

Kiwi Ingenuity

Necessity really is the mother of invention.

By John Jurman

Banging her head on the top bunk once too often while changing wet bed sheets got Diane Hurford thinking. The moisture proof bed pads she designed for her own children led to the Internet, then China, then Brolly Sheets ... the Hurford's fast-growing family business.

Brolly Sheets began in Australia, where the Hurfords were based for Glenn's work. Once friends saw Diane's cheerful, practical bed pads they placed their own orders, then asked if she could design something for teens ... and then for older family members with continence needs.

Before long Diane realised there was a market gap for attractive, affordable, good quality bed pads in a range of sizes and colours. And by the time Glenn was transferred back to New Zealand, Diane's planning for Brolly Sheets was well advanced.

Diane has found a manufacturer able to produce quality, absorbent fabrics with laminated (not plastic) backing. She visited China to check out the manufacturer and meet those who would be sewing her products.

"I wanted to see everything for myself, and make sure I knew what I'd be selling."

Keeping costs low for families is very important for Diane, especially as most clients buy two pads (one for the bed, and a spare in case a change is needed during the night).

Diane sells Brolly Sheets direct to customers at www.BrollySheets.co.nz, or by phoning (0800) 276 559. Brolly Sheets are now also stocked at Bed, Bath and Beyond.

After a call from a New Plymouth customer seeking help, Diane came up with the idea of a waterproof top sheet.

The customer had been washing her disabled son's duvet



and blankets several times a week, and was desperate for a labour-saving solution. Now Brolly Sheets also sells waterproof top sheets, pillow protectors, and chair pads.

Other new products, including underwear for children, are in the pipeline. All Brolly Sheets products are washable, and can be used over and over.

Keeping up with orders is a family affair with Glenn, who works in the banking sector, often working nights with Diane after their children are asleep. Seven year old Mia is a great hand with packing, and Lewis (5) is a whizz at putting return address stickers on envelopes.

"Our whole house is full of Brolly Sheets," Diane laughs.

It's important for families with a bed wetting or continence need to get medical advice. Brolly Sheets promotes the 0800 helpline numbers and websites of the New Zealand Continence Association and the Continence Foundation of Australia at her own site so families can get expert advice.

"People need this information and help to manage what is a common but very hidden issue," says Diane.

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