

Family that zips together just might get rich together

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Lauren Altman thought her husband's sweater needed a little "oomph."

"Rick always wears a fleece pullover," said Lauren, a West Bloomfield resident. "It's kind of boring."

Then she noticed the zipper and pictured some kind of key chain. Not only would a key chain liven up the sweater, but it was the perfect business opportunity Lauren had been looking for.

Lauren shared her idea with Rick and their 6-year-old daughter, Hannah, and CoolZips was born.

"We always knew that we wanted to do something that was ours," Lauren said. "Then this came along and it was like, 'How simple.' We all put our heads together. It was really exciting. Hannah came up with the name. Rick ran upstairs to the computer to see if the domain name was available. It all happened so fast."

CoolZips are charm/bead zipper pulls that can be attached to jackets, sleeping bags and backpacks. The Altman's dog, Joey, wears an 'I love cats' CoolZips on his collar.

So far, the Altmans have



West Bloomfield residents Rick Altman and his 6-year-old daughter, Hannah, show off some of their CoolZips zipper pulls. Rick's wife, Lauren, makes the zipper pulls.

come up with nearly 50 styles, including animals, peace symbols, skulls and crossbones and sports. Lauren designs and creates the zips with some help from Hannah, a first-grader at Lone Pine Elementary School.

"The hardest part is coming up with new ideas," Lauren said. "Hannah has been a big help getting a kid's point of view. She talks to all her friends about what's hip and cool."

"All the styles are pictured on

the Web site. If you pick out the skull and crossbones, for example, I'll make one like that. But we'll also play around with the colors if you want. There is some customization available."

Hannah likes hanging the charms on her Webkinz toy pet collars.

"CoolZips are really cool," she said. "I like all the different ones. My friends really like them."

Lauren, who served as an executive director for a non-profit organization for five years, also created a fund-raising division of CoolZips to benefit schools, sports teams, religious and community groups and other charitable groups.

Fund-raising works like this: The organization notifies its donors to purchase CoolZips online using a coupon code. A total of 25 percent of the sales will be donated to the organization.

The Altmans have been busy filling orders and fielding inquiries from across the U.S., Australia, Canada, South Africa and Romania.

CoolZips are currently available online and the Altmans plan to sell them at art fairs this summer. They range from \$4-\$6.

For more information, log onto www.CoolZips.com.