

Charlotte Jorst parlays skin cancer experience into protective clothing – with tons of style.

by Michele Vaughn

You've probably seen Charlotte Jorst in the pages of this magazine, riding her amazing dressage horses, modeling her Kastel Denmark sun protective riding clothes, or both. But the story that connects those two passions has always been a bit of a footnote.



I wanted to ask her more about it, because you don't build a company this rapidly and successfully without real passion to keep you going through the ups and downs of building a business.

The Dark Side of Sunshine

Riders know that without a covered arena, you spend a lot of time in the sun. Way more time than any of us want to spend, even when we wear the highest SPF available.

Charlotte found the dark side of riding in the sun when she was diagnosed with skin cancer, just as her dressage competition riding was really getting into high gear after years of learning, practicing and showing at local and regional shows.

All that riding in the sun – no covered arena – took its toll. Lucky for her, her skin cancer was treatable, but to this day she still has to have her skin checked every six months.

After her diagnosis, she went on a search for sun-protective clothing that would work for an

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active rider. What little she found was unattractive, to say the least. She says she looked like a beekeeper – no offense to those who really are – but it also wasn't practical for riding.

Find a Need and Fill It

That's the classic business school advice for entrepreneurs. Charlotte had both the business school education in Denmark and the practical experience of building and running a successful company – Skagen Designs, which she and her husband Henrik sold to the world's largest watch company.

Being Charlotte, she dove right into designing something that she would like to wear. She wore the samples year-round, testing them herself – in the saddle, at the barn and around town. She wanted UV protective fabric, and she wanted the design to be stylish so people would want to wear it.

Young people especially need to be careful about exposure to UV rays. Research shows that early exposure can create big problems later in life, and that's not much of a priority for most young people, riders included. Riders of any age need sun protection, and most of us would rather be stylish than not.

Charlotte found the need that she could fill: stylish and sun-protective clothing that looks as good for running to town as it does for riding at the barn.

Kastel Denmark started small with just a few shirt styles, and still has only five people working in the Reno headquarters. It has expanded distribution across the country and into Europe, where it is sold in tack shops, equestrian catalogs and on www.kasteldenmark.com.

Fall Fashion Trends

Charlotte finds ideas for new styles, colors and products as she goes about everyday living. If she thinks something would work for her, she figures it would work for other riders, and so far she's been right on the mark.

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This fall and winter, Kastel Denmark is coming out with new waterproof rain jackets and vests with super stylish embellishments that will appeal to fashionistas in the saddle and in everyday life. New men's line colors and polos are also in the pipeline.

Colors change with the seasons, of course. Blue is always the favorite among the many colors she offers so this fall navy and denim shades are prominent, along with hunter green to round out her already-colorful lineup of sun-protective shirts.

While trend-spotting late last year, Charlotte also saw a void in tonal designs with small but complimentary trim colors. This fall customers will see the main line in dark, bold shades that add a color pop to other riding gear and accessories, as well as an athletic black shirt with red trim for men and women.

Charlotte wants her clothing to be affordable for everybody. She especially likes to see young people wearing Kastel Denmark, protecting them from cancer-causing UV rays while looking stylish.

Two Passions = A Recipe for Success

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