

# FOOTWEAR PLUS

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HEALTHSHOES

**Crazy  
hot** THE  
SPRING  
PREVIEW

Bonus Insert  
**LITTLE  
STEPS**





## Meet Mohop

**Annie Mohaupt always thought it would be fun to be a craftsperson.**

**A**n architect by trade, Annie Mohaupt grew tired of sitting at a desk and itched to do more with her hands, especially after being struck by inspiration from materials she discovered on the job. So when a friend asked her to go in with her on a crafts fair booth, she jumped at the chance to create something. The result of that leap of faith? Hand crafted, customizable, eco-friendly shoes that she now sells under the name Mohop (the phonetic pronunciation of her last name).

"It ended up being a lot harder than I initially thought," Mohaupt says of shoemaking. Her first footwear designs drew from furniture makers of the last century, who created designs from bent plywood. Using birch plywood (sourced from a family farm in Finland that plants more trees than it harvests), rubber soling made from recycled car tires, and the most eco-conscious glues, sealants and inks that she can find, the designer created heel bases in three heights that can be customized by the wearer. Ribbons, fabric and other materials get threaded through her patent-pending strap system to change the style, and allows for personalized

embellishments such as stones and buckles. "I want people to feel like they can make [each pair] their own, and get whatever look they like," she describes.

Making the shoes durable and sturdy took a lot of trial and error, but Mohaupt road-tested them herself to make sure they'd last for at least 100 miles. Now Mohop shoes, which retail for \$185, are available in eco-friendly boutiques that feature independent designers and traditional shoe stores, where the designer says they sell best. (It helps when the staff understands footwear and can explain how they're worn, Mohaupt notes.)

"We have a hard time even keeping them in stock," says Adina Clark, manager of City Soles in Chicago, who adds that her customers are environmentally conscious. But Mohop's style and comfort play a role in their decision, too. Though hard to understand the shoes on display, Clark says once customers get them on their feet, they're sold. "They're amazing for any foot shape, because you can tie them in different ways to accommodate," she explains.

For Spring '08, Mohaupt is planning a wedge style and also would like to add closed-toe shapes. While last year she considered her work a craft, today, "I feel like I have a full-fledged fashion business," she says. Two assistants, both of whom learned shoemaking at the Art Institute of Chicago, now help Mohaupt produce the shoes, and the demand is growing. "It's exciting but kind of scary, too," she says. "Fashion moves so much faster than the crafts world." —*Leslie Shiers*

## PrimaLoft Offers Partially Recycled Insulation

Equal benefits and a competitive price make new blend as good as standard options.

PrimaLoft, the insulation technology division of textile manufacturer Albany International Group of Albany, NY, has developed a new insulation partially made from recycled fibers that has applications for footwear product. The supplier will launch the Eco technology at Outdoor Retailer show in Salt Lake City this month.

PrimaLoft Eco is made of 30 percent recycled fibers and 70 percent traditional fibers, with the recycled component coming from post-consumer and post-industrial plastic waste (i.e. soda bottles). According to Tom Mendl, PrimaLoft marketing director, the eco-friendly insulation provides the same benefits as PrimaLoft's original product—namely, providing warmth even when wet, drying quickly and bouncing back after compression.

The material was quickly snapped up by two sleeping bag companies: Outdoor product vendors Big Agnes and Sierra Designs—who Mendl calls "ahead of the game"—will offer product made with the recycled insulation for Spring '08. As for footwear, Mendl says there has been a lot of interest and several manufacturers are currently sampling it in product development.

Craig Throne, general manager of Patagonia Footwear, a division of Rockford, MI-based Wolverine World Wide, applauds PrimaLoft's efforts to add greener sourcing options. Though Patagonia is not one of the brands currently experimenting with PrimaLoft Eco, Throne says suppliers' steps to be more environmentally conscious are steps in the right direction. However, "Everyone's got their environmental material," he adds. "The first question, when we talk to suppliers, is what is the rest of the company focused on? You try to find suppliers that have a long-term commitment, because these are the people who are going to be innovating going forward."

Mendl says PrimaLoft is looking to improve upon the Eco fiber's 30/70 ratio of recycled to non-recycled fibers, and research is ongoing. "We'd like to get as much recycled content as possible, but we don't want to sacrifice performance," he explains. "The holy grail is 100 percent."

Now that environmentally responsible alternatives are available for the same price as traditional insulation components, it's up to the market to speak. "We anticipate that consumers will embrace this new technology," Mendl says, noting that consumers used to believe the term recycled meant "used." Now Mendl says there is much more awareness and acceptance. "There are some people who will care very much, and others who don't," he notes. "We're hoping there are more people who care." —*L.S.*

## Spotlight: Teko Socks

Boulder, CO-based Teko, known for its earth-friendly performance socks, ups the ante with its EcoMerino and Ecopoly styles, now in new colors for spring. The EcoMerino wool, which comes from a sustainable Tunisian farm, is herbicide- and pesticide-free, while the Ecopoly socks are made from 100-percent recycled polyester created from soda bottles. Teko's socks are made domestically and the company compensates for all energy used in production by purchasing credits from American Wind.

