

Apparel Firm Big on Yoga

Lola Getts puts twist on Lululemon pants flap by touting plus-size wear.

Chip Wilson, co-founder of Canadian active wear company **Lululemon Athletica**, opened a can of worms last month when he said in an interview that plus-size female bodies did not work well with his clothing. He also opened a door for **Lola Getts**.

The L.A. company designs and manufactures yoga pants and sports apparel specifically for plus-size women—a market its owners say is ignored by trendy brands like Lululemon.

"We're designed for that plus-size customer who deserves to have fashionable clothes like anyone else," said co-founder **Jodi Geiger**. "Sixty seven percent of American women are size 14 or bigger."

Geiger and co-founder **Stacy Goldstein** both have backgrounds in the fashion industry, and said they designed their products with durable fabric and stitching so they would hold up well and avoid showcasing unflattering bumps and



Not a Stretch: Stacy Goldstein at Lola Getts in downtown L.A.

hitching. Manufactured in downtown Los Angeles, Lola Getts sold out its modest first season of about 1,100 units through its website and smaller boutiques. Prices for its size 14w to 24w line of pants and shirts run from \$68 to \$76.

Lululemon's yoga apparel often runs in excess of \$90, and it does not make any apparel larger than size 12.

Lola Getts products go through a longer manufactur-

ing process compared with a regular piece of yoga apparel; rather than being sewn straight from the roll, its fabric is laid out for one to two days, which allows it to "rest" and to endure more stretching.

The company, just 18 months old, might be going after a market Lululemon has ignored, but it still faces competition from big sportswear players like **Nike Inc.** and **Gap Inc.'s Athleta**. The distinction, Geiger said, is that

those companies' plus-size offerings are just larger versions of their regular designs.

Though Lola Getts' co-founders might disagree with some of Wilson's remarks, they said he helped put active wear into the mainstream.

"We give him credit for how we view yoga pants today," Geiger said, "but we want to empower the plus-size demographic that has been shunned."

— Justin Yang

Typhoon Hits Close To Home

Firm with Manila office pitches in to raise funds for Philippines.

More than a year before Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, **Bryce Maddock** lived through a less deadly storm in Manila.

"Within the period of just a few hours, 20 inches of rain fell and there was awful flooding," he said of the August 2012 typhoon. "People had to wade through waist-high water in order to get to work."

His Santa Monica outsourcing company, **TaskUS**, has offices in Manila. It was spared the worst when Haiyan hit early last month, but many of his employees had families and friends living in the affected area. So he wanted to help.

"The Philippines is our extended community," he said. "We felt compelled to raise money to support the country."

Three days after Haiyan hit, Maddock and TaskUS

started fundraising, promising to match every donation dollar for dollar up to \$25,000.

As of last week, the company raised \$8,000 and had donated \$16,000 to the **American Red Cross** for relief efforts in the Philippines.

The company also set up a collection station in its Manila office for cash and emergency goods. Cash will go to the local Red Cross, and the company will send the goods to the affected area.

Maddock, who co-founded TaskUS in 2008 with **Jasper Weir**, a friend from Santa Monica High School, said they had tried a dozen countries before setting up offices in the Philip-pines. They were

drawn to the country because of its English-speaking population and its appreciation for American culture as well as to the strong work ethic there.

"The truly remarkable and amazing thing that happens in a typhoon is people go out of their way to come to work during some of the most fierce conditions," he said.

— Kay Chinn



Maddock

Getting Back to His Roots

A quarter-century ago, **David Henry** began his real estate career while living in Dandora, a slum near Nairobi, Kenya. There, 100,000 people live in shacks made of cardboard, tin and cinderblock.

Now a managing director in the downtown L.A. office of real estate services firm **Transwestern**, Henry spent much of his time in Africa making real estate microloans with money from the **Ford Foundation** to impoverished single mothers.



Henry

"I signed up to offer my two good hands and a creative mind to help the poor help themselves," he said.

With a \$100 loan, a single mom in Dandora could build two shanty homes, which she could rent out to pay off the loan, feed her children and, eventually, open a bank account to save for her children's education.

Henry, 46, moved back to the United States when he was 24 and has since

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returned five times to visit the women and children he worked with. During the holidays this month, he plans to go back to Kenya once again with his youngest brother, 37-year-old **Mike**.

David Henry said he's excited to show his brother the place where he spent the formative years of his career—even if it is dangerous.

"East Africa is a hotbed for

(terrorist) activity, but I speak fluent Swahili and I have street smarts," he said. "I know where to go and where not to go, I hope—knock on wood."

Long-Distance Learning

Neil Uchitel has a monthly commute that takes far longer than driving the 405 at rush hour.

The founder and creative director of L.A.'s **Slappo Music & Sound Design** flies to New York once a month for a week to attend classes for his executive

M.B.A. program at Columbia University. In 10 months, he's logged about 50,000 miles, which include a class trip to Munich. That's equivalent to two trips around the world, but Uchitel, 45, said the classes have been worth it.

"Every class has been very useful, especially for someone who doesn't come from a finance background," he said.

He chose the program because of Columbia's scheduling.

"It's almost impossible to check out every

Friday for two years, but easier to check out for a week at a time," he said.

Still, Uchitel said sometimes juggling his business duties, where he might work on projects for 60 to 80 hours a week, with his course load and family is a challenge.

"My first term was brutal. My family suffered for it, but they were on board with me," he said.

Staff reporters **Bethany Firnhaber** and **Justin Yang** contributed to this column. Page 3 is compiled by editor **Charles Crumpley**. He can be reached at ccrumpley@labusinessjournal.com.



Uchitel



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