

QUEEN FOR A DAY

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE HINDERER

Alida Rubin is fabulous. She won't say it herself, but you can just tell.

Her appearance — including the curls she slicked back with dippity-do until she finally embraced them in her 40s — is impeccable, as one would expect from someone who spent years working at *Harper's Bazaar* and then as a certified image consultant and makeup artist in New York City.

But after a visit to her 97-year-old mother's Florida nursing home last year, Rubin had a life-changing moment that led her and her styling talents to the often forgotten women residing in assisted-living facilities.

"It started with the makeover that I gave to my mom on Mother's Day. I looked at her — she was this gorgeous woman. Gorgeous. She was a model. To see her withering away really blew me away," Rubin recalls.

Her daughter (she has two who both inherited her curls) had encouraged Rubin to take a picture of her mother while she was there, just in case it was the last time.

"I had this 'aha' moment lying in my bed in my hotel room the night before I was leaving that not only was I going to take a picture of my mom, but that I wanted to do a makeover on her so that she would feel great and she would look great and THAT would be the picture that I would have," she said.

The next day, she gave her mom a makeover and wheeled her into the dining room.

"All the women said 'Oh my god, Rose, you look gorgeous! What did you do? How did you do it?' I said I did makeup and they all said 'I want that.' I had an aide take pictures of my mom and me together and it wasn't until I got on the plane I had an epiphany. I knew my life from that moment, knowing what I did for my mom, and knowing the reaction, was going to change."

She got back to New York on a Sunday. On Monday, she called her first nursing home to see what she'd need to do to put her plan into action.

In January, seven months after that visit, Rubin officially launched her nonprofit My Makeover Mission: Queen for a Day, where she travels to nursing homes and makes women feel beautiful with a mini makeup makeover. According to 2015 data from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid, approximately 930,000 women in the U.S. reside in nursing homes, and they make up more than 70 percent of nursing home residents.

"Each time I touched the face of a woman, a powerful and profound connection developed. It was soft, it was quiet, it was emotionally uplifting, and for me, it was life-affirming," she wrote on the My Makeover Mission website. "To the women, I became a daughter, a friend, a confidante, and I relished my roles. I quickly learned that my makeovers are a revitalizing experience; an opportunity to remember and to relive a time when the women were vibrant, vivacious, valued."

Alida Rubin is taking her professional styling skills to women living in nursing homes.



And based on before-and-after photos on the website that feature sullen expressions transformed into giant grins, the makeover results speak for themselves.

"It's a symbiotic relationship, it's not just a makeover. It's just a beautiful thing and as much as I'm giving to them, I swear they're giving it back twofold to me. And it's beautiful," Rubin said. "I just love what I do."

In addition to the makeovers, she travels with a photographer who takes a picture of each woman afterward. Then Rubin has the picture printed out and sent to the women and their families for a memory of when their loved one looked and felt beautiful.

"I think everything that I have done in the past led me on this path. It gave me the tools, the education, the expertise, and I'm now giving it back," she said.

Recently, she did a makeover for a stroke patient who hasn't spoken in seven years.

"She flinched when I came over to her," Rubin said. "But at the end of the makeover — a smile, so broad and so beautiful. Her sister was there that day and she cried."

"I cry every time I do a makeover," she admitted. "The little that I do makes the biggest difference."

And Rubin isn't a crier (except when something touches her emotionally). In fact, before she accepted her curly hair in her 40s, she wore it straight and said back then people thought she was "unapproachable" and took her way too seriously.

"I'm a free spirit. I go out by myself all the time because I love the experience of meeting new people," she said. "People come up to me all the time and they say, 'Oh my god, I love your hair. Is it natural?' The other way [wearing it straight] didn't suit who I am. Didn't suit my personality, my persona. But the curly hair SO fits me. It's just freeing in every sense of the word. When you let your hair go free, you let your soul go free."

Now that she's embraced her hair and her calling, Rubin hopes to be able to hit the road and spread her Makeover Mission to other locations outside New York.

"The goal is to get enough donations to go around the country and train people to do what I do," she said. "I'm just one person right now."

But the one person she is, is a pretty amazing force. "Age is just a number; style is forever," she said. "I'm not going to let anything stop me." ♦



How you can help:

If you'd like to donate to My Makeover Mission: Queen for a Day, visit mymakeovermission.org.

Are you, or do you know, a curly girl
who's changing the world?
Running for office? Serving other people?
Tell us at changetheworld@readcurl.com.



Alida's hair tips

If you were stuck on an island and you could only have one hair product with you, what would it be?

I would have to say Innersense Quiet Calm Curl Control. It's a leave-in conditioner; you put it on when your hair is soaking

wet. Wring it out and just let your curls be themselves.

Do you have any tips for women who think their curls aren't beautiful?

I think a great haircut by somebody who understands curls is

key. That's what I would certainly start with. Forget the product for a minute, it's just really about finding a curly hair stylist who understands the curl and how it should be cut. I do a dry cut and that's the way it should be. Once you have a great cut, it becomes very manageable.



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