

SHS graduate, mother, launch site for used sports equipment

By Ted Glanzér
Sports Editor

One day, former Simsbury resident Tara Griggs looked at the mountain of outgrown sporting equipment that had taken residence in her garage and wondered what to do with the still-usable stuff.

Her daughter, for example, saw her feet grow three sizes in one year, rendering unusable several pairs of soccer cleats that were still in very good condition.

"If you wear cleats only a couple of months, they look pretty brand-new once they're washed off," Griggs, a graduate of Simsbury High, said.

There began the genesis of swapmesports.com, an on-line venture that Griggs and her mother, Carol Dornbush of Simsbury, launched in beta form in May.

Griggs, who works in advertising for Aetna, saw the need for a community that could serve as a one-stop shop for people looking to buy, sell, trade, or donate their used sports equipment.

Other sites that are utilized for unloading surplus sports equipment are neither cost efficient (eBay), nor user friendly (Craig's List), according to Griggs.

Goodwill and the Salvation Army are also options, Griggs said, but can be picky about what they accept and put on their shelves, Griggs said.

So far, the results have been more than encouraging, Griggs said in a telephone interview July 16. Last month, the site had 12,000 page visits and just hit 700 fans on its Facebook page.

For those looking to acquire sports-related stuff, the selection is, to say the



Simsbury High graduate Tara Griggs (left) and her mother, Simsbury resident Carol Dornbush, have launched swapmesports.com, a website for people looking to buy, sell or donate used sports equipment.

Courtesy photo

least, eclectic.

Recently, visitors on the market for size 9 ½ men's ice skates could pick them up from someone in Connecticut for \$50. Then there's the man from Sheboygan, WI, who was looking to unload four Frisbee golf discs for the low price of \$20.

There are no requirements for people looking to buy; those interested in selling, donating or trading items, however, must open a user account.

While the site's primary function is to serve as a place for people to buy and sell products, Griggs notes swapmesports.com's other goal: to serve as a single repository for coaches of teams in need of resources to obtain equipment at no cost.

Additionally, swapmesports.com has partnered with the authors of the book "A Glove of Their Own," which donates

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proceeds from the sale of each copy to organizations for the acquisition of sporting equipment for children in need.

Griggs selected The Village for Families and Children in Hartford for such donations.

For its work, the website has been endorsed by several former professional baseball players, including Tommy John.

Even with the site's early popularity, Griggs said that it is a work in progress, evidenced by the recent addition of a community events page that lists sporting events – from 5ks to RelaysForLife – that

will take place all over the country.

There are other features as well, including a Sports in Action summer photo contest, which encourages people to post sports-related photos of their children on the website's Facebook page.

The winner, who will be determined based on votes received by the site's community, will receive a backpack full of prizes and the website will donate \$100 to the fall league or coach of the athlete's chosen sport.

Swapmesports.com may appear to be direct competition with physical stores that have similar business plans, such as Play it Again Sports.

Not so, Griggs said, adding that

the website and the stores can share a symbiotic relationship by having the stores use the site to list items with which they are either overstocked or having a tough time selling.

"We're not looking put anyone out of business – people still to go somewhere and walk out with a receipt," she said. "Our intent is to make the community stronger and to reuse sports equipment."

Instead, Griggs said that the site is one more way of helping kids stay active by making sports equipment more affordable.

"Sports help children with their manners and social skills for all kids who play," she said.