

Voorhees soccer moms launch Skunkies deodorizers

By Molly Albertson

Special Sections Editor

Jill Levin and Ann Marie McCartney, both of Voorhees, are busy moms. Between the two, they have seven children, and they're always on the go. From soccer matches to field hockey practice, these moms spend a lot of time at sporting events, as do their rising athletes.

In fact, that's how these fast friends met, at a soccer game. McCartney coached youth soccer with Levin's husband, Keith. That was seven years ago, and all this time both moms have complained about one thing — the nasty side effect of kids playing sports. There is always sports gear strewn in the car, the garage and all over the home. But it's not the clutter that bothers them.

"It stinks," said Levin with a laugh, "Sometimes it gets so bad it makes me nauseous."

Both moms tried almost every product on the market before making their own. From sprays to powder, inserts to odorizers, nothing lasted long. These moms set out to



Photo submitted by Jill Levin

Ann Marie McCartney, left, and Jill Levin selling Skunkies at a fundraiser.

solve their greatest problem, an inspiration they got from "The Big Idea" show with Donny Deutsch.

"He's a role model of ours, and he says to take your worst problem and remedy it, so one day we decided to do it," Levin said.

After doing research on nontoxic products and trying various batches, they discovered what they call the "secret formula."

The moms invented Skunkies, their solution to odor and bacteria in shoes and bags. They are 3-by-5-inch non-toxic, environmentally friendly inserts that kill bacteria and odor. Skunkies come in a variety of colors, themes and in six scents.

"Other products just mask odor, but this kills bacteria, and it really works," she said.

The women make their own product, for the most part.

"We tried sewing them ourselves, and that was kind of sad," Levin said, to the backdrop of McCartney's laughs, "We got those handheld sewing machines and it was such a joke."

Now, the entrepreneurs leave the sewing to local experts.

Several coaches and athletes have taken notice of the inserts, Levin said. Karen Shelton, who coaches women's field hockey for the University of North Carolina, a four-time national champion, gives them to her team and loves them.

"Keith Primeau of the Flyers said, 'It's a novel idea. Who isn't looking for a deodorizer for kids' athletic gear? It's very practical and reasonable,'" she said.

"You can put them anywhere, a camp trunk, a golf club bag, the car, wherever," Levin said.

Their vision is blossoming. It's the culmination of years of friendship and experience as sports moms.

"Our friendship and partnership really complements each other. We're the antitheses of each other," Levin said.

She is the sales side of the company and uses her finance background, while McCartney spearheads the production side.

"I'm more of a talker," Levin said.

"If you couldn't tell already," McCartney said, both women laughing, in one of the few moments she chimed in during the interview.

Skunkies are available in 10 stores, including the Soccer Locker in Voorhees and at Soccer Post in Deptford. For a full list of stores and more information, go to www.skunkies.net.