

# RISING STARS



# CONCEAL DON'T REVEAL BECKY CONNELLY

A photo of Becky Connelly at age 11 sits on her desk as a reminder of the reason she's worked so hard for the past five years to design the perfect bra. "It's a picture of my sister and myself, the light is shining right on me and all you can see is my nipple through my top," she says. "Well, that's all I see—that's all I've ever seen. I've always been self-conscious about it."

Working in the traditionally male-dominated profession of construction, Connelly wanted to feel comfortable and at ease, but sometimes her clothing didn't comply. At school in Boston for construction management she was one of only three girls in her class, and during her subsequent career was often the only woman in the meeting room or on the job site. "I've always been self-conscious about my nipples showing through my clothing, and never want to draw any attention to that part of my body," she explains. After years of using medical tape, adhesive petals, and silicone concealers to fix the issue, and totally frustrated with uncomfortable padding and molded bras that reshaped her figure, she decided to do something about it.

"I had dreamt of my ideal bra, a thin, wireless bra with a thin concealer built into each cup," she says from her makeshift home office in Darrell Creek. "I was transitioning back to work after my children were born and went to see a life coach who convinced me to pursue it." With no background in textiles manufacturing or fashion design ("I don't even know how to sew," she admits), she sought out advice and encouragement from Charleston's free SCORE business incubator program, as well as other women designers and entrepreneurs. "It was uncharted territory, definitely daunting at times but I was so passionate about this bra being a solution for me that I knew it would be for other women, too," she says.

After five years and several false starts, Connelly launched Non Disclosure Apparel and its first product, the Ellie Bralette—a concealing bralette for small breasted girls and women—in January 2020. Designed without wiring and completely seamless, the bralette features a small, thin, flexible piece of fabric heat-sealed into its center, designed to completely conceal any potential nipple protuberance. When it came to naming the colors of the bra—Storm, Beach, and Azalea—she drew on inspiration from her family's home on Dewees Island. "My dad, John McLeod, built a home there in 1995," she says. "I've been a part of Dewees for over half my life, and my children don't know a time without it. It's a magical, magical place." She also used the island as the backdrop for a professional photo shoot for the bralette, traipsing the models all over, from Marshmallow Walk and Big Bend Dock to Lake Timacau. "They loved it there," she says. "It did get a bit cold though, but that only went to show how well the bras work!"

She has big plans for the small bra. "In the short-term, we're looking at larger sizes of the Ellie (currently available in small, medium and large), plus a new junior style," she says. Long term she'd like to roll out bathing suit tops, sports bras, camisoles, bandeaus, and leotards. Initial feedback has been very positive, from corporate women who wear suits and heels all day long to women just looking for something comfortable to wear around the house, "It's all about being confident in anything that you're doing," she says. "And people love how comfortable it is."

The road to realizing her dream has not been easy, but Connelly says she wouldn't change a minute. "I found myself in the process," she says. "I mean, I'm completely obsessed with it, but it's been nice to find something to be passionate about. There were difficult times, discouraging times but just pressing on has been so worth it. I would have always regretted not doing it."

- Jennifer Pattison Tuohy

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## COMPANY

Non Disclosure Apparel

## ENTREPRENEUR

Becky Connelly

## FOUNDED

2014

## LOCATION

Mount Pleasant

## PRODUCTS

Ellie Bralette

## WEBSITE

ndapparel.com