

WILLMAR COUPLE CONTINUES INVENTIVE WAYS

New bottle-cap invention helps consumers squeeze last drop of liquid from pump bottles

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The Verso-Cap was created to help consumers squeeze the last drop of liquid product from bottles at the end of their use. The product is entirely made in Minnesota and was created by a Willmar couple.

See video at wctrib.com.

Photos by Erica Dischino
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Steve Vossen, left, and Julie Vossen-Henslin at their home in Willmar hold up the Verso-Cap product they invented and are now selling. The invention is sold in a pack of three different sizes to fit all bottles.



Steve Vossen speaks about the Verso-Cap product created by him and his wife, Julia Vossen-Henslin.



The Verso-Cap was created to retrieve the last of the liquid product from the bottom bottles at the end of their use. The cap package comes with three bottle sizes: small, medium and large.

Willmar

The spark of inspiration can happen at any time and be caused by the smallest of things. For Steve Vossen and Julie Vossen-Henslin of Willmar, it was the two inches of shampoo left in the bottle after the pump stopped working.

“I used to cut the bottle off,” Vossen said.

At first, trying to solve the problem was just an idea, nothing concrete. Then the husband and wife team started thinking about it a bit more seriously.

“It continued to bother us,” Vossen-Henslin said.

What eventually came from the inspiration was Verso-Cap, a patentpending, bottle-cap invention that allows consumers to use every drop of product from their pump bottles, such as large shampoo containers or hand soap. The Vossens sell their new invention in a threepack, a cap to fit small, medium and large bottles.

“We haven’t found a bottle they won’t work with,” Vossen-Henslin said.

Verso-Cap isn’t the first time they have created something and marketed it. They own Ductcap and KZ Sales, both of which manufacture duct work coverings, another invention of Vossen and Vossen-Henslin.

“We’ve been doing it for 15 years now,” Vossen said.

It was because of their experience and success with Ductcap that they knew they could do it again with Verso-Cap. The couple have been through all the steps before.

“We’re not intimidated by it,” Vossen said.

When they first started brainstorming about what would become Verso-Cap, the couple looked at ways to change the bottle itself, but quickly came to the realization that was too big of a project.

“It would have been far too expensive to redesign all the bottles,” Vossen-Henslin said.

Instead they focused on creating a new cap that would allow people to squeeze the remaining product out of the bottle without the use of the pump.

Even that was a big challenge, since bottles can have different neck sizes and thread patterns. Instead of being able to invent a one-size-fits-all top, the Vossens created three different sizes. They also needed to find the right design and material to use.

“I think we had about five failures,” Vossen said.

The first step in bringing Verso-Cap to life was creating the prototype. They turned to John Wells of Wellstronics3D, a 3D-printing operation in Inver Grove Heights.

“A terrific guy to work with,” Vossen said.

“He never rolled his eyes at us once,” Vossen-Henslin added.

Once they finally landed on a design that worked, which allowed the product to be squeezed out but not leak out when not in use, it was on to the next step. They brought the schematics to H&S Specialties Inc., a Glenwood company that creates products using custom, precision injection molds.

Funding the injection mold step of the process was a learning experience. It costs more than \$15,000 to create the mold for the product. At first they attempted a Kickstarter campaign, but ultimately financed it themselves.

They had complete control over the product and self-funding also allowed them to go at their own speed, to make sure it was all done the way they wanted.

“We’ve had fun doing it so far,” Vossen said.

The first 1,000 Verso-Cap sets came off the manufacturing line this past August.

So far the Vossens have sold the Verso-Cap at a few arts and crafts fairs, as well as online at www.verso-cap.com. Word has started to spread and they are getting return customers. In 2020 they’re already lined up to participate in shows up in Duluth and in Shakopee. Vossen-Henslin also plans to increase their marketing in the coming months.

“Next year, by Christmas, we’ll be able to hit that hard,” Vossen-Henslin said,

The goal is to expand the product’s reach nationwide. They would also like to see the product in salons and other beauty companies.

“I think we could see some decent growth,” Vossen said.

Everything having to do with the Verso-Cap from its invention to its packaging is done right in Minnesota. The couple’s patent attorney is in the Twin Cities and students at Willmar Public Schools complete the packaging process. And like any good Minnesotan, they have a certain 12-day get-together in their sights.

“Eventually we would like to get into the State Fair,” Vossen-Henslin said.