

## Turning trash into cash

**T**AKE AWAY THE BIG CROWDS and legwork of walking booth-to-booth at art fairs or craft shows, and you get Etsy.com — “the place to buy and sell all things handmade.”

While you can browse and shop stores globally on the site, stick to the Grand Rapids region by going to “Buy” and then “Shop Local.” There you can find the online stores of Danny Lynn, Jane Kropewnicki and Sarah Roemer — just three of more than 100 artisans in the Etsy West Michigan “Street Team,” a group of artists and crafters who live in West Michigan and sell their works on Etsy.

Recycling old sweaters, pop can tabs and magazines into one-of-a-kind works is just a preview of what people can do with some creative vision and skilled hands.

**Sarah Roemer**, a mother of four, makes innovative purses, belts and bracelets with recycled pop can tabs. “I’m reluctant to throw things away that still have a little life left in them,” says Roemer, who developed her own construction method after seeing a picture of a pop-tab purse in a magazine.

Local charities often raise money by collecting pop tabs and selling them to scrap yards, where Roemer purchases them. “I wash and prepare all the tabs, construct the purse, make the liner and sew it in,” she said. It takes her about four hours to make a small purse.

**Danny Lynn**, a 26-year-old graphic designer in Grand Rapids, re-purposes seemingly old, useless materials into mittens, slippers and notebooks in her free time. “It’s about loving the process and the pure act of making something one-of-a-kind,” she said.

Lynn recycles sweaters from garage sales, Goodwill, the Salvation Army “and even friends whose husbands have helped with the laundry. We love them for their good intentions and gladly take their shrunken sweaters.”

**Jane Kropewnicki** also makes use of old sweaters to create eco-friendly stuffed creatures. With names like Mortimer and Lorenzo, these creatures “warm your heart and hug you back.”

— CRISTINA STAVRO



Sarah Roemer sells purses she makes from pop can tabs on Etsy.com.

**“It’s about loving the process and the pure act of making something one-of-a-kind.”**

— Danny Lynn



Danny Lynn re-purposes useless materials into mittens and slippers.