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Advertising executive has plan to save kids and planet

BY LANA MINI MIRROR STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 18, 2009

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Royal Oak resident Jeff Newsom is a visionary.

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He has big thoughts about the state of our planet, the problems in inner city schools and the concept of fashion.

He's combined all three in a unique way he hopes the public can easily embrace, assist in and enjoy.

Here's Newsom's idea:

Inner city children often score low in state MEAP testing in the area of science. To help increase those MEAP scores to help kids with their education, Newsom is using a European eco-fashion of taking old tank tops and transforming them into bags.

Simply sew the bottom of the shirt together and use the top's straps as bag handles. Make them stylish, sell them for \$1 or more. Then take the money and create project-based learning kits for kids called 7 Things You can Do in 7 Days to Save the Environment.

The kits contain items that Newsom hopes will pique kids' interest in science. It includes tree seedlings and recycling bags to use as containers for plants to grow. Kids can plant their seedlings and later transplant them outside helping the environment.

Hopefully it will spur kids into liking science, raise the MEAP scores, help the schools and who knows ... maybe one day one of those kids will find a cure for cancer, AIDS or an environmental problem. A big idea with a shirt made from the bag.

Newsom's grassroots plan is embraced by business people and artists in Royal Oak and Ferndale.

Lisa Maas, president of the publicity firm PublicityWorks in Ferndale, loved the idea so much she is doing AShirtbag's media work pro bono.

I love Jeff's idea, I love that he is trying to improve the environment and help children in a non-pushy way, Maas said. It's creative and positive.

Other people agree.

Newsom has worked his entire career in the advertising/creative world. He's been a creative director on projects with Audi, The Gap and more and is now applying those skills for the nonprofit world. Even his office, located at the Detroit Recycling Center is designed retro-style from recycled items.

At Inn Season Restaurant on Sunday, Jan. 25, 15 bags created by designers from around the world will be auctioned. The public is welcome to attend.

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Jeff Newsom is founder of AShirtBag.com, a nonprofit business that makes bags from old shirts. The goal is to sell the bags and donate money to school science programs to get lower income kids interested in science, raise their MEAP scores and heighten their interest in the environment. There is an auction by AShirtbag at Inn Season restaurant next week.

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