirement plan. Health insurance costs for employees and their families are paid by the company.

A salary ratio scale has been established ensuring that the gap between the highest-paid executive and the lowest-paid worker does not become too wide. The company has carefully regulated growth to ensure that employees are not overworked.

"We try to treat our workers like a part of our family," Bronner said. "We care about them the same way we would care about our own families."

As a result, employee turnover is almost non-existent. Still, Bronner said avoiding turnovers is not what motivates company executives.

"This is not part of a plan we have to improve our company from a financial standpoint," said Bronner. "This is about us trying to do what is right—to treat everyone like they deserve to be treated."

That focus on ethics was critical when the company was started more than 50 years ago by

Emmanuel H. Bronner, a third-generation soap-maker who came to America from Germany in the 1920's.

Striving to communicate his eclectic views about God, truth and love, the founder compiled his philosophies and had them emblazoned on the soaps' labels. His words remain on the company's products today, about five years after his death.

The label on the almond-scented soap declares, "To keep my health! To do my work! To love, to live! To see to it I gain and grow & give & give & give!"

The soaps are made primarily with natural oils, making them particularly mild. All ingredients used in them have not been tested on animals, earning the company special designation from the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics, an alliance of animal rights organizations.

After telling students how her family's company is operated, Bronner acknowledged that each of them still has to make their own decisions about business ethics.

"It depends on what is in a person's heart and mind—that is what determines how they will run a business or live their lives. I like to think...that we try to make good choices that help others and help the environment. But if your only interest is making money, I don't think that will happen. Your choices will be very different."

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*"To keep my health! To do my work! To love, to live! To see to it I gain and grow & give & give & give!"*

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