

whirl  
a-style Proudly Featured In

Fashion World



**Whirl-a-Style™- 1994 to present.  
By 1997 selling 20,000 units a  
month to Claire's Boutiques.**

Lois Sonstegard, inventor of the Whirl-a-Bun™/ Whirl-a-Style™(makes buns and up-dos by wrapping hair with a snap-lock feature) had a PhD in hospital finance and management, and was content working in the healthcare business—until her son was born with a severe disability that would require her to have more time at home to help him. She moved into the bed and bath

business, designing for major department stores. She never had intentions of getting into the hair business—"the idea I developed just happened to work for hair". Randomly, she was leaving a factory with too much stuff to carry (scraps that her environmental consciousness would not allow her to throw away), and was handed a plastic handle, when the revelation came—"creating handles to carry the bags of stuff was no different than managing hair and organizing it in a fashionable way. With that thought, I was off and running". Although she wanted to be a nurse as a kid, she "understood fashion early, out of necessity. By age 12 I was over 6 feet tall and had outgrown toys to wear clothing, so I began sewing my own clothes. That led me to making my own fashion and designs. From that I think there grows an interest in how you put yourself together and hair becomes a natural part of that." She thinks her "strength is in finding unusual solutions to problems". On success- and failure, she comments that "starting a business from the beginning keeps me forever humble because it never exactly does what I think it should do or what others think it should do. I have had my ups and downs with developing markets—that means I get often stretched beyond my liking. Marketing is an area I have had to teach myself". Tenacity has been the key to her success. "I think working with my son taught me that if one approach didn't work, I just needed to go down another street and look some more. There was no giving up with him and I have brought that same persistent energy to this business". She used her own money to launch the product, lamenting that "an untried idea is not interesting to investors". She came close to giving up on the product many, many times, but "then something would happen I would realize there was an untried path and I would go check it out." Strokes of luck and good timing didn't hurt either. She credits meeting the owner of Accessory Brainstorms at a trade show in Las Vegas (an important business relationship for her) with her being able to get the product into Claire's stores, with their assistance. She tells future inventors to "get some one who will mentor you. Everyone needs help and good advice."