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TOP STORY

Gilbert business makes eco-friendly giftwrap

By Ralph Zubiate, Tribune Managing Editor Nov 20, 2017



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Hethyre Baez was fed up with having to throw away bag after bag of used wrapping paper.

"I got tired of the after-Christmas craziness of garbage, wrap and bows," said Baez, of Gilbert.

Statistics indicate that Americans throw away 25 percent more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's than any other time of year. The extra waste amounts to 25 million tons of garbage, or about 1 million extra tons per week.

"I love holidays and celebrations as much as anyone. But I just couldn't stomach the waste of so much paper, time and money caused by wrapping presents," Baez said. "It seemed counterintuitive to be giving to someone while at the same time taking something away from our planet and future generations."

She wasn't having any of it anymore.

So, about seven years ago, Baez sewed together fabric bags and started using them to "wrap" gifts to her family and friends.

"It started with my family, then I started giving them out to close friends," she said. "They went crazy. I had to tell them, 'Hey, hit me back next holiday! Be sure to give it back to me!'"

She said her family and friends treated the reusable, reversible, eco-friendly fabric gift wrap like precious objects.

"They wanted to know, 'When can we get some, when can we get some?' They said, 'We want to be able to get these, and we don't want to wait to get one a year. We need these year-round.'"

They encouraged Baez to start selling the special fabric wraps.

Thus was born ggwrap – for “go green” – and the business, after a couple of fits and starts, has begun to grow. Baez’s ggwrap sells at its own website (ggwrap.com) and has just hit Amazon (tiny.cc/ggwrap).

“I designed everything,” she said. “I’m a graphic designer by trade.”

The ggwrap is built of sturdy fabric that requires no boxes, tape, scissors, tissue or wrapping paper.

“Women love them and men can use them easily,” she said.

The product’s website touts the “stabilizing insert” in ggwrap, which helps it keep its shape. The fabric has double-sided designs that can be used for a variety of holidays and special occasions. It’s also meant to be reused again and again.

“A lot of usable wrapping out there looked slouchy,” she said. “I wanted something that looked good under my Christmas tree each year.

The ggwrap comes in three sizes: small, large and extra large. Baez’s website says the large bag can fit anything that would fit in a standard shirt box, plus more, because ggwrap is flexible. Small ggwrap fits jewelry, gift cards and other trinkets. The large drawstring bag fits games, large toys, coats or anything else bulky.

The wrap sells by the set, a 33-piece kit that includes one small and two large wraps, an extra-large drawstring bag, reusable bows and ribbons, along with gift tags and a storage bag. It’s not cheap – the set runs around \$65.

“I do understand that might seem to be a high price for gift wrap,” Baez said, “but when you break it down and weigh how much you can reuse it, five times a year or so. The average American wraps 20 gifts a year. I’ve used mine for seven years. That’s 80 uses, which is around 82 cents per wrap.”

Baez has plans to expand the line.

“Depending on the success, I have a lot of ideas,” she said. “I already have a second batch started, a little more holiday-looking.”

She’s going to create more reversible sets, including for new babies.

“I plan on doing one for Baby Boy on one side and Baby Girl on another side.

“I have lots and lots of plans in the works.”

As her online business takes hold, Baez is eyeing expansion into old-school stores.

“I would love to get to brick and mortar someday,” she said. “That’s probably a year or two away at least. I’m not sure it can be sustained in brick and mortar itself, but I do have some options to get into boutiques.

“I also want to get into Paper Source stores, and I also want to get to QVC,” the shopping channel. “I think it would be a great product to get into QVC.”

The ggwrap website cites a statistic from Stanford University.

It says that if Americans alone wrapped just three gifts over the holiday season with reusable and/or sustainable gift wrap, the paper saved could cover 45,000 football fields. And, if every family reused just two feet of ribbon, the 38,000 miles saved could tie a bow around the entire planet.

“We’re all about giving presents. We just want people to do it with presence of mind,” Baez said.

Information: ggwrap.com, tiny.cc/ggwrap.

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