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Local entrepreneur bringing up the rear for fashionable moms

By Tori Sutton

With a new line of designer diaper bags for fashionable moms, local entrepreneur Sherri Ground is out to prove there's life after diapers for not only her bags, but for the parents who carry them. A former fashion retail buyer, the mother of two came up with the idea to create fashionable but functional bags when she was pregnant with her youngest son, Cameron, now four months old.

While hunting for a stylish diaper bag, she found there was little available outside the traditional teddy bear prints or simple, solid colours. Designer bags at Toronto boutiques were just too expensive.

"I wanted something made for me as opposed to being made for the baby," said Ground, in an interview at her Stratford home, the homebase for Posh Mom. "I wanted something I could wear as an accessory and wasn't just meant for the baby."

Having learned to sew at a young age, Ground hit the machine and created her own bag. And as soon as she hit the street with it, she was blown away by the response.

"Strangers in the mall started stopping me, so did strangers in the street," she said, adding women without children inquired also about the bags. "It all kind of started by a fluke."

Before she knew it, the dining room in her south-end home had been transformed into the sewing room. Soon, new bags - some funky, some formal - were taking shape.

Ground admits if she wasn't a mother herself, the bags would not be as practical. Each bag has inner and outer pockets, special spots for diapers, wipes and bottles, along with a key clip and pen loop for moms with their arms full. A washable change pad, also to be used as a stroller pad, is included with each bag, as is a matching make-up purse for mom.

A tiny pacifier hangs from the outside of each bag, sometimes the only hint as to what lies inside.

"I'm sure if I wasn't a mom, each bag would have a big bling pendant, a cellphone and iPod pockets and that's it," said Ground, with a laugh.

Available in two sizes - medium, for day trips, and large, for weekend getaways or overnight visits - the bags are large enough to carry toys for toddlers along with the necessities.

She's had plenty of support from husband Justin and her son Mitchell, 3, along with family, friends and other moms in business. Soon her website, www.poshmom.ca, will be up and running with an online store.

She's also presenting her unique product at the One-of-a-Kind Show and Sale at the National Trade Centre in Toronto this weekend.

Locally, Posh Mom bags are available at Baby Bumblebee and Marley and Me.

Though it's been challenging to find a balance between family and her work, she's found the experience of flexing her entrepreneurial muscles rewarding.

"It's my own thing," she said.

Down the road, she wouldn't be surprised if the line grew to include new Posh Mom items.

"I'd love to do a million things," she said. "But for now, I'm taking baby steps."