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FIT Pet Fashion Success: Abby Kass, Founder and Designer, Les Pets en Voyage
By Sarah Stanfield



Abby Kass and Statue of Liberty design

Many people like to pick up travel souvenirs for friends and family when they take a trip. For those who consider their pets a part of that circle, there is Les Pets en Voyage, which specializes in travel souvenirs and gifts for pets and their parents. Founded by Abby Kass in 2011, a graduate of the

Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) Pet Product Design and Marketing certificate program, the company has made a big splash. Not only have its products been featured at FIT's Fashion After Bark pet-fashion show, the 2011 Pre-Westminster Fashion Show and Gala and the Fox and Friends Beggin' Parade, it has also garnered coverage from *Fido Friendly* and *Gift Shop* magazines and News 12 Connecticut's *Pet Talk*, among other outlets.



Stella & Ally

It all started back in 1983, when, on a trip to London, Kass had trouble finding a pet-friendly memento of the U.K. capital for her beloved Schnauzer, Windy. Even a trip to the pet section of the famed department store Harrods left her disappointed. "They had nothing that was 'London,'" she recalls. "I ended up buying a snowman for my dog, but there was nothing about it that was British. "It struck me that you could never find souvenirs for pets."



Les Pets en Voyage display

Years later, she came across a brochure for FIT that mentioned the Pet Product Design and Marketing certificate, and ended up taking a class. When her professor and classmates responded with enthusiasm to her idea, she decided to continue with the certificate. She completed it in 2011, and now the company is doing a brisk business selling such wares for dogs and cats as a lightweight rain poncho that folds into a portable pouch, collapsible water and food bowls, a hoodie, bandanas and a soft heart-shaped toy—all with New York City themes.



Disney

Kass designs all her products, a skill she learned from her time at FIT. When she entered the program, she didn't have a design background, but her instructors, including FIT adjunct professor Kris Lynch, were more than happy to help her learn the ropes, teaching her not just about the process of designing and making clothing for dogs and cats, but also the practical elements of bringing a product to market and running a business in the pet-products industry. "I can't tell you how much [Lynch] helped me," says Kass. "She really cares. She walks you through everything."



Liberty raincoat

From apparel to marketing, Kass says she got a well-rounded education at FIT, which went a long way toward the success of Les Pets en Voyage.

"You might be incredibly creative, but the business end is a whole different thing, and it requires a lot of time and knowledge. You have to be prepared to take that on, and I think FIT really helps you with that."



Another display for Les Pet en Voyage

While Kass plans to keep her day job as a Spanish teacher in New York City, where she lives with her cat, Disney, Les Pets en Voyage continues to grow. Her next step is to add more travel destinations as themes for her product line. Thanks to the FIT certificate, she now has a strong road map for making that happen.