

# Greece woman has great time reusing bottle caps

MEAGHAN M. MCDERMOTT • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 21, 2009

Faced with a growing collection of nonrecyclable bottle caps in her family's Greece home, Alison Davidson was seized by inspiration.

"I'd gotten tired of throwing them out, so I was saving them for the kids to play with," said Davidson, 40, a stay-at-home mom with two young children. "Looking through the basket of them, I thought they were beautiful and that there must be something I could do with them."

Realizing the colorful plastic discs bore a striking similarity to decorations on a pricy wall clock she'd recently bought for her 4-year-old son Matthew's bedroom, Davidson decided to try her hand at clock-building.



Alison Davidson makes the parts to a clock, using used plastic bottle caps, in the basement of her Greece home. Davidson has started selling her clocks and other crafts made from used materials on her Web site. (WILL YURMAN staff photographer)

Using repurposed spokes from an old bicycle wheel, bottle caps and battery-powered clockworks, she created her very first decorative clock — which she dubbed a "Clockpop." And then, she kept making more.

"At first, I started making them as presents for friends and family, then I started getting asked about selling them," she said.

So, a few weeks ago, Davidson opened up her online business REaction Gifts, selling her bottle-cap Clockpops, as well as smaller clocks made from repurposed compact discs called Second-Time CDs and Beadmarks, bookmarks made from repurposed beads taken from old costume jewelry.

"All of my items are contemporary, different from what some of the other environmental crafters are making, and I'm getting a positive response," said Davidson. "I know this is a tough climate to start a business, but I've been thrilled by the response so far."

Reena Kazmann of Washington, D.C., is proprietor of eco-artware.com, a 10-year-old online gift store specializing in items made from recycled, reused and natural materials. She said

Davidson is one of a growing number of artisans who view the world differently and is among a business community that finds growth catering to new consumer demand for environmentally friendly wares.

"I think there is more awareness that we're stripping the Earth for new products when there are perfectly good ones that can be reused," she said. "It seems to me when you find really good pieces, you admire the imagination that was there to overcome the traditional way of thinking."

Kazmann's site features an array of interesting pieces that use old materials in new ways. There are baskets created by Zulu weavers from plastic-coated copper telephone wire; chairs fashioned from aluminum traffic signs; cuff links made from vintage typewriter keys; and more.

"Some people go out and look at trash and think 'trash,'" said Kazmann. "Others go out and think 'art supplies.'"

Davidson's new business is a natural outgrowth of her lifelong interest in environmental stewardship. A marine biologist, she spent five years as curator of fish at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Md., before moving to Greece with her husband, Tim, an engineering supervisor with Eastman Kodak Co. She and her husband take care to minimize their environmental impact and to instill respect for the natural world in their children, Matthew and Megan, 2.



One of the clocks that Alison Davidson made from used plastic bottle caps and old bicycle spokes. (WILL YURMAN staff photographer)

She hopes to soon add more items to her gift store, including handmade batiks — fabrics dyed using a wax-relief process — once she locates suppliers of eco-friendly dyes. She'd also like to offer Clockpops kits for youth groups and schools.

Her hope is that her business can help spread the word about "learning to reuse materials and that we need to rethink what gives purpose to a material. We can no longer just think of the original purpose of a thing; the materials it is made of also have value, and once we start looking at things that way, we will see there is a wealth of resources available free for the taking."

## ON THE WEB

To learn more about Alison Davidson's business, go to [www.REactiongifts.com](http://www.REactiongifts.com)

