



Take me home. See Page 2.

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Breaking the glass ceiling in the business world

Westmeister plugged into future with Power Shelf invention

By Lynne Phillips

Times-Junction Staff Reporter

"If you never take the opportunity or the risk, you will always wonder what could have been," are words local inventor Lynn Fetzer Westmeister has learned to live by.

Her "can do" attitude is what has led to her latest patented invention, "The Power Shelf."

Twenty nine year old Westmeister said her invention was born out of her desire to accomplish 29 things while she was 29 years old.

"Patenting one of my many ideas was one of my goals," she said. "I thought it would be



Lynn Fetzer Westmeister works on her invention the Power Shelf.

something I had created previously. I hadn't thought of The Power Shelf when I made my list."

The Power Shelf is a unique, innovative, patent

pending design that may change how people think of the common electrical outlet, according to Westmeister.

See Power Shelf on Page 3

Power Shelf

From front page

She said with her invention the outlet cover can now serve a greater purpose. Her tapered design allows the cord of an electronic device to be wound around the base of a shelf thus keeping annoying and unsightly cords neatly organized.

"I actually thought of the idea when I would plug the charger for my phone into the outlet behind the nightstand next to the bed," she said. "But of course, the charger cord would fall down behind the nightstand then I would have to pull the stand out from the wall crawl around to find it, push the stand back thinking this is so stupid. Why don't we have a shelf at the outlet so this doesn't happen."

The Power Shelf was born. Sunday, April 20, 2008 is when Westmeister said she came up with the idea. "I discussed it with my husband, Shawn, and we drew it up in autocad to burn it out. By the end of the day on

Monday I had the first prototype to take home and try out. Once installed and put into use I was ecstatic. It was then I knew I wanted to make them available for everyone."

That night, the idea was refined by Westmeister and her husband, and the next day she told her mom of her intention to take her invention to market. Her excitement mounted, and



Lynn and Shawn Westmeister

she shared her idea with her dad as soon as he walked in the door at Fetzer Manufacturing Co. (FMC).

Six months of research and development followed. During that time, potential customers, vendors, sales people and drivers came to see what the excitement was all about.

In October 2008 the shelf became available online and orders, according to Westmeister, were filled as they came in. At this point retailers began receiving information about the shelf from Westmeisters.

The original Power Shelf measures 2.5-inches wide and 5-inches in length.

The shelves are available in a number of designs for both round and square outlets with more to be released soon. They are available in numerous powder coated colors according to Westmeister.

She credits her creativity to her mother, Maggie. "My mom was always very crafty," she said. "As a child, I would come

up with off the wall ideas and really loved creating new things.

"It didn't matter if I was making a craft project or just letting my imagination run wild," Westmeister added. "Mom always acted and spoke positively. She always encouraged me, telling me not to hold back from what I wanted to do in fear of what someone else would think."

Even as a child Westmeister said she loved to clean and organize. "I would clean my bathroom and take out each item, wipe it down and put it away then I started on my room, cleaning first one side then the other."

With a grin she said, "Mom told me I wanted to be a janitor when I was in elementary school. Then I wanted to be my dad."

Dad is Bill Fetzer of Plymouth's FMC. She said she started accompanying her dad to work when she was very young. Sharing a photo of herself with her pint sized desk and chair placed side by side at his desk or

facing him she said, "He never discouraged me. Even though I was only six or seven at the time and had no idea what I was talking about when we 'talked shop' in his truck on our way to work.

"At the plant, he always gave me 'important' jobs to do," this daughter added. "I would walk prints out to the engineer or the shop foreman. I would even answer the phone. I thought it was just great and would go home and tell mom all about my exciting day and all of the important things I did to help.

"Then, dad would step in," she said, "and tell mom what a great job I did. I feel am a complete mix of the best parts of both my parents.

All Power Shelf products are 100-percent made in Plymouth at the family owned and operated FMC which has been in operation for over 25 years. The Power Shelf is manufactured using recycled domestic steel and the most durable powder coating finishes.

There are multiple patents pending on the product, according to Westmeister. Power Shelf packaging is also made of recycled cardboard by Shelby Carton. The packaging, said Westmeister, can be recycled yet again.

Currently the Power Shelf can be purchased on line at buypowershell.com. According to Westmeister they are in negotiations with a number of national franchises and local retailers to market their product.

She said a commercial has run on Time Warner Cable and it has been used as a giveaway on a Mansfield radio station.

Westmeister said as product demand grows, she expects jobs to be added. Possible positions may include those in powder coating, stamping, forming, machining and welding.

Lynn and Shawn reside in Shelby. The couple hold degrees and certifications in accounting, advertising, business and computer engineering.

She noted she has been involved in manufacturing since she was a child. "Shawn and I have prepared ourselves for where the Power Shelf is taking without knowing it."

Westmeister said she has some advice to inventors. "The most important thing to do is to make sure you are protected (patented) before disclosing your product to anyone. A lot of people have created a lot of extraordinary things, so never doubt your ambition."