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The 7 Virtues Brand Brings Perfumes for Peace to Sephora

One of the hand-picked brands in Clean at Sephora, The 7 Virtues' benefits stretch way beyond better-for-you ingredients.

By [Faye Brookman](#) on June 12, 2018



Peace Blend Box.

The 7 Virtues is one of the inaugural brands featured in Clean at [Sephora](#), the beauty juggernaut's initiative to increase transparency about products in its mix. But the story behind the formulas in The 7 Virtues fragrance collection stretches well beyond just eliminating caustic ingredients.

The 7 Virtues perfume brand was founded by human rights activist and

author Barb Stegemann after her best friend was severely wounded while serving in Afghanistan. She pledged to help support him in any avenue she could. “I said, you go heal, I’ve got this,” recalled Stegemann. “But then I realized I’m not a brave soldier, I’m not a world leader. Then I thought, women have the buying power. Why don’t I try new things to break the cycle of war and poverty?”

Understanding that supporting Afghanistan’s economy was key to building stability for its people, Stegemann created The 7 Virtues, a company that sources organic, fair-trade essential oils from countries experiencing turmoil. Stegemann started purchasing legal orange blossom and rose essential oils from farmers in Afghanistan — paying them twice what they could make selling the illegal poppy crop.

Her first scent, Orange Blossom eau de parfum from Afghanistan helped her net funding from Canada’s “Dragons’ Den” (a TV program akin to “Shark Tank”). She has since expanded her portfolio to include ethically sourced ingredients that benefit Haiti, Israel, Iran, Rwanda, India and Madagascar. In addition to those efforts, the fragrances are paraben- and Phthalate-free, vegan and not tested on animals.

But even with funding and passion, Stegemann faced growing pains endemic to start-up beauty companies. In particular, she felt she wasn’t making an impact with an important buying group — younger women including her Millennial daughter. She had the opportunity to bring her products to [Sephora](#) where she learned about the company’s Accelerate program (which is dedicated to building a community of female founders). She asked to apply and was subsequently selected. During the boot camp-like experience at Sephora, Stegemann was advised to rethink her entire positioning. “I had to let go of my old ideas or I wasn’t going to be able to really help farmers. We were surviving but not thriving.”

Under the guidance of the Sephora team, Stegemann revamped her entire line including all new scents and packaging. With alacrity, she relaunched and debuted within 11 months in Sephora Canada in February of this year.

The new collection is made with natural oils from Afghanistan, Haiti, India,

Madagascar, The Middle East and Rwanda. The packaging highlights notes, ingredients and the countries that benefit from the production of the fragrances. She said it broadened the appeal to younger shoppers. "Now my daughter even buys my fragrances," she said.

The 7 Virtues is expanding online at Sephora this month with plans for 100 stores in August. That includes a launch of the Peace Blend Box, which retails for \$28 and includes all seven scents. Prices range from \$28 for rollerballs of the signature scents to \$77 for the full eau de parfum. All fragrances are made with organic sugar cane alcohol.

Stegemann has more concepts simmering including organic moisturizing soy wax candles. The wax from the candle can be used on the skin, she said, as a moisturizer. She also has numerous new scents in the pipeline as she continues her pledge to use her business to do good for countries in need. Stegemann's story is highlighted in her documentary, "Perfume War," which chronicles the friendship that ultimately led to the creation of The 7 Virtues and is currently shown in several film festivals.