

# Woman turns sewing skill into international business

By Charity Prater

Fun, colorful shoes with names like "Blueberry," "Confection" and "Fifi." Snug-fitting caps that tie under the chin. Felt mini bags named "Ladybug," "Sunshine" and "Fairytale." They're almost too adorable and all handmade by Betsy Fernley, owner of Little Deer Company in Northeast Portland. The felt shoes are made for babies, both boys and girls age 0-6 months and come in a wide variety of colors. The equally adorable and snug hats come in several colors and fit children up to two years old. The purses and mini bags are made for all ages.

Fernley learned how to sew at the age of ten from her grandmother.

"My grandmother, who lived near me, came to my home and taught me as a little girl," says Fernley. "When I was young, we were so poor that it was worth it to make our own clothes."

Fernley, who loves to sew, began working with the previous owner of Little Deer as a seamstress when she was a stay-at-home mom with her youngest daughter, Madeleine, who is now eight and a prospective seamstress herself.

Four years later, the previous owner was looking to sell the company. Fernley bought it and began adding new designs to the product list and developing the company website.

The business has grown internationally. Today, Fernley sells her Little Deer products - which are durable, machine washable, warm and soft - in bulk to boutiques and to private parties, as well. The items are made out of high-quality, rayon-and-wool felt. Fernley ships her merchandise to Powell's Books and to several countries, including Australia. Fernley takes requests for special orders from customers who enjoy mixing the designs with different colors. She currently sells to approximately 50 wholesale cus-

**Betsy Fernley, owner of Little Deer Company, has been sewing since she was ten years old. - Photo by Charity Prater**



tomers and is preparing for the Christmas rush.

"I'm hoping to have so much business that I'll have to hire some help for the holiday season," she says.

Her family is very proud of her success.

"My husband is very happy for me. He knows that I am doing what I love to do," she says.

For more information, call (503) 238-9791, visit [www.littledeer.com](http://www.littledeer.com) or send an email to [littledeershoes@comcast.net](mailto:littledeershoes@comcast.net). ★