

Quick Change

Diaper Duty Provides Inspiration for Lucrative Inventions by Local Moms

By Victoria Pericon

Last year, more than 390,000 patent applications were filed at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (www.uspto.gov) by hopeful inventors across the country looking to make their widget the next big household name.

When Marion Donovan invented the disposable diaper in 1951, she provided parents across the country with a much needed break from the daily drudgery of washing cloth diapers. More than a half century later, three mothers have taken a page from Butler — using motherhood as the inspiration.

Grace Welch, a former marketing and branding specialist, is the mother of three children under 6 years old. Welch's company, Patemm



Patemm Pad: Making changes easier

& Company (www.patemm.com), invented Patemm Pads, the first round changing pad that can be folded up with one hand.

When Patemm Pads hit the market in 2004, they were enthusiastically received by parents of wiggly infants and toddlers. Patemm Pads are made from 14 patterns of oilcloth; they are available in two sizes and the oilcloth is easy to wipe down.

Patemm Pads have been called "ingenious" by customers who have spread word of the invention to their expectant friends. The pad

won iParenting Media's "Outstanding Product" award and top parenting publications have applauded its style and function. Celebrity mom Courtney Cox is reportedly a fan.

Tired of having to use scrunched up diapers that had made their way to the bottom of her diaper bag, Christina Leigh Rein started using a freezer bag to carry and organize the diapers she towed around for her three children. But carrying freezer bags wasn't fashionable, so Rein took \$5,000 of her savings and started Christina Leigh & Company, the parent company of Diapees & Wipees (www.diapeesandwipees.com).

Rein's small cotton bags can be used for holding a travel container of diaper wipes and diapers. They come in a variety of stylish prints and patterns. Her invention has won the praises of Celebrity Baby Blog founder Danielle Friedland for not making moms feel "like a dorky 'Mom Jeans' kind of mom when I have to change my daughter's diaper in public," referring to a "Saturday Night Live" sketch. Rein's 2005 sales figures topped \$180,000.

Lisa Stackman, a mother of two young boys, used safety and sanitary concerns as inspiration for her innovative idea. Irritated by the number of public restrooms that lacked infant-changing stations, Stackman invented Diaperbridge (www.diaperbridge.com), a compact changing station that fits into diaper bags. Moms no longer have to change their babies on dirty public bathroom surfaces; Diaperbridge creates a firm platform to place the infant while an additional panel folds up to block the spigot on sink tops.

Marion Donovan would be proud. ■

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