

Team players

NAMES: (From left) Leigh Orne, 31, Katie Rock, 32, and Blair Warner, 31

PROFESSIONS: Founders of Activyst

CITIES: Seattle and Los Angeles

SHAPE READERS: 9 years

As lifelong athletes, Katie Rock, Leigh Orne, and Blair Warner know first-hand the benefits of playing sports like tennis and crew. "It made us more confident and resilient when we were competing, and in everything else we did too," says Katie. She first realized that not all girls shared their experience while on a trip to Nicaragua in 2007. "Local girls kept asking why I was swimming, running, or surfing, because only boys did those activities," she says. "They had never played sports!"

CALL TO ACTION

When Katie returned to Central America in 2010 with the World Health Organization to promote gender equality in sports, she discovered a durable, water-resistant material called "macen," used for everything from carrying groceries to building hammocks. Inspired by this fabric, she got the idea to make gym bags and use a portion of the proceeds to fund nonprofits like Soccer Without Borders and Girls Gotta Run Foundation that provide athletic opportunities for girls worldwide. Once back in the U.S., she asked friends Leigh and Blair to join the crusade, and as a team they formed Activyst.

A BAG IS BORN

The trio spent most of 2012 designing the macen Active Bag (\$138; activyst.com), a colorful handmade carryall with pockets for shoes and a laptop, plus holders for a yoga mat and water bottle. In presales from March to May this year, they raised \$68,000 that went toward bag production, building a soccer field in Nicaragua, starting a vocational training program for female sports teams in Uganda, and more. Now they're working to provide gear for Ethiopian girls, since allocating funds to hire their female running coach. "Research proves that girls who play sports are healthier, better educated, and less likely to use drugs or get pregnant," says Katie. "When people learn this and hear about our company, the idea of helping to make a change really clicks."



Leigh, Katie, and Blair wear their company's tees (\$32; activyst.com).

Photograph by Erik Isakson; hair and makeup by Kathy Vargas