

Labor of Love

Helen Curtis, who splits her time between Vermont and South America, found that the women of Uruguay, a country plentiful in wool, were keen on knitting. Curtis, who had been knitting baby hats for friends, found



several women to help her. This local operation now involves three women's cooperatives that dye, knit and hand-loom for her Woodstock, Vt.-based company, Abundancia.

Curtis spends three months each year in Uruguay and works with the women to design the collection. Abundancia helps these women support their families, and allows them to care for their children while they work from home. "I have been so fortunate, and it is important to me to give back to other women," she explained.

Abundancia began in 2000 as an evolution from Curtis' original hats designed to look like fruits and vegetables, including pumpkins, tomatoes and watermelons. The line now features knit hats, jumpers and polo shirts in sizes infant to 24 mos., in motifs from cows and bunnies to dolphins, horses and sailboats. Future Ivy Leaguers will enjoy Abundancia's hats and layette designed for a license with Dartmouth College that feature the school's signature green logo—and were approved by the Fair Labor Association.

Abundancia premiered to rave reviews at the October 2003 Children's Club; which will help the company grow beyond its New England base. But the heart of the operation is with the South American women who hand-make each item. "I am anxious to get [to Uruguay] to see them and show them how well we have done," Curtis said. "I'm excited to go to the next level."

Wholesale prices range from \$11 for a hat to \$26 for the four-piece layette set. Contact Abundancia at P.O. Box 423, Woodstock, VT 05091; (802) 457-2595. ■