

BootyPop Gives Aspirational Lift

By Katherine Bowers

NEWTON, Mass. — The cinched waistline and its curvy counterpoint, the voluptuous backside, are a mainstay of pop culture.

Jennifer Lopez and reality TV's Kim Kardashian are famous for hourglass shapes, sales of skintight jeans and bandage dresses are up, and gym squat regimens and Brazilian butt lifts continue to grow in popularity. It was enough to inspire entrepreneur Susan Bloomstone and her co-creator, designer Lisa Reisler, to make a panty equivalent of a padded bra.

"I read about young girls getting butt implants and it disturbed me," said Bloomstone, mother of two daughters. "We saw this as a safe, fun option because not everyone is going to get that perky butt from doing 100 squats in the gym each day."

Their boyshort panty, called BootyPop, features two sewn-in, curved pads over each "chock" and a ruched center seam. The shapewear category is hot, but nearly everything else on the market is girdle options à la Spanx.

"We laughed at first, like 'Would people really buy this?' But it's been flying off the shelves," said Dean Khial, vice president of Kitson boutique, who picked up the line this spring. "It's been the sleeper hit of the summer."

It's the top-selling underwear stockkeeping unit on kitson.com, moving 25 to

30 units a week, he added. BootyPop also sells to Boogie's Diner in Aspen, Colo., Holiday in Boston and Alene Too in Boca Raton, Fla., and will be launched in October at National Jean Co. in metro Boston. Bloomstone and Reisler project \$2 million in revenues in 2009.

"We're not necessarily selling to the traditional lingerie stores, but to the jeans stores," said Bloomstone. "The trend is for tight jeans, which tend to squash you a little. So retailers are having customers try on BootyPop while they're trying on their jeans. Women buy the jeans that makes their butt look good."

Reisler, based in Montreal, handles design while Bloomstone, a former PBS producer based in metro Boston, tackles sales and marketing. A third investor, American Dream Team Network, a division of Canadian conglomerate J. Corp., handles sourcing and production.

Bloomstone has gotten Kelly Ripa and Shari Shepherd to wear and discuss BootyPops on "Live with Regis & Kelly" and "The View." Making the circuit of celebrity charity events, Bloomstone has handed out BootyPops to the "Gossip Girls" cast.

The current BootyPop, at \$14 wholesale, has a junior sensibility — candy-bright colors, a bubble-pattern logo and cotton and spandex fabric.

Using feedback from retailers, Reisler has designed a contemporary collection, B.P.C. by BootyPop, in microfiber at \$17 wholesale and stretch lace for \$20, to hit stores in October. She's also working on swimwear and loungewear for spring. Reisler said they're able to move the BootyPop padding into the new categories.

"We did a lot of trial and error to find the right foam that would be functional and washable," she said.

