

A Nod to Teen Self-Expression

Underground Clothing Company

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By **Rebecca I. Allen**

When Melissa Lowman

wants to know what clothing to order for her new shop she turns to the experts—her kids.

“The kids tell you what sells,” admits Lowman, owner of Underground Clothing Company.

The last time she and her brood, ages 11, 13 and 15, browsed catalogs from different extreme sports clothing manufacturers the kids wanted all black and white clothing.

“I wanted some color,” says the 32-year-old entrepreneur. “Yet what they are wearing now is black and white. Any of the styles where I got my way and ordered color are not selling.”

Lowman chose to start up Underground, which opened in May, because she and her family could not locally find casual clothing for extreme sports enthusiasts, such as motorbike riding, supercross and skateboarding.

Her son got into motorbike racing after BMX racing. “You get tired of them racing in the cul de sac, so we put

them on a track,” Lowman, a six-year Anthem resident, says.

The whole family enjoys racing. So, she and her husband turned their passion into a business. Lowman carries the clothes, “you’re wearing when not riding a dirt bike,” says the former bartender and photographer.

While some parents and schools may frown on the “PG to PG-13” logos and messages on some of the clothing, Lowman says that while the store does carry CDs with explicit lyrics, she checks for any hidden messages and does not carry clothes with sexual or drug references. “I’m pretty up on all that,” she maintains. “We don’t carry anything with really explicit meanings.”

The native Anthem neighbor believes many teens want ways to express themselves, and it’s not always with the latest fad or fashion. Oftentimes it manifests in things such as purple hair, baggy clothing or participation in a non-mainstream sport.

“The name ‘Underground’ came from just that,” Lowman says. “The clothes are more than just a bunch of logos, it’s a lifestyle and it’s not mainstream.” **io**

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