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Comfortable Sunporch

PHOTOGRAPHS: ADAM BARNES

above: Red Alderman passes on his knowledge of herbs' medicinal uses to his granddaughter, Lilli MacKay, in the Gaia echinacea fields. **left:** Red's daughter, Amy, and Lilli grew up with Wounded Warrior.

Herbal Healing

Start with a passion for herbs. Add a resolve to heal. Blend in an entrepreneurial spirit, and you get Wounded Warrior skin ointment.

The pushpins tell the story of an ointment spreading across America. Stuck in the U.S. map over Amy MacKay's desk in Wilmington, the pins reveal how her family business is helping tend wounds around the Southeast and in other parts of the country. "I mail out cases of the ointment each day to more than 900 stores across 40 states and even to clients in Singapore, Australia, India, and many other countries," she notes.

Wounded Warrior, the all-natural, antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory ointment developed by Amy's dad, Red Alderman, is no longer the best-kept secret in his hometown of Boone. Its tagline makes a hefty promise: "A medicine chest in a bottle." Guaranteed to relieve burns, bites, blisters, cuts, rashes, poison ivy, and even acne, there's not much Wounded Warrior hasn't cured. For the thousands of loyal users who rely on the salve to ease skin problems ranging from the irritating to the debilitating, the 2-ounce white bottle provides noteworthy relief.

> "The biggest testimony is that people who buy it come back for more."
>
> *John Stacy, pharmacist*

They Swear By It

"We sell a tremendous amount," says John Stacy, a pharmacist at Boone Drug. "But the biggest testimony is that people who buy it come back for more."

Amy attributes the ointment's success to the enthusiasm of what she calls the "Wounded Warrior fan base," the company's primary marketing tool. "People come to the mountains for vacation during ski season or in the summer, and they'll buy a bottle at a local store," Amy says. "It sells like crazy. Then in turn, those people go back to their hometowns, tell friends, give it away, or tell their local health food store about it. So that's how we've grown. People stop my dad all the time around town at restaurants and even stoplights to tell him what Wounded Warrior helped them with and how much they love it."

Red laughs, recalling a trip to the grocery store one day. "I was walking through the parking lot, and an older man—he was maybe about 85—came up to me and asked me if I was 'the Wounded Warrior man,'" Red says. "He said when he pulled up to a stoplight the other day, his car stopped and wouldn't crank. So he put some Wounded Warrior on it, and it started right up. He had a twinkle in his eye like you wouldn't believe."

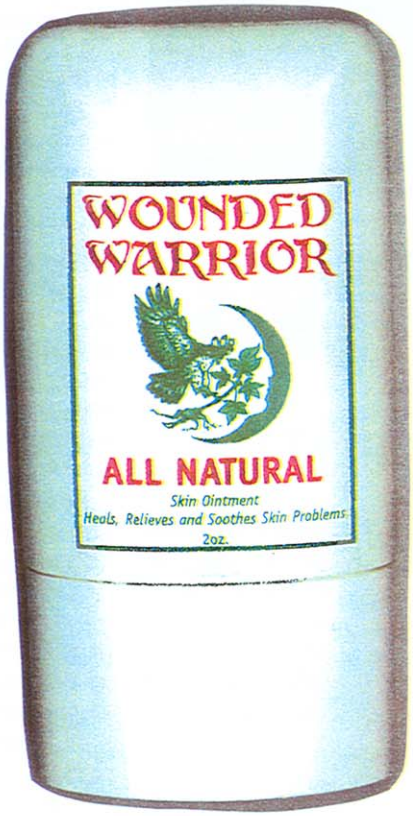
A Few Good Uses

Red developed Wounded Warrior when a fishing buddy from Louisiana needed help for hands marred with wounds from catfish barbs and hooks. "He asked me if I

A Warrior's Secret

Red Alderman attributes Wounded Warrior's name and success to the advice of a well-known Cherokee medicine man and trusted friend, Chief Two Trees, who advocated a couple of the ingredients in the Wounded Warrior recipe. One is white cedar; the other is a secret. "It was used as a dry herb in medicine pouches for warriors to stop bleeding and take away pain," Red explains. "So our name, 'Wounded Warrior,' honors the chief in a way." To find this product, call 1-800-232-7713, or visit www.woundedwarriorointment.com or www.amazon.com.

Jay McCarthy, formulation and compounding technician at Gaia Herbs, blends the ingredients that go into Wounded Warrior.



could come up with something that would heal his hands," Red remembers. A seasoned outdoorsman himself, Red got busy—relying on years of organic herb farming experience and a teaching background in the earth studies department at Appalachian State University.

"I knew a good bit about herbs—which ones are antibacterial and anti-inflammatory, for example," Red says. "So I took some of my knowledge and did a lot of studying and a lot of testing. I'd make up a batch, give it to everybody I knew, and let them try it."

The ointment's sweeping healing properties was surprising. "We knew it would heal cuts and burns, but the rest of the uses we've learned from people telling us," Amy says. The brochure she hands out with the bottle features a long list of "key topical uses," including cold sores and fire ant bites. The product is now manufactured by Gaia Herbs, based in Brevard.

"I've also gotten calls from people all over the country who have used it on their pets," says Amy. "We sell it to horse reps because it heals horses' wounds without creating proud flesh." The ointment has also helped animals with hot spots, flea and tick bites, and open wounds. "If their pets lick it off, it doesn't bother them," she adds.

"I'm very passionate about Wounded Warrior," Amy continues. "I got an e-mail from a man whose wife had Darier's Disease, a rare skin condition." The man heard about Wounded Warrior on a discussion board related to the disease and ordered some. According to his e-mail "It has been a miracle product," far surpassing any prescribed medicine she had tried. With that kind of testimonial—and there are many more—Wounded Warrior is feeling no pain. ROBIN SUTTON