



COOPERATIVE SHOPPING

Trillium offers local and sustainable goods *by Max Thornberry*

Trillium Clothing has succeeded where few other small businesses in Eugene have succeeded. The co-op minded partners uprooted themselves from the Saturday Market and started a thriving storefront operation.

Karen Kross, founder and one of the two people who create the hemp clothing and accessories under the name Trust Hemp, can be found working at the small store on Wednesdays.

"We make hemp and organic cotton clothing," Kross says. "We are just like the neighborhood store. On my day, people know they can come in and do alterations or custom orders, that sort of thing."

Each of the more than a dozen partners has specific days to work at the store so the others don't get burned out and can spend time with their families — all of them have children of their own.

Trust Hemp, along with Watermelon Kids and Circle Creations, all started out as individual Saturday Market businesses.

Kross' partner James Breech says the group met in 2000 and formed a co-op. "We all joined to become one entity," he says. "You have to mesh personalities, you have to mesh businesses and everyone has a different business style."



Breech specializes in jewelry but assists Kross with the clothing business as well. He explained that, during the recession, jewelry stopped selling as well but people were still willing to invest in locally made clothing.

While business slumped, some of the Trillium members signed up for the Individual Development Account program at Lane Community College. The program consisted of creating a business plan, participating in counseling and saving. At the end of the program, students received three times what they saved in goods. Trust Hemp received pallets of cloth from Colorado-based company Envirotexiles as their tangible good.

Four and a half years after opening, Trillium Clothing is thriving by word of mouth with local artisans. More than 85 percent of the store's products are locally made, Breech says.

Because of the store, the owners have moved out of the Saturday Market scene but will return this year for the Holiday Market and will expand their hours in December to be open on Sundays.

"This is the last thing any of us thought we would do. I never thought I'd have a store in Eugene. It was a badge of honor to leave here, to get out of here," Breech says. "It's the best choice we ever made and we didn't even know we were making it, really."

For guys, you can get organic button up shirts for \$65-\$85 and for the women on your list, you can get at tank top or tunic for less than \$50. If you are looking to expand your jewelry collection, handmade silver rings, bracelets and necklaces are sold for \$2 per gram.

Trillium Clothing at 3235 Donald Street is open noon to 6:30 pm Monday through Saturday.