

Teenage 'lip balm guy' takes his idea from concept to completion

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Daniel Schlessinger is known around campus as the "lip balm guy."

The 17-year-old Omaha native and freshman at Northwestern University has had his college neighbors and buddies swarm his dorm room to get samples of his creation: Fix-



Daniel Schlessinger

MySkin Healing Balm.

Daniel even mingled with celebrities at the Emmy Awards in September to give red carpet walkers a sneak peek of the product before it was released to the public last month.

FixMySkin Healing Balm is a medicated body balm intended to heal a number of skin issues, including chapped lips and cuticles, dry elbows and heels, psoriasis, eczema, poison ivy and insect bites.

Daniel, who aspires to follow in his dermatologist dad's footsteps, came up with the concept when he

was only 12.

It was winter in Nebraska and the Kiewit Middle School seventh-grader had dry, cracked skin on his hands. So he rubbed some lip balm on his skin and wondered why it worked better than lotion, but didn't completely heal his skin.

"It was my intellectual curiosity, I guess," Daniel said by phone. "I was just really curious about why something like lip balm didn't work there."

Turns out, he learned from his father, Dr. Joel Schlessinger, that his lips and hands have two different

types of skin and the hand requires a stronger medication.

"It was more complex of a problem than I imagined," Daniel said. "And it led us into this whole journey."

The journey began with Daniel's idea, but his father saw potential in it and stepped in to advise and mentor his son.

Daniel researched the market to see if a medicated balm existed that could be used on lips and hands. There were lip balms with medications in them, but no skin balms

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Daniel Schlessinger came up with the concept for FixMySkin lip balm when he was 12 years old.

Schlessinger: Patent is pending

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that contained medications, such as hydrocortisone, or any that were specifically aimed at dry, cracked skin on the fingers or other targeted areas.

To be sure, his father hired a patent attorney to research it.

Their attorney, Roberta Has-treiter, based in Atlanta, gave them the green light to move forward. The patent for Fix-MySkin Healing Balm is pending.

The mission to create a body balm that was portable, easy to use and medically effective had begun.

Daniel was still young and could help only so much because he didn't understand much of the medical jargon and discussions. Even so, his father had him sit in on meetings and on conference calls with attorneys and manufacturers.

"This was really Daniel's baby," Joel Schlessinger said.

Even the business professionals they worked with during the process took time to explain details to Daniel, making sure he felt a part of the deal.

But, "it wasn't an easy process," Joel Schlessinger said.

Joel Schlessinger brought his father, Bernie Schlessinger, who has a Ph.D. in physical chemistry, on board to help develop formulas. They knew they wanted

to add 1 percent hydrocortisone in the balm, but hydrocortisone tends to glob and be messy and has a bitter taste in lip balms. So figuring out how to make it glide on smoothly and taste good was a challenge.

After roughly four years of research and 54 different formulations, they finally found the right one.

During the past few years, Daniel, who was attending Mil-lard North High School and had taken advanced science classes, was able to understand more and get back into his creative role.

He worked with chemists after school, before track practices or whenever he had free time. He used vacations and time off from school to travel to potential manufacturers. Most recently, he spent most of his summer familiarizing himself with all of the Food and Drug Administration's requirements and worked with a liaison for the FDA to make sure the product met all of the guidelines.

"These professionals couldn't believe they were dealing with a high school senior," Joel Schlessinger said.

But Daniel won't take all the credit. Turning his idea into a reality was a "family affair," with his sister, Claire, his mother, Nancy, and his grandmother

June throwing in ideas and giving advice.

The FixMySkin Healing Balm, which went on sale a few weeks ago, has been featured in national health and beauty magazines such as Allure.

The healing body balms come in three sizes: a small jar, a chapstick size and a glue-stick size, ranging from \$8 to \$12. They can be purchased at Joel Schlessinger's Omaha store, Lovely Skin, near 144th Street and West Center Road, or online. Visit Omaha.com for a link to the site.

Already, 3,000 individual containers have been sold in store and online.

Joel Schlessinger distributed the product to roughly 200 dermatologists and skin specialists at a recent convention in Las Vegas and sold an additional 200. The hope is to eventually sell the product through other vendors and retailers.

"It's a good feeling to see all the work come together and produce a product people like," Daniel Schlessinger said.

For Joel Schlessinger, "It was a beautiful thing to see Daniel grow alongside the development of this product."

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