

WAG

FROM BAGS TO RICHES

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY COLLEEN WILSON

THE DUFFEL HAD BEEN DONE A MILLION TIMES OVER.

But when Lisa McCullagh designed the canvas duffel bag that would become the cornerstone of her new business, Scarborough & Tweed, in 1992, she says she “kicked it up a notch.”

It was a midsize duffel that came in navy and hunter with ribbon handles that could be outfitted with any logo. But what has made it a classic, McCullagh says, were the little things – heavier canvas and fabric webbing, brass hardware and an understated client logo rather than a glaring silk screen on the bag.

“If it has the Scarborough & Tweed label in it, it has to pass certain tests of time,” she says.

And it has. Twenty-three years later, McCullagh has made her brand essential to the world of corporate gift giving and all from her Pleasantville headquarters.

My Original Duffel – it was first called – made McCullagh’s company a million-dollar business venture in less than a year.

“A lot of it was the product,” she says. “And, of course, luck, too.”

And what is arguably more impressive is that it became a company in about 10 minutes.

The Pleasantville resident had been working with a marketing and promotions company for nine years, but when she went back to work after



Lisa McCullagh, owner and founder of Scarborough & Tweed, in her Pleasantville office.

maternity leave for her first child, she was told her job would be changed.

“That was really disappointing to me because I love my clients. I really was in a position of, ‘Do I stay or do I not?’ I have zero money in the bank and I was basically really worried about what my next step was.”

McCullagh decided to leave and shortly after making that decision received a phone call from a client who was asking what she was going to do next.

“I told him about what my thought was about starting this (gift) business ... and he says, ‘You have 10 minutes to come up with your company name, because I’ll give you your first order.’”

Grabbing an atlas on a nearby desk – “This is very scientific,” she quips – McCullagh opened to the England page. The English town Scarborough caught her eye and nearby north of that is the river Tweed.

“I just thought it sounded kind of established and Brooks Brothers-ish ... so Scarborough & Tweed it became.”

And now McCullagh’s business has grown beyond the traditional duffel. The company offers just about any kind of gift including portable phone chargers, apparel, journals, pens and desk accessories. Scarborough & Tweed has an international clientele in just about every industry, she says, adding that the company now has an office in the U.K. in addition to the four buildings they use in Westchester County.

But what has truly defined her success, McCullagh says, is that Scarborough & Tweed is a philanthropic company, too.

“It’s a new approach to how we’re going to run our business,” she says.

McCullagh, who has long supported a variety of nonprofits including Girls Incorporated of Westchester, told WAG that the company is announcing a new philanthropic effort this month.

In partnership with World Food Program, Scarborough & Tweed will donate a meal to a person in need for every bag the company sells.

“It’s been a personal goal of mine for so many years to be able to do this,” she says about giving back through her company. “It’s one other thing that shows us as we’re here for the long term. We’re here to help.”

For more, visit scarboroughtweedgifts.com.