

NO MORE BAGS

HSN showcases former Lawrenceville woman's invention

By CHERYL R. CLARKE
clarke@sungazette.com

LAWRENCEVILLE — What does an electrical engineer and a new way to shop have in common?

Linda Fritz, formerly of Lawrenceville and now of the Cincinnati, Ohio area, has come up with a "shopping system" that virtually eliminates the need for plastic — and even reusable — shopping bags.

Her CRESBI system, which stands for Collapsible Reusable Environmentally Friendly Stackable Box Idea, is so clever it got the attention of the Home Shopping Network and will be featured on the channel at 7 p.m. Monday and 7 a.m. Tuesday.

The system uses plastic collapsible crates that fit in shopping carts and on checkout lines.

It especially is a favorite with grocery store cashiers who have hand scanners because, as Fritz



said, the customer can put his or her items in the crates with the UPS code up to facilitate easier scanning without the need for the cashier to ever handle the products, speeding up checkout time.

Fritz, 55, holds an electrical engineering degree from Penn State University and worked for 10 years for General Motors and National Semiconductor, among other corporations.

In 1993, she decided to go to broadcast school at night because she wanted to create a TV show that would "help kids, because in 1993 there wasn't a lot on TV for kids that was educational and fun," she said.

"I wanted to know how video was made for television. In the process, I came up with an idea for a show for middle-school kids called 'Skyquest,' a vari-

(See FORMER, Page B-6)

Linda Fritz, inventor of the CRESBI shopping system, poses on the street next to her new van complete with her product line and logos. The crates, above and at left, fit in carts and on the conveyor belts at supermarket register lanes, which, Fritz said, shows how the system makes it easier and faster to check out without plastic or reusable shopping bags.



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Region

Former area resident's invention to be showcased this week on HSN

(From Page B-1)

ety show using about 300 kids, with me as the host," she said.

The show featured various educational topics and places such as museums, zoos and other places and "made it look fun," she said.

"We cut the show into little segments like a game show and obstacle course, and a couple local stations put it on," Fritz said.

As she was busy with her television career, she and her husband learned they were going to become parents and her career changed again, this time to a stay-at-home mom of a daughter.

In a desire to find better, more nutritious food, Fritz started growing fresh edamame, eventually selling it to Kroger stores in the Cincinnati area.

She used her video production education to create and launch a website for her business, which she named Sun Sugar Farms, after the type of tomato she also was growing. From there, the idea for the CRESBI was born.

"I bought some industrial bins to carry my edamame to market," Fritz said, but they were too big and bulky to shop with at the grocery store.

Environmentally minded, she had tried plastic reusable shopping bags, which were a "limy farce," she said, "so I thought why don't I shop with these?"



Linda Fritz, inventor of the CRESBI shopping system, shows her three pack of lightweight shopping bins.

"So I contacted companies to make a lighter version of the industrial bins," Fritz explained.

"I was so motivated to get this creation that everyone could use, I

couldn't sleep," she said. She drew up measurements of what she had in mind and found some online companies producing something similar to what she wanted.

"The bins originally came with weak plastic handles, so I took them off, came up with the webbing and other strong ways to keep things together, then came up with the cooler insert, securing a patent along the way," she said.

"No matter how full you fill a shopping cart, I have designed a system that will replace all those bags, plus my standard size CRESBI fits into all carts out there," Fritz said.

There even are wheels and other reusable items available for the CRESBI system for an extra charge, she said.

The story of how she got a chance to be featured inventor on the Home Shopping Network,

also is an interesting set of circumstances.

"My sister told me about a radio show called 'Dream Big America.' They would have inventors on the show, so I emailed them, and got on it," she said.

"I was on one week, a chiropractor selling a back system for people with bad backs, and then a guy that invented a different way to curl your eyelashes, and he won," she said.

"Me and the chiropractor guy were sort of disgusted that fashion won out over solving back problems and saving the environment," she noted.

But their loss eventually led to attention from QVC television personality Lori Greiner, founder of the Chicago based company For Your Ease Only Inc., which she established in 1996 to do product development and marketing.

Greiner, who also appeared on ABC's "Shark Tank," noticed the chiropractor's tweet because she was looking for something to help her father, who had a back problem, Fritz said.

"She saw the tweet from the chiropractor talking about his invention, and helped get him on QVC," she said.

Through that original radio experience and increased CRESBI sales from vendor shows such as Mother Earth News fairs, Fritz reached out to HSN inventor and marketer Akos Jankura, whom Fritz said was "instrumental in getting the network to have an inventor's night once a month on Mondays."

"Now they are spreading it out, and it's great because he is giving people more of a chance to bring their ideas to the public, and now I am going to be on HSN," she said. "I have been very blessed."

For more information about the CRESBI shopping system, call Sun Sugar Farms at 888-883-7259.

Inspiring Words



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THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Despite the fact that family and friends may become deeply distressed over the death of a loved