

# slumbering in style

by lisa lafontaine bynum | photography by anne bryant

Most people dream of taking something they enjoy and turning it into a career. What started as a side project for Jackson natives Hilary Armstrong and Elizabeth Winkelmann, owners and cofounders of Lazy Bones Beds, has blossomed into an exciting new business venture. As their success has taken on a life of its own, the two business partners are making plans to become the leading provider of fashionable dog beds that merges practicality and elegance.

"Hilary and I are dog lovers and owners," explains Winkelmann, who is the proud owner of a Bernese mountain dog named Linus. "Like most Southerners, we are attuned to the décor of our homes. However, we were particularly frustrated by the limited options in dog beds—we were tired of bringing in these ugly brown beds!"

Winkelmann credits Armstrong—owner of Riley, a golden retriever—as the creative genius behind the business. Armstrong began covering her old dog beds with colorful upholstery fabric. During a get together at her home, friends took notice. "They commented on how great the beds were and really encouraged me to do something with the idea," she commented.

Armstrong approached Winkelmann about the possibility of taking the idea retail. However, both hold demanding full-time jobs—Armstrong as a nurse practitioner and Winkelmann as an airline pilot. "We knew we couldn't sew the beds in our homes!" explains Armstrong.

In their spare time, they researched local manufacturers willing to take on the production. Both were adamant that only Mississippi manufacturers and suppliers be used. "We wanted to bring more attention to the region," says Winkelmann. "We know how special our home state is, and we think more people need to know as well."

Each bed is covered in upholstery weight designer fabrics in a variety of patterns and colors. A waterproof liner protects the inner core, making the bed not only pretty but functional. The beds are overstuffed ensuring they hold their shape over time. They decided to take the connection to their Southern ties even further by naming each design after Southern writers, towns, and landmarks. Customers can choose from the multi-colored Eudora, named after the brightly colored gardens found at Ms. Welty's estate; the stately Mark Twain design, inspired by the brown and blue waters of the



Mississippi River; or the muted colors of the Natchez, named for the trellises and latticework found on many of the old homes. Other patterns include the Peabody, Mardi Gras, Mr. Faulkner, Charleston, and the St. Francis.

Once the finished products were in hand, the two decided to test the waters at the 2009 Mistletoe Marketplace. "That was really our debut," adds Armstrong, "and we had such an amazing response!" After such an encouraging response at Mistletoe, Armstrong and Winkelmann applied to the January 2010 Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Market. There they were able to secure several wholesale accounts across the country including retail outlets in Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Aspen, Colorado; Austin, Texas; and Asheville, North Carolina.

Says Armstrong, "This really just started as a fun project and we are surprised at the success we have already had." The pair have since launched a web site and will return to the Atlanta market in July. They are also looking to expand into Nashville, Boston, New York, and Charleston, South Carolina.

In five years, both would like to see Lazy Bones Beds become one of the top retailers of dog beds. "I don't think we want to quit our day jobs because we both really like our professions," laughs Armstrong. "But it would be nice to see the brand take off and become a viable source of income. It started as a hobby—a creative outlet for us both. I would like to see it become a career, but stay fun at the same time."

Lazy Bones Beds, LLC  
[www.lazybonesbeds.com](http://www.lazybonesbeds.com)  
[lazybonesbeds@gmail.com](mailto:lazybonesbeds@gmail.com)  
 601.896.3756

