



These Bags are Rubbish

Here's a conundrum - would you rather bury perfectly good materials in the ground to pollute the earth or recycle them into devilishly stylish bags to carry your stuff around in?

When it comes to sustainable business practices producing huge canvas billboard skins, sticking them to a wall for a week or two and then burying them in a landfill is not one of them.

A West Auckland business, WAS Bags, is attempting to redress this imbalance by reincarnating the billboard skins as a range of satchels, bags and clutches.

"I had a piece of a billboard skin tucked away in my house for years, certain that there was a better use for it," says the owner of WAS, Glenda Keegan.

"It had a great design on it, was waterproof and extremely tough and hard wearing. It just didn't make sense that all this stuff was being thrown away."

In 2004, WAS - as in 'WAS something else' - came into being when Glenda used her mother's old Singer sewing machine to cobble together the first bag.

"It wasn't pretty but we could see the potential," she says.

Since then, the techniques for sewing the bags (it's a tricky material to deal with) and the materials used other than the billboard skins - including seatbelt straps - have all been refined into a popular range of products that combine fashion with extreme durability, and above all functionality.

The most recent customers who have realised the ingenuity of the WAS range are a number of corporate clients, who have asked Glenda to produce bags from their own advertising billboards, those who have simply placed orders for their own staff, and more recently, those who are giving them to clients as carbon-free gifts.

Visit: www.was.co.nz



'That Blind Woman' Celebrates Braille

Known to many as 'That Blind Woman', Julie Woods isn't letting her disability stop her from living an extraordinary life.

Julie says that, at first, her nickname of 'That Blind Woman' frustrated her. Especially when she would go out and have people say, 'Oh, that's the blind girl I was telling you about.'

However, over time Julie found she was describing herself in the same way.

"If I phoned back anywhere, I found I would be describing myself as 'that blind woman' who came into your store yesterday or 'that blind woman' who spoke at your dinner last week," says Julie.

"I have to accept that my most distinguishing feature now is that I am a blind person, with my second most distinguishing feature being that I am a woman."

After the birth of her second son, Julie noticed the vinyl in her bathroom floor began to shimmer. Being partially sighted, she visited Dunedin Hospital. Three months later, on March 27, 1997, she was declared legally blind. Faced with learning a whole host of adaptive skills, Julie got on with learning to live life as a blind person.

"I felt I had two choices," explains Julie. "I could be pitied or admired and the first simply wasn't an option for me."

Julie's unstoppable attitude was the driving force behind her recent fundraising ventures, which saw her travel to Paris for Louis Braille's 200th birthday bash.

She has worked as the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the

Blind's literacy coordinator and now operates her own life-coaching business under her brand That Blind Woman - coaching with a vision.

"I thought it would be fun to use 'coaching with a vision' as my slogan," Julie quips. "Just because I am blind doesn't mean I don't have vision. Having goals brings clarity, and with clarity everyone can see."

