

THE HISTORY OF THE RED JACKET

Ever wonder how the Red Jacket program got started? Read on for a look at one of the most important elements of the Mary Kay heritage and why you should care (from May 2009 Applause).



Back in the summer of 1972, Independent Executive Senior Sales Director Kathie Cunningham was still new in her Mary Kay business when her husband offered an intriguing proposition: Why not set up a promotional event between his employer, the St. Louis Cardinals baseball club, and the Company with whom his wife had become associated? As then Director of Sales and Community Relations for the club, Joe Cunningham passed on his idea to Senior National Sales Director Emeritus Ann Sullivan, Kathie's "Senior."

"The ball team could present the Company with a percentage of each ticket Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultants sold for contribution to a favorite charity," he explained. Ann conveyed Joe's thoughts to Mary Kay Ash, who loved the idea and even agreed to attend the game and let the Cardinals present the check to her. So, for two weeks before, Joe went on a St. Louis radio station and promoted the event to build excitement. The club agreed to let Mary Kay Career Car drivers onto the field, and come game day, as three pink Cadillacs drove slowly around the stadium, the crowd went wild! Coupled with the personal appearance of Mary Kay at the stadium, "A Day With the Cardinals" was a resounding success.

About that time, Kathie became an Independent Sales Director and was encouraging her team members to "go for it" too. When she noticed that they were tuning her out, however, she thought she knew why. "At the time, eight team members were required to achieve Independent Future Sales Director status. I decided we needed a smaller goal, which led to having three qualified new team members to achieve Star Recruiter." With three, Kathie explains, her team members would be eligible to purchase a "red jacket," a mark of recruiting distinction she had secured through a clothing connection she had made in her former modeling days. Kathie ordered six of the jackets, which sported a beautiful gold-braid design complete with an "R" in the middle of the design. Over the following weeks and months, women in Kathie's unit began eagerly working toward obtaining one of the prized garments so they could wear it proudly to all Mary Kay functions.

When plans evolved for the next Mary Kay day with the St. Louis Cardinals, Mary Kay said she would come back to St. Louis if women in the area held a city-wide hostess contest. "We invited Independent Sales Directors from all over," says Kathie. "Red jacket wearers in my unit suggested we promote the red jacket concept by letting Star Recruiters go on the ball field along with Independent Sales Directors. They did, and after that, everyone in St. Louis started promoting the Star Recruiter program. We also shared it with units in Kansas, Illinois and Missouri. When Independent Beauty Consultants learned that they could sit up front at Mary Kay's workshop if they had a red jacket, they were further motivated." Mary Kay left St. Louis and embarked on a speaking and teaching circle that took her to California and back to Dallas. At every stop, she enthusiastically spread the word about the "Red Jackets in St. Louis." Meanwhile, the Star Recruiter program was underway, and Kathie was placing reorders at a pace that kept the supplier glad to be doing business with a Mary Kay businesswoman. The cooperative promotions with the Cardinals continued for nine more years. The last year, 31 pink Cadillacs drove onto the field, and the Independent Sales Directors riding in them stepped out at home plate and were introduced over the loudspeaker.



Kathie says the sight of Star Recruiters lined up in triple rows down the first-base line and Star Consultants in triple rows down the third-base line was an awesome sight. In 1978, the Company asked Kathie for permission to take over the Red Jacket program and make it a National initiative. She remembers the transition with fondness. "At Seminar 1979, Mary Kay presented me with a beautiful plaque for 'Idea of the Year' and an elegant diamond watch. Mary Kay believed in and promoted this program, which has made a powerful impact on the Company and thousands of Independent Sales Directors and Independent Beauty Consultants." Today, the red jacket still stands for a woman's advancing leadership skills and her desire to be a positive influence in women's lives. What if Joe, Ann and Kathie had kept their ideas to themselves? So many would have missed so much. "One of Mary Kay's dreams was to see a sea of red at Seminar," says Kathie. "Each year at Seminar that dream repeats itself once again, and lives are being enriched because of it."