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Nu Skin marks milestone in quest to fight hunger

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PROVO — When Nu Skin Enterprises decided to help feed hungry children around the world, company leaders learned a harsh lesson.

"We had no idea how hard it is to give away food," said Brent Goddard, managing director of Nu Skin's Nourish the Children division.

Some charities wouldn't take Nu Skin's food unless they were paid. That was a blow to a Provo company that had worked with a Third World nutrition expert at a California university to develop VitaMeal, a porridge-like product that, at a cost of 66 cents, provides all the nutrients a malnourished child needs for an entire day.

Nu Skin's dilemma was solved when it teamed up with an Oklahoma-based Christian relief organization named Feed the Children, which raises its own money to fund the delivery of VitaMeal.

On Monday, Nu Skin celebrated a lofty milestone. As of Nov. 1, more than 100 million meals have been provided by Nu Skin distributors, employees and customers to malnourished children around the world since the program began five years ago.

"Congratulations to all of you hitting the 100 million mark," Lee Iacocca, chairman of the Nourish the Children advisory board, said in a video posted on the program's Web site. "Just keep it up."

VitaMeal comes in a dry pack that contains 30 child-sized meals, so each package can feed a child for a month. Added to boiling water, the mixture of rice and lentils or corn and soybeans contains a critical balance of carbohydrates, protein, electrolytes, fat and fiber that saves and improves lives, said Moses Nkhombe, a native of Malawi who is working on a master of business administration degree at Brigham Young University.

Malawi is the largest recipient of VitaMeal donations, and Nkhombe has worked on the program in his homeland. Nu Skin has built VitaMeal manufacturing plants in Malawi and China.

"VitaMeal is not only providing meals in Malawi, it is providing jobs," Nkhombe said. "It also has created a (stronger) market for corn and soybeans."

Nu Skin employees celebrated by unveiling a banner on the side of the downtown Provo headquarters and by tasting the VitaMeal creations of local chefs from BYU, Salt Lake Community College, the company's own Nu Cafe and India Palace.

Judges selected India Palace the winner of the cook-off for a rice-and-lentil dish seasoned with Indian spices.

Nu Skin has more than 800,000 distributors. Many of them, along with employees and customers, purchase VitaMeal packages for \$19.95 and donate them to their local food banks, use them for food storage or donate them to the company's Nourish the Children program.

For every eight packages purchased, Nu Skin donates one. In June, Nu Skin won a 2007 American

Business Award in the category Best Corporate Social Responsibility Program for its Nourish the Children initiative.

Nourish the Children grew out of the company's desire to be what it calls in its mission statement "a force for good."

"Our secret mission statement," Nu Skin founder and board chairman Blake Roney joked during a press conference Monday, "is to placate the stockholders while we trick as many people as possible into doing as much good as they can."

For more information or to buy VitaMeal packs and donate them, visit www.nourishthechildren.com.

"We're hoping we can get to the second hundred million in three years," Goddard said.

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