

# Mothers of Invention

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Three San Antonio women who brought their inventions to life—and to market!

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## Deb Bolner Prost *Cool Off*®



Born and raised in San Antonio, Deb Bolner Prost grew up around her parents' family business, Bolner's Fiesta Spices — with products selling in about 40 states — which helped foster her own entrepreneurial spirit. But, more importantly, it gave her a knowledge of herbs and spices that would be essential to the creation of a product that she and four other friends would invent, a product that was truly born of necessity.

"I work out quite a bit and try to stay healthy, and I always find it difficult to cool down quickly. My daughter was an Olympic Development Program Division One Elite soccer and field hockey athlete, and we were always attending regional and national tournaments. Often I'd stand around watching while she played in temperatures of almost 100 degrees in the shade. I'd try to cool the kids down when they came off the field, and we'd have towels iced down, but the towels never kept cool. Later, my friends and I and those in my Bunco group would go through 'the change' and get hot flashes, and we couldn't find a way to cool off quickly either. Women who are going through that want natural alternatives to help with the problem. I'd go into stores thinking, 'What can I do or buy or find to help me cool off?'" says Prost. There wasn't anything.

Then, when Prost's friend Linda Caldwell began a battle with breast cancer, the need for a way to cool off became more important: "When Linda went through chemo, she was thrown into early-stage hot flashes and needed something to cool her down," says Prost, and it was then that she and four friends decided to call upon their joint background in business and marketing and upon Prost's understanding of herbs and spices to create a product that would help people feel cooler.

And so Cool Off™ was invented. It soon hit stores across the United States in April of 2010. Cool Off™ pre-moistened towelettes provide a quick, convenient way to renew, refresh and re-energize wherever you are while exercising, working or playing outdoors, traveling ... or dealing with hot flashes.

“Cool Off™ is infused with natural ingredients that include cooling herbs, plant botanicals and essential oils, all with a clean, fresh scent, so it soothes and moisturizes skin as it provides instant and long-lasting relief from the heat,” explains its Web site. “The Cool Off™ chill lasts approximately 20 minutes, with some reporting effects lasting up to an hour and a half. Users can reactivate the towelettes’ cooling properties by splashing water on the skin where Cool Off™ was applied, renewing the refreshing sensation.”

So how does one take an idea to product form? As the song goes, “With a little help from my friends.” “This is a project that is much bigger than one person — we really are a team: Linda Caldwell, Bev Bolner, Dawn Gwin and Jim Caldwell and me. Together we have backgrounds and strengths in engineering, graphic design, marketing, research and events promotion,” explains Prost, who has been called “a data guru” and marketing research specialist and who is currently about halfway through her graduate work for a master’s degree in nutrition at Incarnate Word — though she’s had to take a short break from studies because she’s so busy now.

“We spent about three years doing research and development marketing work, along with a little kitchen chemistry, while drawing from my background in spices and my other interests in natural healing and nutrition,” says Prost. “We took our respective skills -- researching, going to trade shows, talking to contract manufacturers, doing marketing research — and launched this new product strictly by the book. We wanted to make sure there was indeed a market for our product.” And there was.

“We did our first manufacturing run March 2010 and got on the shelves of H-E-B in late April on the first-aid aisle,” says Prost. Soon Cool Off™ could be found in TETCO convenience stores, in Duane Reade drugstores in New York City and online at Amazon.com, Drugstore.com, CVS.com, as well as at Academy Sports & Outdoors ... to name just a few places.

After the American Music Awards this year and even the Emmys, Cool Off™ was included in gift bags for stars. Prost was excited to be able to go to Los Angeles to be in the “gifting room” of the American Music Awards.

Cool Off™ has also, and quite appropriately, been given out in sample form at performances of *Menopause the Musical* in Houston and Austin — just another opportunity for this original invention to help folks cool down when things heat up.