

Figitz Spinners creators pitch to *Dragons Den*

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Plastic, one-handed spinners are this year's latest craze, and an Acton couple, along with their business partners, are the brains behind it all.

The product is called Figitz Spinners: a product made out of plastic, with washers on protruding arms. The devices can be spun with just a couple fingers, and acts as an aid for people with ADD, ADHD and autism, as well as Alzheimer's patients.

Last year, couple Karen and Bill Hilton were approached by their friends John and Jen Stevenson, who live in Wellington, with a prototype for a one-hand spinner made out of wood.

He could never get a perfect layout of it, and on top of that, they didn't look fantastic, Bill said.

While visiting the Stevensons, the Hiltons made a suggestion to better the product: using a 3D printer.

Around Christmas time, both couples purchased a 3D printer, and began creating spinners made out of plastic. Six variations were created, all varying in price and age group. Each product is manufactured by hand, and sold on the online shopping website, Etsy.

At first, the Hiltons sold between five and ten each week, and sent some with their son to school. The couple viewed the product as a side project, or a hobby, but John was interested in more.

On Feb. 13 of this year, John submitted the spinners to a YouTube product reviewer, under the name Unbox Therapy, and overnight, everything changed.

That night, our phones were going insane, Bill said.

Orders jumped from five to ten a week to over 3,500 orders in just two months. The team bought three more printers each, totaling eight printers between the four of them, to keep up with the demand.

Although viewed as a toy by some buyers, the team sees the product as an aid for people with busy minds and busy fingers, and sells the product with the promise of occupying the mind. Kids began using them in class, and the teams began studying the changes in focus when utilizing the product. But once the spinners gained popularity, they showed up more and more in class, and schools have begun to ban them.

Before the craze over the spinners began, the team was able to keep up with the orders. Their 3D printers can print a number of spinners at a time, depending on the model. But then, the team found competition in numerous areas, including China, which can manufacture them for less money, more efficiency, and deliver them faster.

Feeling a little overwhelmed, and with some recommendations from friends and family, the team decided to get some help in delivering and building their product, and they sought that help

in the form of CBC's *Dragons Den*.

Early March, Bill and John traveled to Oshawa to audition and pitch their product to members of the show, and they left feeling optimistic. Two weeks later, they got the call: they were headed to pitch to the Dragons.

It was everything I thought it would be and more, Bill said.

On April 19, the team discussed the product with the Dragons. Although they can't disclose what happened during their pitch, they encourage other people to go through the process and see what it's like.

Even if people are afraid to go to something like that, even the contacts you meet (in the waiting room) is huge, Karen said. Who we were sitting with and who we were waiting for, they had contacts and different ideas.

Although not given a specific date, the *Dragons Den* episode will run next season, between September and May.

Since the pitch, the team has seen a slight decline in purchases in their online store, but they have had school boards and police boards reach out with interest in the spinners. Since February, Karen estimates they have made between 5,000-10,000 spinners, some with her thumbprint still in the glue.

Figitz Spinners will soon be available locally. For more information about the product, visit www.figitzspinners.ca



Figitz Spinners creators Karen and Bill Hilton and John and Jen Stevenson pose with Jacob Hilton on the set of *Dragons Den* on April 19.

Submitted photo

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