

Entrepreneurial Mom Crafts Ecofriendly, Fun Backpack
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An entrepreneurial mom with roots in Bangor has created an environmentally friendly backpack for kids that she's selling at more than 50 stores, primarily in New England, and in online catalogs. It retails for \$20 to \$25.

Tina Hill, who was born in Bangor and now lives in West Newbury, Mass., created Kidsack in May 2007 in hopes of developing an ecofriendly product that kids love.

"I made a back sack that kids can color on, moms can wash out, and kids can color on again and again," Hill said in a telephone interview. "It comes with eight nontoxic markers. It definitely encourages creativity."

Kidsacks are backpacks that are meant to help keep kids occupied by coloring in artwork designs again and again. They are decorated with select artwork designs, such as sea life, jungle and sports, that children can color in.

They are designed for children 5 and up. Hill said they are not intended to be school backpacks, but are for children "on the go" - to sports events, the beach or vacation, for example.

"The Kidsack is the activity," Hill said. "The mom doesn't have to think about what to bring. She can grab it and go. ... Young kids are a handful. It's just a great activity, perfect to keep [them] occupied."

"I have four kids," she added. "I'm always dragging kids to youth sports games, and this is a perfect activity to keep them busy. That was the idea and target age range."

Kidsacks also encourage environmental awareness in children, according to Hill.

"I definitely wanted to go ecofriendly. That was big for me," she said. "It made perfect sense to make something that's environmentally conscious."

Hill said she buys her fabric from a company called Ecotec.

"It's made from 100 percent recycled fabric," she said. "Eighty percent is leftover fabric from companies. Ecotec shreds it up and makes it into yarn. The other 20 percent is polyester and made from recycled soda bottles."

Hill got her first opportunity to sell her product from Eureka, a store in Newburyport, Mass.

"[The owner] was so nice," she said. "She gave me a shot and that gave me hope. From there I started Googling toy stores state by state and calling them."

Eight months later Hill has racked up \$9,462 in Kidsack sales.

"More and more I am getting my product out there, and people are loving it," she said.

On the web: www.kidsack.com

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