

WOMEN AT WORK

Mom recycles scrap into items worth buying

By JANIS CAMPBELL
 FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Pam Klumpp, a Traverse City mom of three, brainstormed a new business when she wondered out loud how to reuse scrap material from a family friend's banner-making company. Like many people in her community, Pam recycles plastic, glass and paper and has tried to live a green life. Her husband, Brian, works in a green industry, selling electric cars and scooters. Now, they've gone green again with priorLIFE, which recycles old banners into statement-making totes and bags.

"I thought there was an opportunity to create something new," says Pam. "And the beauty of it was that it was out of something old. It just felt right."

PLANTING THE SEED: The couple's friend is Paul Britten, owner of Britten Inc., one of the biggest commercial banner makers in the country. Paul asked Pam to do some market research about what could be done with discarded banners after a Britten customer asked about the firm's green initiatives. Pam and her husband, Brian, brainstormed new uses for the old banners.

GROWING A COMPANY: Pam was busy dialing Britten's about the afterlife of their banners when she got a call from Paul: "Put down the phone and come in. We're starting this company." The folks behind the Davis-Cup tennis tournament wanted to turn old banners into souvenir bags for event volunteers. Pam joined Paul Britten in forming a spin-off company they call priorLIFE.

BECOMING A MOMPREENEUR: Jumping into a new venture — creating not just a job but a company — was rough for the first several months," says Pam. "I barely knew how to run the computer."

OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE: Pam says she's had to learn to stand up in front of large groups and pitch ideas and report on her products. She's mastered the company's computer systems and she's a passionate saleswoman for her products.

SUCCESS IS IN THE BAG: The company makes products for retail sales and custom items with personalized labels telling the story of each one-of-a-kind piece. The company recently made bags for



the 33rd Marine Corps Marathon, using last year's banners for the race directors. "The fact that we could print a label saying this was part of the finish line from the 32nd Marine Corps Marathon ... it just allows you to take a piece of the history home," says Pam.

HER GOALS: "I'm taking a risk," says Pam. "I'm putting in sweat equity trying to become a part-owner in the company. That's my long-term goal."

SALES FORCE: She's starting small with a retail kiosk at the Grand Traverse Mall, where she'll be selling chic shopping totes, wine totes, messenger bags and wallets, kicking off on Thanksgiving weekend and daily Dec. 5 through Dec. 31. The company has also launched its e-sales site, www.priorlife.com/shop.

Contact *JANIS CAMPBELL* at 313-222-8779 or
jmcampbell@freepress.com.



ABOUT priorLIFE

Shop for priorLIFE products, including three large carry-all tote bags for \$25, at www.priorlife.com/shop.

The Web site currently features tote bags and wallets, but is being updated with more items, including messenger bags and wine totes.

PriorLIFE is a subsidiary of Britten Inc., one of the country's leading banner manufacturers. The Traverse City company, founded and owned by Paul Britten, has grown from a handful of employees to 198 in the past 20 years. For more: www.brittenbanners.com

Pam Klumpp, director of Traverse City-based priorLIFE, creates cool, eco-friendly products from banners.

JANIS CAMPBELL

Printing imperfections
present during scanning