

Lunchology: Clever Lunch Bags to Learn From

Lunchboxes are great don't get us wrong, but let's be honest. The shiny new design that's kids love on the first day of school gets pretty boring after awhile. Bob the Builder starts to fade, Dora the Explorer isn't the fave that she once was. What's a kid to do? Kristi Thomas' daughter, Madison, never has to worry because Mom decks her out with a custom designed lunch bag everyday. Sometimes silly, sometimes sweet, sometimes artistic, other times uplifting and educational. Now, kids of all ages can benefit from Kristi's talents.



After hearing Madison recount her classmates pleading for her lunch bags, Kristi founded LuNcHoLOgy to design and market 1,000 themed bag sets for kids and adults alike. Clever Parents caught up with Kristi to talk about LuNcHoLOgy bags, where the business is going, making work a family affair, taking ME/ntal Health Time and a LuNcHoLOgy kids contest your children might enjoy.

Clever Parents: What are your best-selling lunch bags?

Kristi Thomas: We have several Best-Sellers: Our Kidspirational 1st Edition is tied for First Place with Grosser-Than-Gross. Our Kidspirational Phrases have sweet saying for children both young and old with whimsical artwork. This set was LuNcHoLOgy's First Themed Set produced by my daughter, Madison and me. Grosser-Than-Gross, like many of our Sports Themes, appeal particularly to young boys because of their content; the bags teach children everything from bodily functions to disgusting critters often found in everyday foods that we love. Both are Neck-N-Neck for first place, with all of our Animal Themed Sets at a very close second.

CP: We love your brain teasers. How do you come up with your ideas?

KT: Research, Research, Research. We do a lot of research on what kids are reading and watching on TV. Knowing what's cool to a child at a given age, and also challenging kids to think past their noses, is the driving force behind each bag, not just for the Brain Teasers Sets.



CP: Tell us about your kids contest.

KT: LuNcHoLOgy is hosting our 1st Annual Kids Contest this summer. We have been receiving original drawings with sayings on them from kids, of a variety of ages, across the country over the past year. These drawings will be juried by children, the same age as the artist, and selected to create a set of 25 LuNcHoLOgy Bags Designed By Kids For Kids called Kid's Creations. We have invited 3 local schools to participate in this event to judge the drawings. Each winner will get a Free Set of Kid's Creations LuNcHoLOgy Lunch Bags, where one Bag inside the set of 25 is their own artwork, and a FREE, "I'm a LuNcHoLOgiST" T-Shirt. We will announce the winners on our website this fall 2006. You can go out to www.lunchology.com and click on "Kids Contest" and then click on "Get Your Bag Here," to get started drawing and to enter. This event is the Brain Child of my Daughter, Madison, who also wants to host, "Camp

LuNcHoLOgy,” next year,...an art and education workshop.

CP: What are your daughter’s current favorite bags?

KT: Madison is 10 years old and in the 5th Grade. She loves all the Animal Sets, Glamour Girls and Grosser-Than-Gross. She even consults on all the bag images and decides for us which bag will be the top bag when it’s packaged. So far she has been right on the money,...so to say.

CP: What are the top 10 items you like to pack in your daughter’s lunch bag?

KT: Madison loves “Ants on a Log” for a snack or lunch,...that’s Peanut Butter on celery with raisins on top. Pretzel Rods wrapped with low fat ham and cheese with a mustard dip, are yummy. One of Madi’s favorites is Fruit Kebobs with sweetened cream cheese to smear on them. Sliced veggies and dips are popular in our house. Every snack or lunch is completed with a low-sugar juice and a mini-bottle of water. I always involve Madi in the Packing Process, this way I know that what is packed is something that she loves, will surely eat and is not likely to “Trade Up For!” We create fun lunches to go in our amusing bags...and no LuNcHoLOgy Lunch would be complete without Mom signing the back of the bag!

CP: Where can people buy your lunch bags?

KT: LuNcHoLOgy Lunch Bags are sold on-line at www.lunchology.com and in 120 up-scale grocery and gift stores across the country. You can go out to our web-site and click on “Where to Buy” to find a retailer near you.

CP: Since launching your bags on grocery store shelves in March of 2004, how has your business changed?

KT: LuNcHoLOgy receives calls every day to be included in a new store or venue. It’s thrilling to watch LuNcHoLOgy grow so quickly, particularly when we started printing the bags just 2+ years ago in the basement of our home. Madison has been such a critical part of each piece of the process. She even draws some of the images herself. When we were still working from home, she would put on her head-phone set, listen to Christmas Music, even when Christmas had passed, and collate bags around our dining room table, to be packaged and sold to local stores. She loves the attention it brings and never balks at working hard to help her family. She is seeing and learning some invaluable and incredible life-lessons, like: Hard Work does Pay Off, Always Believe in Your Dreams, Never Let Anyone Tell You That Your Ideas are Crazy, You Get Out What You Put In, and she mirrors our dogged work ethic. All Good Skills for adulthood.



CP: What’s in the future for LuNcHoLOgy?

KT: LuNcHoLOgy is negotiating with Target. We plan on being in 5000 stores by 2008. This fall we will be launching our Product Line: 25 Packaged LuNcHoLOgy Napkins, 25 Packaged LuNcHoLOgy Wet-Wipes, LuNcHoLOgy Place Mats where all 25 in a Package are different, 25 Packaged LuNcHoLOgy Sealing Stickers and a LuNcHoLOgy

Kit, which includes, 1 Bag, 1 Place Mat, 1 Wet-Wipe, 1 Sealing Sticker and 1 napkin, all of the same theme.

CP: When you're not busy running a business and raising a family, what do you like to do?

KT: I love spending lazy days, when we can slip a few in, with my husband Chris and Madison, doing absolutely nothing at all, just being together. We even have "Mandatory Lazy Days," when we know we need them. Those are the days that if you stopped by our home we might all still be in our PJ's at 4:00 in the afternoon, playing a board game, reading books, or making a new recipe. Other times, we like to ski as a family, go rock climbing and take road trips to places we haven't been before. I take, "ME/ntal Health Time," when I need them. As a leader within the Ladies Who Launch Network, I like to travel to some of our events and meet other inspiring women. Too, I love to exercise and I teach Pilates at my local "Y" two days a week.

- Kristi Thomas, President of LuNcHoLOgy, lives in Akron, Ohio and is a Clever Parent to Madison, 10.