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Skin care products a hit with overseas military

By **MARCUS RAUHUT**
Staff writer

It took her about two years and 1,000 batches to get the mixture just right.

But persistence paid off for Sara Damelio, whose Combat-Ready Balm, a hand-made skin balm used by troops overseas, has been growing in popularity.

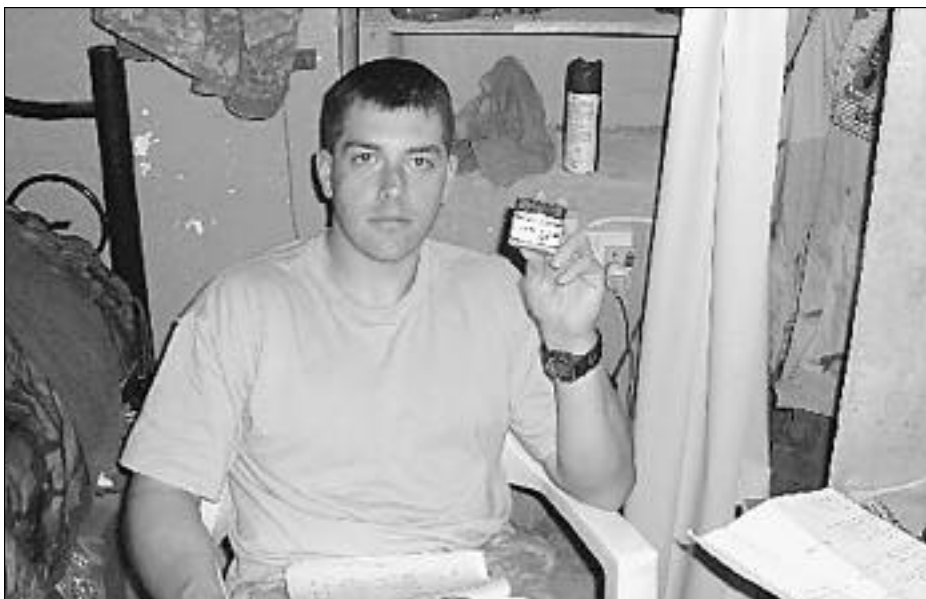
She first started selling the product in 2002 through her Web site, but the product really began to take off about a year ago.

Her father, a radiologist who lives in Waynesboro, gave a jar to a co-worker at Gettysburg Hospital. The co-worker shipped the jar to her husband Marc Popchak, who was stationed in Iraq with the Army's 876th Engineering Battalion.

"It healed his bites and he asked for more. I sent him more jars and he shared it with his friends and they loved it," Damelio said.

In 1998, Damelio graduated from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md., with a degree in communications. She was working for National Geographic when her research on skin care products prompted her to start creating her own line.

"I started making my own skin care products because I was concerned about the ingredients in the products I was using," she said. "Nothing I had worked on my skin, so I started researching



Courtesy/Scott Sciko

In the field: Scott Sciko is one of Sara Damelio's overseas military customers who uses her line of Combat-Ready skin care products, Damelio said.

and mixing it on my own."

The main components in the balm are the oils, waxes and water. She melts down the oils and waxes, and boils the water. After the water is cooled to room temperature, the ingredients that did not need to be boiled are slowly blended into the mixture.

It took some research and some experimentation to achieve the right consistency.

"I bought some recipe books and took home to rework them and figure out ways to naturally preserve them," she said. "It took 1,000 batches

and two years to perfect the mixture."

All of her products are made and packaged by hand. Her products are also organic; in her Combat-Ready Balm she uses ingredients like apricot kernel oil, coconut oil, beeswax, and clove.

Damelio had worked full time as a facialist at a salon on Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. She began selling her skin-care products to her private clients but then left her job to start her own company, Skincando Inc., and

make her own products full time.

In addition to the skin balm, she makes the Combat-Ready Lip Balm and the Combat-Ready Bar, a soap made with organic rosemary and black tea.

Her Combat-Ready line and other skin-care products are sold in 10 salons along the East Coast, including two in Chambersburg, though most of her sales are online.

With its name and packaging, the Combat-Ready Balm may appeal particularly to soldiers, but Damelio said the



Courtesy/Sara Damelio

Combat-Ready Balm

balm also works well for those who spend time outdoors like hunters and fishermen and can be used to treat dry skin, diaper rash, sun/wind burn, or bug bites.

"It really heals the skin and bug bites, and that's why the soldiers like it," she said.

The feedback she has received from soldiers who used the product has been especially gratifying for Damelio.

"There is comfort in knowing that the product helps troops overseas. I'm so glad our products were able to get to our soldiers fighting for our

country. For them to ask for more was a tremendous compliment," Damelio said.

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How to buy

Locally, Combat-Ready Balm is available at two salons: Exclusively You, 398 Floral Ave., Chambersburg, and Phillip Greene Studio, 603 Wayne Ave., Chambersburg. The product is also available online at <http://www.skincando.com>. A 2-ounce jar of the balm retails for \$25.