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SMALL BUSINESS

## Move Over Avon Lady, the Tweens Are Here

With Skin-Care Startup Willagirl, Middle-Schoolers Sell to Their Peers, With the Help of Social Media

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By **ANGUS LOTEN** CONNECT

June 16, 2014 7:26 p.m. ET



Hartley Messer, right, hosts a sales party for Willa products at her home in Riverside, Conn. The 12-year-old has recruited seven other Willagirls. *Keelin Daly for The Wall Street Journal*

Addressing a group of possible customers at a tony Riverside, Conn., home last week, the sales representative delivered her pitch for a \$30 package of moisturizer and foaming face wash.

"The 'sleepover travel kit' comes with a super cute bag that's great as a super cool pencil case for school," said 12-year-old Hartley Messer.

Her prospects—seventh- and eighth-grade girls—dabbed on samples of creams, sniffing their wrists, as their mothers looked on. "The 'Skinny Mini' lip gloss is made to slide into your jeans or [Lululemon](#) (LULU +1.20%) pockets," added Ms. Messer, who sells moisturizers, lip gloss, acne cream and other products made by Willagirl Inc.

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**Q:** Hi willa, My name is Ryann. I have talked to you over direct message on Instagram about becoming a willa girl before you even advertised it:). I emailed with Christy and Paula about becoming one too. When you first introduced it, you said you had to be in middle school or at least 12. I talked to Christy and told her that I am going into middle school over the summer and that I turn twelve in September. She said that was fine, and that I was the perfect willa girl. But now you're saying you have to be 13. I'm really worried about this, because I already got accepted, I took the survey, and I've talked to the willa crew about it a lot. Are you still going to accept me as a willa girl? I'd be totally heart broken if I couldn't be one, as I've been working on it for months. I understand if I can't though. ;(

**A:** Hi Ryann, we're currently working on trying to make it open for all girls in middle school or older. Stay tuned for more updates xoxo