



Robert Lobetta styles hair on stage at the Hairdressers Unlocking Hope presentation during Serious Business 2008.



Vivienne Mackinder and Tim Hartley confer on a model backstage.



Neill Corporation's Creative Director Michael Baker presented his "5x5" philosophy.



"Our goal is for the salons and spas we service to be strong, sustainable businesses," said President Edwin Neill III.



Debra Neill-Baker CEO of Neill Corp., welcomes attendees to Serious Business 2008.



Vidal Sassoon appeared at Neill Corp's special fundraising event for Hairdressers Unlocking Hope.

## It's Cool to Care

**THE EVENT:** The Neill Corporation's Serious Business 2008 conference. **THE VENUE:** The Sheraton Canal Street in New Orleans.

**THE DETAILS:** Neill hosted its eighth annual Serious Business conference, themed "Cool and Caring," devoting two days to helping salon professionals achieve business and personal success through a program of education, break-out sessions, keynote speakers and the opportunity to network with some of the industry's most progressive thinkers. Judah Schiller, Noah Kerner and Matt Mason, all young business leaders, shared their expertise, which included sustainability, standing out in a crowded marketplace and the economic effect of the youth culture. Customer service expert John DiJulius and styling star Nick Arrojo rounded out the keynote roster. Breakout sessions provided opportunities to learn and be inspired in a more personal setting. Michael Baker, creative director for Neill, presented his "5x5" philosophy of seeing the styling arena as a stage. "Cool and Caring" was a green event where carbon emissions were reduced or eliminated whenever possible.

**THE BUZZ:** The event included a spectacular evening stage presentation combining the world-class talents of artists Antoinette Beenders, Robert Lobetta, Vivienne Mackinder, Nick Arrojo, Van Council, Christiaan and Tim Hartley to raise funds for Hairdressers Unlocking Hope. The event concluded with an appearance by the industry's ultimate progressive thinker, Vidal Sassoon. **THE LAST WORD:** "Being involved in the beauty industry, we are all connected by a vision, a higher social purpose in that we get to touch people and bring a positive impact to the world," said Debra Neill-Baker, CEO of Neill Corp.

—Jan Hillenmeyer