

Building Momentum: New Pearl Street boutique focuses on fair-trade wares

By Emily Tienken, Camera Staff Writer
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Photo by Joshua Lawton

Logan Burden, 5, of Ft. Collins, plays in the "Kid's Nook" while his mother shops at Momentum, a fair trade boutique, on Pearl Street in Boulder on Wednesday. Burden is in remission from a battle with Leukemia and his mother seeks out natural products, like many sold in Momentum, after advice from doctors.

One of the biggest draws to Momentum, Boulder's newest fair-trade store?

Well, says Kevin Natapow, co-owner, it's that shoppers don't have to do exactly that — ask questions.

They don't have to worry that what they buy was made in a sweatshop or that their money will go to support inhumane conditions, he said.

They know, before they even purchase anything, that Momentum only sells products whose crafters were given livable wages and conditions, and Natapow said customers often tell Momentum how much they appreciate fair-trade products.

"They realize the connection between the product they're purchasing and the difference they're making in these people's lives," said Natapow, who co-owns the business with his wife, Jenny Natapow.

Momentum, located at 1625 Pearl St., opened in July and features everything from home furnishings to handbags. The products are imported from more than 45 different countries, most of them impoverished. The Natapows dreamed up the idea for Momentum more than seven years ago, when Jenny Natapow, studying to get her master's degree, developed the business plan for a project. They decided to open in Boulder, she said, because many of its residents support fair trade.

"Boulder is very aware, and people are looking to shop with their values," she said.

The fair-trade industry is strictly regulated, Jenny Natapow said, and only businesses that meet the international standards can affix the "fair-trade" label to their products. The products must be made by workers paid a living wage. Standards also try to address equal opportunities for women.

Jenny Natapow also said that Momentum pays artisans 50 percent of the agreed-upon price up front, "so that no one goes into poverty trying to fill an order."

"It's important to us to be a socially responsible business," she said. "As a business, we have a responsibility in terms of everything we carry."

Nancy Malloy, who stopped in at Momentum on a recent afternoon, said she travels from her home in Fort Morgan to Boulder frequently for different errands, and now makes a point of dropping by Momentum when she's in town. Shopping fair trade is one of her "core values," she said.

"I really, really enjoy the idea that everything is fair trade, handmade and supportive of women," she said. "I like the entire feel of it."