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## Los Gatos company helps pay corporate gifting forward for women artisans

Peace by Piece connects international makers, companies



Peace by Piece partners with women-owned businesses across the country and around the world and connects them with corporations to source their employee and client holiday gifts. Founder Lauri Pastrone, left, met with Katrina from Thistle Farms, who sells candles to support survivors of human trafficking, prostitution and addiction. (Photo courtesy of Peace by Piece)

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Instead of YETI coolers or Apple products, major companies in Silicon Valley and across the country are gifting their employees and clients handmade, high-quality goods — like leather backpacks or hand engraved charcuterie boards — that support women around the world.

[Peace by Piece International](#), a Los Gatos-based social impact company, connects underserved women artisans around the world with corporations to source their employee and client holiday gifts.

Founder Lauri Pastrone, who has a background in market research and financial services, said she chose to focus on corporate gifting and event merchandise because it opens the makers and artisans up to a huge, formerly inaccessible market.

“I really believe that for a community of people to be impacted, they need volume,” Pastrone said. “Just selling one item at a time doesn’t do it, doesn’t move the needle. Companies who can buy the gifts 50, 500 or 5,000 at a time, that can make an enormous difference.”

A study from Coresight Research estimated that in 2021, the corporate world spent \$242 billion on gifting, [Forbes reported](#).

Peace by Piece “is just a way for companies to take some of that \$242 billion a year that is spent on corporate gifts and put that in a direction that it can move the needle for a woman who’s been homeless, a woman who’s been incarcerated, a woman who’s been sex trafficked,” Pastrone said. “These are the incredible women we work with every day.”

The organization, founded in 2017, works with about 40 communities across the country and around the world to provide goods for the corporate gifts. Partners include a group of formerly homeless women in Portland, Ore., who make nut butters and a team of women in India who sew bags, t-shirts, sweatshirts and aprons.

These pieces made by women around the world are then bundled together and sold in gift baskets containing similar items like an apron, a charcuterie board and jams.

Most companies that work with Peace by Piece are based in Silicon Valley, though they have other partners in Boston, Florida and Texas, Pastrone said.

Corporate gifts have to be high quality and versatile, and Peace by Piece’s inventory of goods checks most corporation’s boxes, Pastrone said.

Barbara Faxon, who works for a tech company in Silicon Valley, said she’s worked with Peace by Piece for executive gifting and employee holiday gifts in the past. During the pandemic, she sent employees a gift box with a throw blanket made from upcycled garments and water bottles, along with different food items.

“It’s high end, it’s quality,” Faxon said. “I don’t understand why anyone would want to go anywhere else. If you can get the same kinds of items that are high quality, that does something positive for the world, why would you even consider anyone else?”

Pastrone got the idea to launch Peace by Piece after she traveled to Bosnia and Rwanda for research on her cookbook, "Share: The Cookbook that Celebrates Our Common Humanity," that she worked on with a group of women in London, where she was living at the time.

There, she was struck by the countless women artisans who made quality goods to make extra money for their families but lacked a large sales market.

Pastrone moved from London to Los Gatos with her family 11 years ago to be closer to her husband's family.

"When I came back to California, after creating this book... I saw all this opulence, and I also saw that companies were talking a lot more than they ever have about their values and commitment to social justice, and their commitment to the environment," Pastrone said. "But there wasn't a ton of evidence of companies actually living that."

Prior to Peace by Piece and her cookbook, Pastrone donated time and money to Women for Women International, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit that helps female survivors of war get back on their feet.

"Companies really need to think about the optics of how they operate, but specifically from my perspective, how they gift," Pastrone said. "We believe that gifting can be a real act of showing corporate values. It can be a way to retain employees."