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South end homes are decked out with decorations as Halloween approaches

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Doggie's best friend

Photo by Kelsey James

Optimus Gear, a Manitoba-based dog safety gear company, sells crash-tested pet products made entirely in Winnipeg. Gordon Templeton, the owner and founder of Optimus Gear, travelled to the U.S. to test the product on an anatomically weighted model dog. Unlike the traditional thumb trigger and bolt snaps found on most pet products, Templeton's clips take about 3,000 pounds to break.

BY KELSEY JAMES
STAFF REPORTER

FORT RICHMOND

A Fort Richmond resident's love for his dog spurred his highly successful business venture.

Gordon Templeton, owner and founder of Optimus Gear, started

looking for pet safety products shortly after getting his first dog, Nala.

"I was riding in the car with her and went, 'This isn't a great idea.' If I crash or slam on the breaks, she'll jolt forward," Templeton told *The Sou'wester*.

"I care about her and don't want her to get hurt, and if she's behind

me and flies forward then she'll also end up hurting me in the process."

Templeton's search for dog seatbelts came up mostly empty-handed. A lot of the gear he was finding were essentially distracted driving tethers that wouldn't hold up to crash forces.

Templeton, a mechanical engi-

neer, decided he would start making prototypes of his own safety product. He came up with the basic design of Optimus Gear's all-in-one dog seatbelt and harness, called the OG Defender Harness Kit, before making his own metal hardware.

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Winnipeg-based dog safety gear first of its kind

Continued from front page

Unlike the traditional thumb trigger and bolt snaps found on most dog leashes, Templeton's clips take about 3,000 pounds to break.

"So, a 50-kilometre crash with a dog like Nala, who's about 75 pounds, means over 2,000 pounds of force that's coming at you," Templeton said.

After landing on a completed design, Templeton travelled to the U.S. to crash test the product on an anatomically weighted model dog, which he said were similar conditions a car seat goes through.

"I really wanted something that's functional," Templeton said. "The idea was to make this all-encompassing; you buy the system, and you can easily transition out of the car and walk, run, tow and train."

He also wanted to change the conversation around dog safety gear, Templeton added.

"You would never dream of driving with your child in the backseat unrestrained, but we're willing to put an unrestrained, 80-pound dog next to them," he said. "It's

counterintuitive, but the reality is it's because there really wasn't anything that existed."

Optimus Gear has received a lot of local attention and sales since launching. Now, Templeton hopes purchases will continue and the product will get notice outside of Manitoba.

"We're trying to save dogs all over the planet, so we'll keep going," he said.

The product was launched in early spring and is done start to finish in Winnipeg, including the hardware, design, manufacturing and assembly. The aluminum is also Canadian-sourced, and the fabric comes from the U.S.

Prior to the harness kit's release, Optimus Gear sold car seat covers. Templeton said he will also be releasing a hands-free running belt in the future, hopefully before Christmas.

"It's evolved from owning Nala," Templeton said. "I also have my daughter now, so that was extra incentive to get this safe so she can ride with her."

Optimus Gear's OG Defender Harness Kit — which includes the leash, harness tether kit and storage bag — starts at \$269.95.



Photo by Kelsey James

Optimus Gear launched its flagship product, the OG Defender Harness Kit, in spring 2021.

They're currently sold in size small to large, but Templeton plans on adding extra-small

and extra-large options, as well as more colour choices.

Has someone done something nice for you when they didn't have to?

Have people gone above and beyond to help you out?

If so, we'd like you to tell us about these...

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

We're asking our readers to tell us about random acts of kindness they have witnessed or encountered. To do so, please send an email to news@canstarnews.com

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