

Florida Social Enterprise Rethreaded Upcycles Discarded Southwest Airlines Leather Seat Covers

New Leather Accessories Inspired by Winning Project Runway All Stars Season 7 Designers Made and Sold by Survivors of Human Trafficking



Jacksonville, Jan 17, 2019 (Issuewire.com) - Rethreaded is continuing its partnership with Southwest Airlines to produce a line of leather accessories inspired by the winning designs seen on last night's fan-favorite Unconventional Materials episode of Project Runway All Stars, Season 7.

Designers were tasked with creating a look for modern-day air travel from provided materials and crafting a leather accessory out of upcycled Southwest aircraft seat covers, in less than 24 hours. Episode winner Irina Shabayeva consulted the women of Rethreaded on the production of the new accessories, for sale at www.rethreaded.com/pages/rethreadedxsouthwest.

“We are so proud to be collaborating with Southwest Airlines to create opportunities for survivors of human trafficking to reclaim their lives,” said Rethreaded founder Kristin Keen. “This partnership has already allowed us to scale our operations and transform the lives of women in our community.”

In last night’s episode, Southwest provided items commonly used in air travel, including coffee cups, peanut packets, seat belts, and aircraft seat leather. These items were specifically chosen to showcase how everyday items can be creatively repurposed into something new. Safety vests became a sporty jacket, ticket jackets became a geometric top, and in Shabayeva’s winning look, paper cups became a vibrant red, futuristic miniskirt set.

All looks featured a leather accessory crafted from Southwest seat leather, with the top designs to be reproduced by Rethreaded for sale online. Typically, this would be impossible to do with the unconventional materials challenge, but Rethreaded’s past history of engagement with the airline made it a natural fit to take on the project. The result is a unique, one of a kind Project Runway All Stars inspired line.

Rethreaded first collaborated with Southwest in 2017 as part of the airline’s ongoing Repurpose with Purpose initiative, an effort to upcycle discarded material into useful products with the help of partner organizations. This initiative helps generate social and economic opportunities for the community partners it serves.

Rethreaded, which provides survivors of human trafficking a second chance at life through long-term employment coupled with mental health services, transformed thousands of pounds of discarded leather into a line of unique jewelry and accessories. Southwest further offered its support through a grant that allowed the organization to purchase new sewing machines.

“At Southwest, we have long been dedicated to global citizenship and Repurpose with Purpose allows us to lead in that effort while continuously minimizing our environmental footprint and maximizing our social impact,” said Linda Rutherford, Southwest Airlines Senior Vice President, and Chief Communications Officer. “We are thrilled to showcase our creative upcycling efforts through our partnership with Project Runway All Stars, and help empower women through our ongoing partnership with Rethreaded.”

Rethreaded’s in-house team of artisans, salespeople, and managers -- many of whom have found freedom from human trafficking with the nonprofit’s services -- will expand the line to include a limited edition collection of products inspired by the unconventional materials episode. Shabayeva has visited Rethreaded headquarters in Jacksonville and helped direct the look of the final products.

“The collaboration not only repurposes discarded material otherwise destined for a landfill,” said Beata Gutman, founder of Grasshopper. “It also allows Rethreaded to expand their business and hire even more women in need of new skills and support systems.”

Keen founded Rethreaded in 2012 to provide a safe and supportive environment for victims of trauma and exploitation. It gives career opportunities to women coming out of human trafficking. The women begin with a six-month development program that includes on-the-job training as well as mental health

counseling, crisis management, and case management. They are then fully integrated into the business through one of five departments and are pivotal in all aspects of the organization.

Rethreaded is part of a network of charities, community organizations, and changemakers within Southwest's Repurpose with Purpose campaign.

About Rethreaded

Rethreaded's mission is to renew hope, reignite dreams and release potential for survivors of human trafficking locally and globally through business. Rethreaded provides a second chance at life through employment for survivors of human trafficking in Jacksonville, Florida. Women have employment opportunities in different facets of the company including production, inventory, sales, marketing and finance/admin. Rethreaded also operates as a distribution company that sells products from like-minded businesses who also employ women who have found freedom from the sex trade.

About Southwest Airlines Co.

In its 48th year of service, Dallas-based Southwest Airlines Co. (NYSE: LUV) continues to differentiate itself from other air carriers with exemplary Customer Service delivered by more than 58,000 Employees to a Customer base topping 120 million passengers annually. Southwest became the nation's largest domestic air carrier in 2003 and maintains that ranking based on the U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent reporting of domestic originating passengers boarded. In peak travel seasons, Southwest operates more than 4,000-weekday departures among a network of 99 destinations in the United States and 10 additional countries. Southwest has announced its intention to serve Hawaii, subject to requisite governmental approvals.

About Grasshopper

Grasshopper is a global venture-building firm investing in ideas that benefit humanity. In collaboration with its clients and partners, it creates joint ventures, businesses, nonprofit organizations and family foundations that wrestle with global systems failures and plan for long term, sustainable growth. Its portfolio spans public health and wellness, food systems, education, clean energy, urban planning & infrastructure, gender equality, conscious design and more. Grasshopper is present on five continents and engages with hundreds of partners ranging from Fortune 100 companies to local community activists.



Photo courtesy of Southwest Airlines®/Ashlee D. Smith

Media Contact

Rebekah Suwak

rebekah@rethreaded.com

(850) 259-9202

Source : Rethreaded

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