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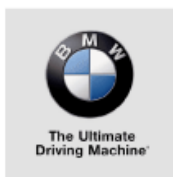
## Local firm sells gear for youngster on the links

ANNE FITTEN GLENN • SEPTEMBER 20, 2009 12:15 AM

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**Business:** The Littlest Golfer, golf-themed clothing, gear and toys for babies and children up to age 12.

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**Who:** Kris and Keri Wilson, founders and co-owners.

**Headquarters:** Asheville.

**Offerings:** Resort-quality clothing for infants and children.

**Prices:** Items range from \$15 for a hat to \$100 for the Littlest Golfer Diaper Bag, which is manufactured in Boone. The most popular items so far are First Knickers in sizes from 0-3 months (\$37) and golf shirts (\$35).

**Inspiration:** "It occurred to me that no one was making kid logos for golf clothes so kids could look like Tiger Woods or Vijay Singh — so they could dress up like their heroes," Kris Wilson said. After searching for golf-themed gear for their own kids (ages 12 and 2, with another on the way), the Wilsons designed cartoon logos of brother and sister turtles called Putter and Sandy that now adorn their golf-themed clothing. "There really wasn't anything out there for infants that was fun and about golf," Keri Wilson said.

**Higher calling:** "I believe golf can introduce children to life's most important lessons, such as sportsmanship, perseverance and confidence," Kris Wilson said.

**Business tip for tough economy:** "Although we started in complete economic uncertainty, we feel that the depth of our product line and exceptional quality will keep us growing at a steady rate. We've structured the company in a way that allows for very little overhead," Kris Wilson said. While the clothing line is sold at several retail outlets around the country, most sales are through the company's Web site. The Wilsons have tried to find manufacturers in the U.S., and a number of items — including knickers, socks and the diaper bag — are made here, but much of the line is manufactured overseas. All design, marketing, embroidery and distribution is based in Asheville and Weaverville.

**Local partner:** "We are happy to see a local, family-based company producing elegant, high-quality garments," said Rosiland Whiteley, owner of Heaven Rains Maternity and Children's Store. "The Littlest Golfer products appeal to dads and grandpas — there's very little children's apparel that speaks to the male population."

Where to buy: In Asheville, you can purchase the company's clothing at Heaven Rains at the Grove Arcade. The Grove Park Inn's golf shop will carry the line starting next spring. The Wilsons are focusing on introducing their clothing line to resorts, boutiques and department stores. Online at [www.thelittlestgolfer.com](http://www.thelittlestgolfer.com).

Up next: The Wilsons have written a series of children's books based on their turtle characters. The first is "ABCs of Golf," which is now being illustrated. They've also designed a kids golf club that will be for sale before the holidays.

Doing good: For the past two years, The Littlest Golfer has sponsored the Eliada Homes Charity Golf Classic and a golf tournament for Next Step Recovery, a transitional living facility in Montford. The company will sponsor a young golfer in the Kids Fore Kids tournament this month in Florida, which benefits the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children.

Contact: 231-2894, [www.thelittlestgolfer.com](http://www.thelittlestgolfer.com).



Kris and Keri Wilson, founders of The Littlest Golfer, pose with a display of some of their products at Heaven Rains Maternity and Children's Store at the Grove Arcade. (Anne Fitten Glenn/Special to the Citizen-Times)

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