

Buy Local, Love Local, Be Local

Written by Jill Sanford

IT'S THE LAKE Tahoe lifestyle—and its promise of bluebird powder days on the mountain or a sunny afternoon on the water—that draws both locals and tourists to the area. This same lifestyle is what local brands try to capture in products like sweat-shirts, hats, T-shirts and other apparel.

“There’s a huge sense of pride here in Tahoe,” says TAHOEMADE owner and founder Jordan Basile. He started his company in 2005 as a high school student in Truckee, and after he graduated from college in 2011 the brand took off. His flagship hoodie is a simple zip-up featuring a

Serape Mexican blanket patch in the shape of Lake Tahoe on the front. “It’s not just about the clothing, it’s a reflection of who we are and life in Tahoe.”

However, TAHOEMADE, like many brands in the area, is clear to point out that its products aren’t just for the locals. They’re for people who love Tahoe. “I’ve always tried to stay true to the culture of this

area rather than cater to the trends of the tourism industry. That being said, people get the impression that we’re a locals-only brand—that’s not what we’re trying to put out there by any means,” says Basile.

Both TAHOEMADE and its newer line, Deso Supply Co., are designed with spontaneous adventures in mind. Basile describes himself as someone who has a hard time sitting inside at a desk, and his love of the



outdoors comes through in both brands.

“I really value time spent outside and I try to use this brand to advocate that,” he says. “I want to encourage people to get outside and spend time away from phones and electronics.”

The company entails a commitment to sustainable production ethics and offers fresh, functional designs to its clientele. Basile also works to give back to the community that supports him, partnering with nonprofits such as the Tahoe Food Hub.

Focusing on community and outdoor recreation is a common thread for successful Tahoe brands. Another creative clothing line that adheres to these ethics is California 89,



OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: TAHOEMADE Navajo tee | Julia Mancuso wake surfing Tahoe with the bigtruck OG G.line black American flag hat **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT:** TAHOEMADE Wilder Ness Tank, photo by Ali Kaukas | California 89 women's short-sleeve bamboo T-shirt | California 89 women's long-sleeve hooded T-shirt | TAHOEMADE O.G. Serape pullover hoodie



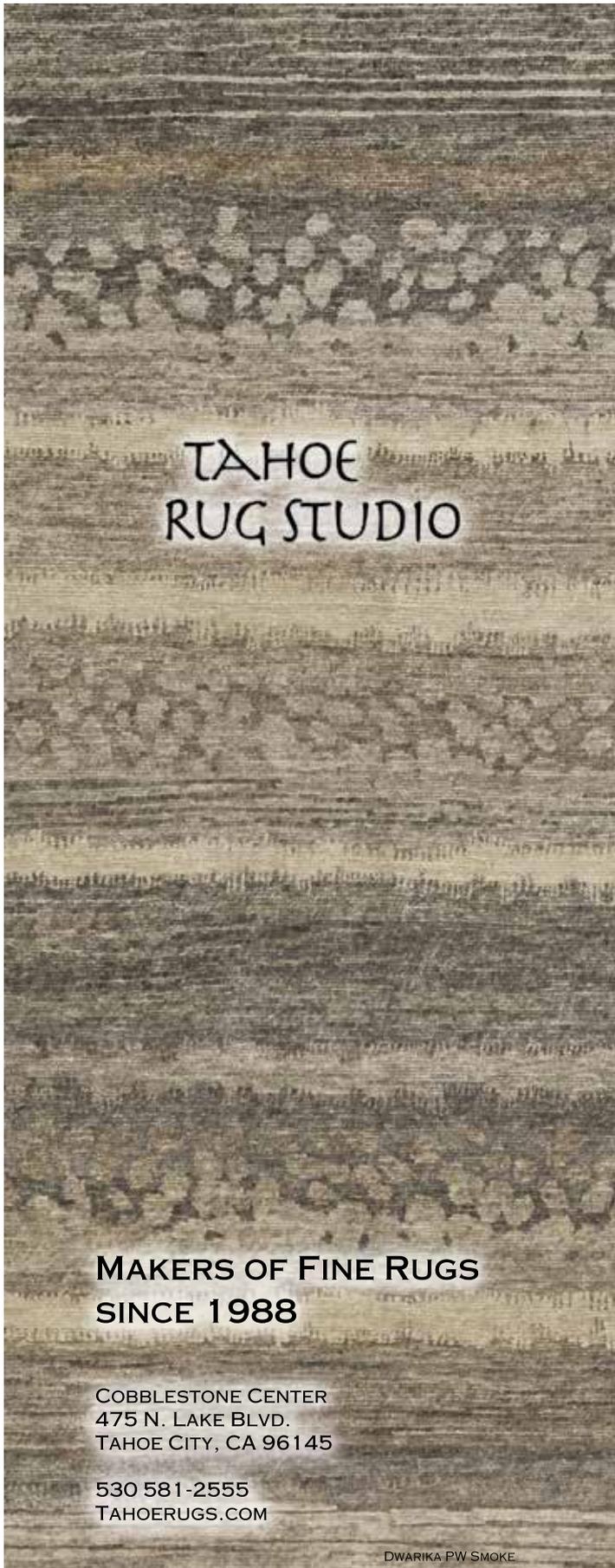
which is the brainchild of Bay Area transplant Lisa Gotts.

Gotts was visiting Truckee in the fall of 2012 with her daughter and friends when inspiration struck. She came up with the idea of California 89 and, by December 2012, had secured a storefront in the heart of downtown Truckee.

“People love local. They love supporting it,” Gotts says. “This is a great community; people want each other to succeed. My company wouldn’t survive without tourism, but I’ve worked really hard to be part of the community. There’s so much support here.”

Gotts partners with nonprofits such as the Tahoe Fund and High Fives Foundation, opens up the green space behind her store for community events and maintains a vibrant presence around town in the easy-to-spot California 89 van that’s usually parked somewhere along Donner Pass Road.

Her clothing, like TAHOEMADE and Deso Supply Co., is fun and fresh, with bold, simple designs and a focus on the



active lifestyle of Tahoe. California 89 has a popular line of technical cycling apparel, but for the most part the clothing is casual and carefree.

“Our brand represents an active, outdoor Sierra person,” Gotts says. “There are so many great sport stores here where you can get the technical equipment for your sport. California 89 doesn’t claim to be that. We focus on casual outdoor wear.”

Gotts’ clothing embodies the activities her clientele love—for example, a shirt with a snowflake, a gondola, a stand-up paddleboard or another iconic Tahoe image.

“California 89 appeals to everyone from the hardcore Ironman athlete to someone who just thinks that being outside is fun,” says Gotts.

It would be impossible to talk about local brands without a nod to one of the most successful companies to come out of the area. Since it was founded in Truckee in 2010, bigtruck has used its close ties to the outdoors and fun-loving culture of Tahoe to promote its brand.



THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: bigtruck OG sublimated mountain lake hat, photo sublimation by Holly Shankland | California 89 men’s long-sleeve blue love T-shirt **OPPOSITE PAGE:** bigtruck OG Sublimated Mountain Peak hat, photo sublimation by Holly Shankland

Partnerships and personal friendships with professional athletes and Olympians such as gold medalist Julia Mancuso has been a huge promotional tactic, but bigtruck's success is due to its "fun first" motto, which resonates with a broad outdoor recreation audience regardless of skill level.

"The great thing about 'fun first' is that it's so relatable," says bigtruck marketing manager Emily Deane. "It's so easy for people to get caught up in their nine-to-five work life and start taking things too seriously. Bigtruck's core values are a reminder to live in the moment and make your happiness a priority, especially in a place like Tahoe."

The bigtruck brand is steadily becoming an icon in the realm of extreme sports, with professional athletes in everything from skiing to NASCAR repping their hats in front of a national audience. While this high-profile attention increases each



season, bigtruck co-founder Galen Gifford maintains close ties with the local community and partners closely with the Shane McConkey Foundation and High Fives Foundation.

The company's commitment to the Tahoe community that helped launch its success doesn't end there, however.

"Our long-term goal is to help contribute to the local economy and provide full-time job opportunities that aren't seasonally dependent," Deane says. "From the early days of the brand, the local community has embraced bigtruck and allowed it to grow. This community support has inspired bigtruck to provide and create more meaningful job opportunities for locals."

In Tahoe, there's a "buy local, love local, be local" mentality that drives the success of regional brands. Local companies make apparel that can be appreciated by visitors and tourists alike, but without exception, they also place high priority on giving back to the community. They celebrate the many possibilities for outdoor recreation in the area, encouraging people to get out and enjoy Tahoe, whether they are here for one day or the rest of their lives. **TQ**

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