

SHOPPING

First-aid kit for kids hot seller for creator

CAVE CREEK

It's amazing when a product keeps giving.

Richelle Nassos of Cave Creek launched me4kidz LLC from her kitchen a year ago. Inspired by her son, Cody, 8, Nasso invented a kid-friendly first aid kit called the medibag.

Since then, the red doctorlike bag has taken off. Nassos and her husband, Pete, have sold 30,000 medibags to 800 stores in eight countries nationwide as well as 70 online retail stores such as Baby Catalog, Baby Center Store, Sports Authority and others. It sells for \$20 to \$30.

Her biggest retailer fans are in the United States. Toys R Us and Bed, Bath & Beyond are among them. Her product will soon be sold at Babies R Us and

Target.com. Target is testing the kits to sell at its stores, Nassos said.

The innovative idea started when a bee stung Cody, then 3 years old.

"Every time I pulled out a first aid kit, Cody had a meltdown," Nassos said. "I said to myself that night after all the tears were gone, 'there's got to be a first aid kit that is made for kids.' Because when you pull it (an adult first aid kit) out, it seems so intimidating."

The kit has been evaluated nationally and internationally, winning seven juvenile awards, Nassos said. Even Phoenix Fire Chief Bob Kahn and local Valley doctors recently endorsed the kits.

"There just wasn't something out there geared toward more kids, making the child's experience less fearful and the parents' experience less stressful," Nassos said looking back.

Last year, when business picked up



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MEDIBAG

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rapidly, Nassos and her husband both quit their jobs to run the family business. Nassos managed an immigration firm in Phoenix; her husband worked for a wireless company.

The red kit can be used for cuts, scrapes, burns, itch relief, insect stings and more. Families can keep it in the house, auto or take it to recreational events and on vacation. The red doctor bag includes 117 items such as:

- eye wash
- crayon
- assorted kid-friendly bandages
- no-sting cleansing wipes
- antiseptic hand cleanser
- fun stickers
- burn relief
- anti-itch ointment
- disposable tweezers
- thermometer
- free refill coupons on 45 items
- cold compress
- First Aid guide
- gauze and more

Medibags are assembled at Gompers Center in Phoenix, a non-profit organization that serves adults and children with disabilities in Arizona.



PHOTOS BY MARK HENLE/THE REPUBLIC

Richelle Nassos with her son, Cody, 8, the inspiration for the first-aid kits for kids.

Adults at the center's vocational room label and pack the kits. The center receives 10 percent for each medibag manufactured, which helps pro-

vide services to disabled adults and children.

"I love helping people," Nassos said. She considers me4kidz, which

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stands for Medical Emergencies for Kids, a Christian-based company.

"We're a Christian family. And I think part of our journey is giving back and making lives better," Nassos said.

This summer, me4kids will launch a smaller version in the shape of a band aid called the medibuddy. The smaller version is dedicated to her son, Luke, who is 21 months old. It is expected to sell for \$5. In addition, a kit for pets called medibag 4 petz, will be released. It is slated to sell for \$15.

"People who don't have kids have pets," she said.

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