Herbal Essences Continuing Commitment to Inclusive Design and Accessibility for All

Release Date:
Wednesday, October 9, 2019 10:21 am EDT

Terms:
P&G Corporate Announcements

Dateline City:
CINCINNATI

CINCINNATI--(BUSINESS WIRE)--There are 253 million people around the world who are vision impaired, yet only 4% of businesses are actively creating products with disabled people in mind. In observance of World Sight Day on October 10, 2019, Herbal Essences is expanding the brand’s use of tactile markings and embracing technology like Alexa and the Be My Eyes app, making hair care easier for people with low to no vision. These new tools make it easier for everyone to browse Instagram, shop, shower and even style their hair.

Last year, Herbal Essences was the first mass hair care brand in North America to introduce tactile markings designed to help differentiate between shampoo and conditioner for those with a vision impairment. This innovation was spearheaded by Sumaira “Sam” Latif, P&G’s Accessibility Leader, who has been with the company for over 18 years and is herself blind. Latif pioneered this effort to help low vision consumers distinguish between shampoo and conditioner products through the sense of touch, with raised stripes on shampoo and circles on conditioner on the bio:renew line-up. Beginning in January 2020, all Herbal Essences shampoos and conditioners, such as the Hello Hydration, Color Me Happy and Smooth Collections, will have tactile differentiations to alleviate in-shower confusion and help consumers, especially those with low vision, confidently perform daily tasks.

“A universal tactile marking seems like such a small thing, and yet as a blind woman it’s the little things that make such a big difference in my life. I’m excited to broaden the positive impact this has had for the vision impaired community and deliver on our mission to help everyone experience the positive power of nature every day,” said Latif.

This year, Herbal Essences is bringing help beyond the shower with technology that makes searching for the perfect product and independently shopping more accessible. The brand is introducing an Alexa skill and offers specialized help on the By My Eyes app. Knowing the importance of audio assistance, the new Amazon skill allows consumers to ask questions about Herbal Essences’ products, ingredients and personal recommendations. The Alexa skill is enabled by saying “Alexa Open Herbal Essences.” Then, you can ask questions such as “Alexa, what Herbal Essences shampoo is good for curly hair?” The Be My Eyes app is a free service that connects blind and low vision people with sighted volunteers through a live video call. Herbal Essences’ has gone a step beyond with a specialized help feature that directly connects blind users with in-house experts to get assistance as they shop in-store, get ready at home or have hair care questions throughout the day.

“We get a lot of questions through the app about people’s appearance – do my clothes match, does my make-up look right, do I have any fly-aways? It’s great when we can have experts from a specific, in-demand field, like hair care, to provide an elevated level of service for our community,” said Will Butler, VP Community, Be My Eyes. “We hope other brands will take note of this effort in making their products and themselves more accessible to this community in an effort to truly serve all consumers.”

Knowing most consumers use social media and websites as resources, Herbal Essences is also increasing accessibility for the vision impaired in these areas. The brand is partnering with blind YouTube star Molly Burke to collaborate on inspiring content related to overcoming daily beauty challenges.

“I’m excited to work with Herbal Essences to co-create content that will benefit my community and drive toward greater inclusivity and accessibility for all,” says Molly. “I know one of the most difficult things for me as a beauty and lifestyle creator has been finding products with cognizant packaging and designing a routine that works for me. I hope this content will serve as a helping hand for those who are figuring that out.”

In addition, the Herbal Essences website will be accessible for assistive technology users, such as screen readers, in January 2020. The brand’s Instagram page is also currently accessible for this community through Instagram’s Alternative Text feature, which utilizes Apple’s VoiceOver capability to allow users to listen to in-feed image descriptions.

The full roll-out for Herbal Essences tactile markings on shampoo and conditioner bottles will begin hitting stores in January 2020 everywhere that the brand’s hair care products are currently sold.

To learn more about this initiative, please visit https://herbelessences.com/en-us/worldsightday and join the conversation using #HerbalEssences and #WorldSightDay.

About Herbal Essences

At Herbal Essences, we know it’s only natural to be different. In fact, nature nurtures diversity and so do we. We protect diversity in plants and embrace it in people and in our products. We see beauty in all plants, all people and all places. And...
when we don’t see it, we create it. We are committed to diverse ingredients, inclusively designed products and partnerships with experts and organizations that protect & preserve the planet for all nature lovers. Now we’ve partnered with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to endorse our real botanicals in Herbal Essences bio:renew. We believe in the positive power of nature. We’re proud to be naturally cruelty-free and acknowledged for it by PETA.

To learn more about Herbal Essences visit www.herbalessences.com, or follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/HerbalEssences, Twitter: twitter.com/HerbalEssences and Instagram: @herbalessences.

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Ticker: PG
Exchange: NYSE
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Herbal Essences is continuing their commitment to making their products more accessible to the vision impaired community with sensory enhanced tactile indicators, a new partnership with Be My Eyes and a new Alexa skill!

Source URL: https://news.pg.com/press-release/pg-corporate-announcements/herbal-essences-continuing-commitment-inclusive-design-and-