

associated with long treks in sweaty boots are a thing of the past. After taking a trip to New Zealand, where lamb's wool is used for hot spots and blisters, she introduced the product, which she calls eNZees, stateside. /Photo by Missy Votel Wool: It does a body good

## secret

Schuman in her impassioned New Jersey accent.

## by Joy Martin The unsung hero of blister prevention has arrived stateside, and leading the reform-in-yourshoes is Durango-based entrepreneur Jill Schuman. Her wonder wool product, called

Local entrepreneur introduces the States to ancient Kiwi

eNZees Foot Soother, is fit for the soles of kings and the toes of outdoor recreationists and

mall walkers alike.

While the simple solution for anyone prone to hot spots is found locally at Backcountry Experience, Gardenswartz, Kroegers, Nature's Oasis, Chinook Medical Gear, Durango Outdoor Exchange, and Surya Health, it's also available online through Schuman's website, enzeesfootsoother.com.

generations. It's not a new concept that I invented; it's just new to the States." On July 7, eNZees (think N.Z., aka New Zealand) launched on The Grommet, an online springboard for novel, inconspicuous products. Exposure on The Grommet means the New Zealand-sourced creation has officially gone global, and Schuman's sales are skyrocketing.

"In New Zealand, they sell it in drug stores," says Schuman. "Over there, they've used it for

Of 60,000 submitted each year since 2008, only 3 percent of all products reviewed by The Grommet are selected for the Massachusetts-based business.

"Through The Grommet, over three-million eyeballs see eNZees Foot Soother," says



peppered with roughly 28 million sheep. With a population of just under 5 million, that's six sheep for every human, the highest density of sheep per unit area in the world.

At the start of a 27-mile hiking trip on the South Island four years ago, Schuman was introduced to lamb's wool as a prevention method for blisters. Her guide explained that

and heels, holding it in place while she slipped on her socks. No scissors. No tape.

For Schuman, the story of eNZees begins in the land of Hobbits, kiwis and pastoral vistas

lamb's wool is coated in lanolin, a wax that wicks away moisture and reduces friction. Intrigued, Schuman pulled a piece off of the guide's stash and wrapped it around her toes

As she hiked over hills and dales, the wool wove into her socks like Velcro, keeping it in place around her trouble areas. At day's end, she tugged it away and was excited to see nothing

more than tired, happy feet. "The lanolin keeps your skin soft like a baby's bum," says Schuman. "And when you're done using it, you just bury it in your garden because it's biodegradable." Inspired by the results - or lack of irritating blisters - Schuman decided to share the 100-

percent, all-natural remedy with her active community back home in Colorado. She chose a New Zealand-based sheep breeder, a wool broker to handle sourcing and shipping, and local

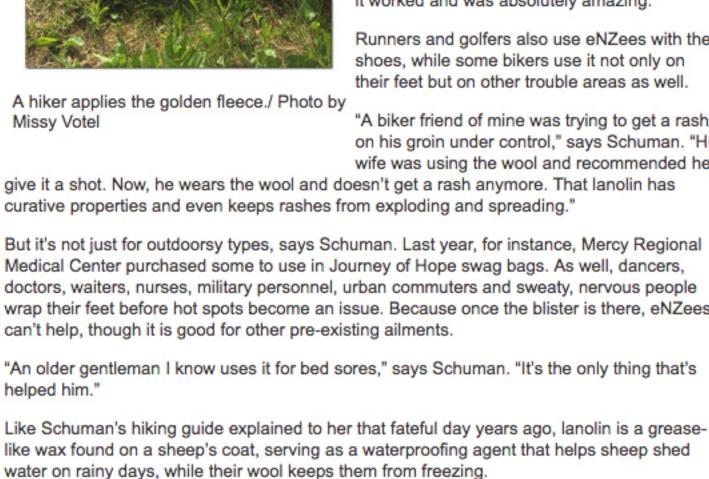
advertising guru Margaret Hedderman to conduct marketing. And just like that, Schuman

came out of a 20-year retirement and unveiled eNZees Foot Soother. Getting the wool from sheep to feet is fairly straightforward. After the breeder shears humanely raised lambs, wool processing takes six weeks. The wool is then scoured and trace amounts of lanolin are left to keep the soother soothing. These giant bales are then

wrapped in plastic and wire and put on a ship for a 45-day door-to-door journey traveling from

Schuman receives 1,000 pounds at a time, splitting up the shipment into 250-pound parcels that are then hauled to Shalom Denver, a nonprofit facility that employs the underserved

community to "pick and pack." Bundling the wool into palm-sized clumps, these fairly paid individuals place the product into hand-made, waterproof packages. "It's a great opportunity for these workers to reenter the job market," she continues. "With this type of job training, they're oftentimes hired by other companies and bigger corporations."



the South Island of New Zealand to Durango.

it worked and was absolutely amazing." Runners and golfers also use eNZees with their shoes, while some bikers use it not only on their feet but on other trouble areas as well.

"A biker friend of mine was trying to get a rash

on his groin under control," says Schuman. "His wife was using the wool and recommended he

"Once, I was cross-country skiing at Cascade

eNZees on me, so stopped and wrapped her heel and big toe. She wrote me later online that

and saw this woman sitting down in total agony," shares Schuman. "I always keep

The packages are sold either as a multi-activity pack that includes 15-20 applications or a fivepack of smaller pre-packaged pouches good

for two to three applications each. Both packages are sold for \$11.95 and are light, easy to carry, and even easier to share.

doctors, waiters, nurses, military personnel, urban commuters and sweaty, nervous people wrap their feet before hot spots become an issue. Because once the blister is there, eNZees "An older gentleman I know uses it for bed sores," says Schuman. "It's the only thing that's

Each spring, farmers shear their sheep to not only harvest the wool but to also ensure the

In the 1960s, the use of pesticides in agriculture became the norm and lanolin was soon blacklisted in beauty products. But after a couple of decades of tweaking methods back to chemical-free, lanolin shines again as the bright star of popular, skin-loving treatments. The natural moisturizer is used on anything from chapped lips to nursing nipples, and now, feet. "I believe eNZees will become a new lexicon," says Schuman. "Like Kleenex is for tissues,

Of course Schuman would help shape the next fashionable wave with something as obvious and revolutionary as wool. Her first business revolved around a similar concept. In 1981, the East Coast native held a master's in education and was working as a dental

After reading an article on personal computers, Schuman had a "notion that everyone would have one in the future" and that education and training would be necessary, so she started a consulting business for software companies.

"It was the high-tech salad days, and I was in the high-tech Mecca," says Schuman, who acquired 200,000-flying miles working 90 hours a week between London and Boston.

"I was not enamored with that profession," she laughs.

"I worked with Bill Gates sometimes," says Schuman. "I'd organize these multi-million dollar conferences that would take over cities. Five hundred to 20,000 people would come, and I

was there to educate them all."

On days off, Schuman would escape to her second home in Vermont for fresh air. In 1994 at the age of 44, she sold her company and moved to Colorado. "I'm an old fart, thriving and happy," says the spry 65-year-old. "I guess I couldn't do

This kind of capitalist mentality embodies the mission behind The Grommet, explaining why

retirement. They call these 'encore careers' when there's so much life and passion to start

"Buy differently," The Grommet website encourages. "Our end goal is that within five years, 10 percent of all products flowing through U.S. retail will be originating from independent, small-scale makers, creating vibrant jobs and innovative products in every corner of our

"This country needs wool," says Schuman. "And people are finally getting it."

"This pain-stopping wool is as kind to the lambs as it is to your feet," says Schuman.

sheep are less prone to heat strokes and bothersome insects. Besides protecting sheep from environmental havoc, shearing leaves the farmer's hands soft and utensils rust free. Thus, lanolin's tendency to protect and heal was recognized as a marketable item that's been traded since biblical times.

people will refer to wool as eNZees."

hygienist.

something new. Many people go into non-profit, but I've always loved business." Schuman's eNZees stood out.

country." That niche is exactly the one Schuman plans to fill.