

The Humane Society of the United States- Spotlight on Teens



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

<http://www.humaneteen.org/?q=node/1233>

ZOE ALBERT

When she was just 11, Zoe Albert made herself a pair of cute faux fur flip-flops. Her friends liked them, so she made some for them too. When it was time to do her bat mitzvah project, she decided to make and sell more flip-flops to raise money for animal organizations. Zoe named her budding business "Faux Paws" because, she says, "I think it is a faux pas to wear fur." Now 14, she's raised thousands of dollars and donated it all to help animals.



Why did you use your bat mitzvah project to help animals?

Animals have always been my passion. So when I needed to take on a "mitzvah project" I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

How did you go about your project?

My project really began in 2006, when I was 11 years old. I visited a local hobby store and purchased a pair of flip flops, some faux fur fabric and started designing with it. I made the first pair for myself, just for fun. I started wearing them and some of my friends thought they were really cute and asked me to make pairs for them too! One woman suggested that I should contact Safari Kids, a local children's boutique, to see if they would be interested in selling them and they did! We now create zebra stripe and leopard print styles. Over \$10,000 in profit has been earned from the sale of Faux Paws, but all the

money goes to several animal advocacy organizations.

Where else can you get Faux Paws?

They can be found on my website and through some of the supported organizations, via their Web sites or at special events such as pet adoption events or festival booths. Safari Kids, a high-end children's clothing and gift boutique, gives all profits back to the animal organizations. With a growing fan base, Faux Paws have been mailed across the country, as far away as Hawaii.

What was your inspiration to create animal print flip flops?

My inspiration and role model is my big brother Zach. He has done many projects that have had a positive impact for his causes. I decided that I could take my passion for animals and my hobby of making craft projects to make a huge difference for the animals I love so much, who sadly cannot help themselves.

What's it like running a business at such a young age?

Sometimes it can be a little stressful with school; I take a lot of honors classes, and band. I am in the Allen Eagle Escadrille, the coolest and largest marching band in the world with 638 members. Often I have very



late nights, finishing all of my homework and making sure I have filled all of the day's orders. There are times I don't get to hang out with my friends because I have a business priority. But my friends are great and they understand how much this means to me. Plus I get a lot of satisfaction knowing that my Faux Paws are making a difference.

How did you come up with the name?

My mom and I were brainstorming. I had heard the term faux pas before but I really didn't know what it meant. My mom said it was kind of like when

someone made a mistake. I have always believed that it is a mistake for people to wear fur, and since all of my products are made with faux fur, I thought Faux Paws would be a great name.

How do you get the word out about Faux Paws?

In the beginning Faux Paws were sold by word of mouth, at local animal adoption fairs, and at Safari Kids. Later my dad helped me set up a website, and ever since we've been shipping Faux Paws all over the country. An article in the Allen Image, my local newspaper, really helped too!

What animal issues do you care most about?

Eating animals, I have been a vegetarian since 2005. Wearing Animals. Animal Testing. Animal Abuse. Animal Shelter Euthanasia.

What advice do you have for other teens who want to help animals but aren't sure where to start?

I would tell other teens, do what you love to do. If you combine your passions you will enjoy both the project and the result. Don't let anyone tell you that just because you are a kid you can't do anything you set your mind to.