

# DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, December 26, 2008

## CUBS = sustainability

Duo creates products from leftovers, samples

Denver Business Journal - by [Sara Castellanos](#)

Leftover fabric that would have gone in the trash has turned out to be treasure for Alexis Baile and Judy Godec.

Their company, Boulder-based **CUBS Bags**, takes remaindered materials and fabric samples from manufacturers in Denver and Boulder, and turns them into backpacks, purses and shopping bags for private-label and wholesale customers.

CUBS (Cool, Usable Bags that are Sustainable) launched in August.

“We took fabric that had no use and turned it into gorgeous bags,” Baile said. “We’re finding a wonderful use from all the samples that exist [locally].”

Baile and Godec use fabric and vinyl scraps from the Denver Design Center and Georgia-based Keyston Bros., which has a Denver office. They also use leftover material from Cloth Constructions Co., based in Boulder.

“We’ve only tapped into [some] locations; there’s so much of it out there,” Baile said. “We’ve gotten great local support from people in the industry.”

CUBS Bags came from Baile’s desire to make easy-to-carry cloth backpacks for scooter owners in Boulder. Baile, president of Boulder-based Diversified Imaging Supplies, a sustainable ink and toner business, sought help from Godec, a longtime friend in the design and fabric business.

Godec owns Boulder-based Linea Vita Design, a home accessories and clothing design company that sells wholesale to retailers nationwide.

Baile and Godec began to research the materials in cloth bags that claim to be recyclable, and found that those fabrics are harmful to the environment.

“We started to research all the material that the cloth bags are made from. All the fabrics made in China [contain] horrible pollutants,” Baile said.

The recycled, plastic water-bottle material in many of the bags is among the most polluting, she said.

“The Environmental Protection Agency would never have allowed these fabrics to be made in the States,” which is why they’re made in China, Baile said.

Baile and Godec sought ways to create sustainable bags safe for the environment.

“We found that there’s a lot of people that throw material away,” Baile said. “Showrooms have gorgeous fabric ... some of [which] cost thousands of dollars per yard. These samples are no longer valuable [once] the season is out — that’s the case with this whole industry.”

Godec said the fabrics’ quality is exceptional.

“The quality of the materials that we get donated to us is far higher than what a normal designer could afford to purchase to design a product,” she said.

CUBS offers five bag models: the BearClaw Bag, the Polar Purse, the Teddy Bag, the Kodiak Pack and the Panda Pack.

They all retail for less than \$100, although Baile said there’s about \$250 worth of material in each bag.



Kathleen Lavine

Alexis Baile and Judy Godec of CUBS Bags during a product demo at Ellie’s Eco Home Store in Boulder.

[View Larger](#)

Baile said the company has made a profit of \$8,000 so far.

Baile and Godec paid the company's startup expenses of about \$2,000 themselves. Those expenses included clasps and hooks, as well as a grommet machine, used to reinforce the holes in the bags.

Baile acquires the materials, and Godec designs the bags, based on the quantity of fabric available for each item. Labor is the biggest expense, Baile said.

Carla King, an independent seamstress in Boulder, sews the bags and employs other seamstresses to help.

Godec said the most beneficial aspect about CUBS is that it doesn't leave an adverse environmental footprint.

"We're trying to keep away from any footprint at all that has to do with using resources that come out of the ground," Godec said.

Godec said re-using materials rather than reprocessing them is the best way to make products.

"The best of all worlds is a sustainable world [where] you take stuff already out there and turn it into something else without causing pollution," she said.

Baile said the hardest part about the business is conveying the quality of the fabrics to customers through the website. The photographs don't do them justice, she said.

She also said it's hard to keep up with generating new designs because wholesalers are always looking for products one season ahead of time.

CUBS bags are sold wholesale to online retailers and stores, and at [www.CubsBags.com](http://www.CubsBags.com). They don't plan a retail store.

In seeking wholesalers, Baile researched websites and boutiques that sell sustainable products, such as Christine Marguerite, at 1721 Pearl St. in Boulder.

They were featured for one week in December at Ellie's Eco Home Store, 2525 Arapahoe Ave. in Boulder.

CUBS also makes private-labels bags for the Elephant Journal, a Boulder magazine that focuses on sustainability.

The bags are also sold wholesale to nine websites.

Since Diversified Imaging Supplies already sells products to [www.Overstock.com](http://www.Overstock.com), Baile used it as another venue to sell CUBS Bags, and now the website is one of her primary customers.

**Other websites include [www.TheGreenLoop.com](http://www.TheGreenLoop.com), [www.BigGreenPurse.com](http://www.BigGreenPurse.com) and [www.FashionAndEarth.com](http://www.FashionAndEarth.com).**

CUBS Bags will be featured at the May 2-3 Green Festival in Denver.