

Times Business

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Fort couple invent hot new product

PAIR ARE THE CREATORS OF THE HOGA MAT SYSTEM, PERFECT FOR HOT YOGA

MONIQUE TAMMINGA
Times Reporter

Very few of us get that 'eureka' moment, where we come up with an idea for a product that hasn't been invented yet.

Fewer of us act on that idea and actually make the product we believed in.

But for Fort Langley couple Lou Fasullo and Nicole St. Jacques, the pair have become inventors and now business partners and manufacturers of the Hoga mat system.

The Hoga mat is a eco-friendly yoga mat and soft microfibre towel which is fastened together with nickel-plated, rust-free snaps and ideal for use in hot yoga.

"We are both runners and my favourite run is through McMillan Island. But when the tide (was) out I got stuck in the mud and tore my meniscus and had to have surgery," said Fasullo.

After surgery, his doctor suggested he try yoga. St. Jacques suggested that he try hot yoga at Oxygen Yoga in Walnut Grove.

"So I did what everybody does, and I went and bought a cheap yoga mat. Within five minutes I was sweating and sliding all over the place," he said.

"I brought a beach towel so I put that down, but it started bunching. I was holding a pose and had no grip.

"I thought I was going to re-injure myself."

Then came his epiphany.

"There had got to be a better way," Fasullo said to himself.

Along with his wife, Fasullo started to research whether there were non-slip yoga mats with towels attached.

"There was nothing out there from what we could see that combined a towel with a yoga mat," said St. Jacques.

So they quickly moved into action.

They searched and searched, finding the best rubber yoga mat that doesn't allow bacteria.

Then they found the microfibre towels that can hold lots of moisture without feeling damp. They can hold a litre of sweat.

They are machine washable and stay super soft, allowing for chins, hands, knees and elbows to hold poses on a soft surface.

Then came the rust-free snaps, which had to be shipped from the U.S. in boxes of 100,000.

They decided to make the mats themselves, buying a 600 pound re-furbished fabric machine from former fabric factories since closed in Quebec.

They invented their own yoga mat press and how to insert the snaps and voila — they have their own Hoga mat factory in their detached garage.

"We really wanted to keep everything as local as possible," said Fasullo.

They launched their product earlier this year and have never looked back.

"The support and response has been amazing," said Fasullo.

Reaching out through social media was a huge learning curve for them, but well worth it.

"A yoga blogger in Chicago asked if she could try our product. She gave it a great review and that has given us amazing reach," said St. Jacques.

They've had sales from as far as Texas and California to as far as New Zealand.

"It's been so exciting. We love helping people achieve their fitness goals by eliminating that distraction of slipping or fixing your towel," said St. Jacques.

"You can lose 20 per cent of your class fixing your towel."

The feedback from people who have purchased their product has kept them going.

"That makes all of this so satis-



MONIQUE TAMMINGA Langley Times

Fort Langley's Lou Fasullo and Nicole St. Jacques have created the Hoga mat system, an eco-friendly yoga mat and soft microfibre towel, which is fastened together and perfect to use in hot yoga. The microfibre towels (below right) can hold a litre of sweat — unlike other towels — so people are not slipping on sweaty surfaces during yoga. The mats are manufactured out of their home's garage.

fy," they said.

Local yoga instructors have been trying the Hoga mat out too, and have provided great support for it.

"Many people have been asking them 'where can I get your mat?' So a lot has been through word of mouth too," said St. Jacques.

"Sometimes I will be in a class and I will see someone struggling with their towel and I feel like telling them, you should try our Hoga mat."

They have a patent pending in both the U.S. and Canada and have incorporated their company.

The Hoga mat system comes with the mat and towel, with various colours to choose from.

The cost is \$162. The price may sound high to



Submitted photo

some, said Fasullo. But they point out that if hot yoga is your thing, it's no different than going out and spending \$160 on a good pair of running shoes if you are a runner.

You want to make sure you

have really good equipment. They are so confident about their mat that they offer money back if you aren't satisfied.

For more information go to thehogamat.com or call 604-371-1949.

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