

Fairy bra mother



COURTESY OF BEVERLY JOHNSON



Beverly Johnson (right) with participant Vera Ussyk, at a bra-making workshop in Saskatchewan.

EVERY WOMAN KNOWS a new bra gives a boost not only to the girls, but to self-esteem and sensuality. But for breast cancer survivors who have had a mastectomy, making their own bras is often the first time they've felt comfortable with their breasts since their surgeries.

Costco member Beverly Johnson, owner of Bra-makers Supply (www.bramakerssupply.com), a Hamilton, Ontario, sewing supply store, has been teaching women to make their own bras since 2007.

Johnson, a former high school home economics teacher, recalls a woman from

California who attended her weeklong "boob camp." "She wore a prosthesis and she hated it," says Johnson. The triangle-shaped breast was hard and uncomfortable, and it didn't match her natural breast. She was unable to find a bra that fit, as bras sold by retail stores are not designed to accommodate uneven breasts. Her only option was a custom-fit bra that cost a couple of hundred dollars.

Johnson not only taught the woman to sew her own bras, but showed her how to make her own prosthesis out of foam and

plastic pellets—one that was a closer match to her natural breast. The prosthesis cost less than \$10 to make, looked far more natural and was more comfortable than the \$400 prosthesis from the medical supply store.

Johnson has worked with close to 1,000 breast cancer survivors and says the emotion involved in being able to make a bra that fits is palpable. "Some of them cry, they're so touched," she says.—Lisa Evans

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LEIF NORMAN

Dr. Rachel Sommer

Giggles and goggles

DUBBED "THE WORLD'S funniest optometrist," Winnipeg's Dr. Rachel Sommer (rachel.sommer.ca) is a stand-up comic by night and a bespectacled, attentive optometrist by day.

Sommer, who has been called "a pretty Phyllis Diller," appeared onstage in April at the Winnipeg Comedy Festival in a rare appearance with her husband, Stuart. A fellow optometrist she met while studying in Australia, Stuart unfortunately doesn't share her love of the spotlight, she says. But being married to an Australian does provide her with comedic material. She also draws on her experiences with patients and her life as a mom to a toddler and a preschooler.

Sommer recently filmed *Hindsight*, a TV pilot she created about an optometrist-comedian who doesn't fit into either world. In June, she pitched it to TV networks at the Banff World Media

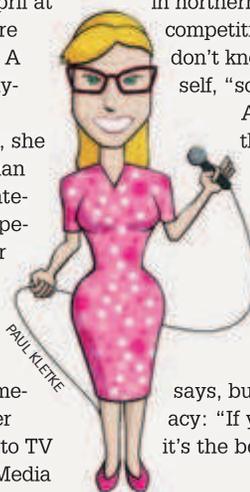
Festival. Selling it would be a dream come true, she says.

On a whim, Sommer entered the world of stand-up comedy in 2003 as a young optometrist. While working in Darwin, a small town in northern Australia, an amateur comedy competition caught her attention. "I don't know anyone here," she told herself, "so if I bomb it's not a big deal."

After charming the 300 people in the audience with her quick wit, sarcasm and ability to poke fun at Australians, the Manitoban-born farm girl won the competition. A few weeks later, she was onstage at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

"I still get the jitters," she says, but she loves comedy's immediacy: "If you can make people laugh, it's the best feeling ever."

—Allison Lawlor



PAUL KLEKE