

Producing Change in the Produce Department

SMALL BUSINESS: Lotus Sustainables' New Item in Major Grocery Outlets

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

Just like their eco-friendly shopping bags, the retail market keeps expanding for Lotus Sustainables.

On a mission to eliminate plastic from shopping, the Carlsbad-headquartered company known for its Lotus Trolley Bag has launched an alternative to the single-use plastic bags that we put our produce in when shopping.

Lotus's three-pack of reusable alternative produce bags – along with the company's "Old Me – New Me" campaign showing how to make the switch from plastic to reusable – are now next to the single-use plastic bags in the produce sections at Vons, Pavilions, Albertsons, Sprouts and Jimbo's as well as across the nation at Target stores, with more partners to come.

One version of the Lotus Produce Bag is made from unbleached 100% organic cotton, the other kind is made from a sturdy polyester blend that can be washed and reused like clothing. The three-pack of bags retail for \$6.99 to \$7.99, with the organic cotton version priced from \$9.99 to \$12.99.

Customers are also using the bags for more than just produce. Lotus Sustainables founders Farzan and Jennifer Dehmoubed say; they are also good for travel organizing, as a mesh laundry bag and for storage.

"For us to make the impact we strive to make, it's paramount that we provide a high-quality solution that can be washed and

used literally hundreds of times over many years," said Jennifer Dehmoubed, who started the company with her husband seven years ago.

The produce bags join the company's Lotus Trolley Bag, a system of color-coded bags that fold out inside shopping carts like an accordion, with secure pockets for egg cartons and wine bottles and an insulated pocket for frozen foods, helping keep groceries packed and sorted.

The Dehmoubeds launched Lotus Sustainables after years of frustration with the endless piles of bags in their home and vehicles.

"We started this company to solve our own plastic bag problem," said Jennifer Dehmoubed. "Now we get to work with some of the largest retailers in the country helping them to solve their plastic bag problem."

Since 2016, the company has grown to 12 employees, has raised about \$2 million and its products are now found in more than 10,000 stores nationwide. Lotus has grown 40% year over year for the last three years.

Sold around the country, The Trolley Bag since 2017 has been the top-selling reusable bagging system on Amazon. Farzan Dehmoubed said they consider their partnership with Target as one of the company's biggest successes. He said other retailers are starting to understand the big picture.

He said the multiple millions of plastic bags stores buy for their customers' convenience is a costly endeavor and that he has

found it a "great process" to talk to retailers to show them the profit margins around moving away from single-use plastic bags.

"Albertsons is spending more than \$10 million on plastic bags, these bags that really never degrade and become microplastics that are hurting the environment," Dehmoubed said. "It's a win-win for the retailer, the consumer and the planet."

American families take home nearly 1,500 disposable plastic bags per year, according to Earth Institute. Farzan Dehmoubed said a plastic bag "has an average working life of only 15 minutes," making them extremely wasteful.

"Those bags, we use dozens of them every time we shop, and for such a limited amount of time," he said. "The bag goes in another bag and goes home and is disposed. It's a crazy habit we've gotten into. And items like bananas, they don't even need to go in produce bag. The produce comes from farms thousands of miles away and didn't need plastics to protect them. If you think about it, it's such a wasteful habit that we've made the norm."

California last October became the first state in the nation to ban single-use plastic produce bags in grocery stores. The ban, which not only includes the thin bags typically found next to fruit and vegetables in grocery stores but also extends to bags for other unwrapped items like bakery goods, bulk items and meat, goes into effect Jan. 1, 2025.

"The detrimental effects of these pesky



Jennifer Dehmoubed
Co-founder
Lotus Sustainables

produce bags which can't be recycled or reused is finally coming out and thankfully California has started to pass legislation to combat this enormous waste," Farzan Dehmoubed said. "In 2020 we really started to focus our business around reusable Lotus produce bags, a truly reusable option that could change habits in the produce section. We thought this would be 5% of our business, but it has quickly grown to 55% of our business."

Lotus Sustainables this year became a certified B Corporation – one of just over two dozen in San Diego County that are designated as such by B Lab. B Lab considers companies' impact on a number of key environmental, sustainability and social factors. ■



Farzan Dehmoubed
Co-founder & CEO
Lotus Sustainables

Lotus Sustainables


FOUNDED: 2016
CEO: Farzan Dehmoubed
CO-FOUNDERS: Farzan Dehmoubed and Jennifer Dehmoubed
HEADQUARTERS: Carlsbad
BUSINESS: Consumer goods
EMPLOYEES: 12
WEBSITE: Lotus-Sustainables.com
CONTACT: Farzan@lotus-sustainables.com
SOCIAL IMPACT: More than 4 billion plastic bags are eliminated with their products.
NOTABLE: Lotus Sustainables was designated as a certified B Corp company this year, one of only less than 30 businesses in the region and about 320 in California with the designation.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

HIRINGS, PROMOTIONS, BOARD MEMBERS AND SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS IN SAN DIEGO

kpff


ENGINEERING (A/E/C)
Promotions



Colin McDonald

KPFF Consulting Engineers has announced the promotion of Colin McDonald, SE to Principal. Having started his KPFF career in 2006, McDonald worked with the Los Angeles team before joining the San Diego office. McDonald has established himself among his colleagues as a highly collaborative and effective team member.

During McDonald's time with KPFF San Diego, he single-handedly developed the office's electric vehicle market. Career highlights include the SDSU Aztec Recreation Center Expansion, UCSD Tata Hall, Kaiser Permanente Clairemont Mesa Medical Office Building, The Muse at Torrey Pines, and extensive work for electric vehicle manufacturers in California, Illinois, Nevada, and Texas.



Steve Spence

KPFF Consulting Engineers has announced the promotion of Steve Spence, SE to Principal. Since joining the San Diego office in 2005, Spence has been integral to the development of tools to increase efficiency in KPFF's operations. His professional affiliations include having served as President of the Structural Engineers Association of San Diego from 2020-2021.

Notable projects include Oceanside Pierside South Apartments, Oceanside Springhill Suites, Anaheim Marriott Residence Inn, Valley View Casino Hotel and Casino Expansion, Santa Fe Christian Schools Quad Building, several High Tech High campuses including Clairemont Mesa, and the NAW'S China Lake Multi-Faith Religious Facility and Fitness Center.

Learn more at www.kpff.com

Solomon Ward
Attorneys at Law

Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith LLP

LEGAL
Promotion



Tanya M. Schierling

Solomon Ward Seidenwurm & Smith, LLP announced that Tanya M. Schierling has taken the reins as managing partner of the firm, effective July 1, 2023. Schierling has been practicing law for more than 25 years, including 20 years with Solomon Ward. She represents clients ranging from large public corporations to small start-up companies and individuals in a broad spectrum of business litigation, including partnership, corporate and real estate disputes as well as employment counseling and litigation, including labor code, wage, discrimination and harassment claims and investigations. Her practice also encompasses domestic and international distribution and franchising. swsllaw.com