

# Milton • Means Business

## Miltonian's FisherGirl hooks on to major chain

*New line getting test run at local Wal-Mart*

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
*The Champion*

Terri MacKinnon was always confident FisherGirl would catch on.

However, reeling in a major department store distributor — even on a single outlet trial basis — certainly wasn't expected this early in the game.

Yet that's precisely what's happened for the 47-year-old Miltonian, who back in February launched a line of gear specifically designed for female anglers — something the market's been more or less lacking until now.

The introduction came at the Toronto Fishing Show, where unbeknownst to Ms MacKinnon, a representative from Wal-Mart was 'fishing' for new products.

"At first I was shocked, surprised and apprehensive that they were interested," Ms MacKinnon recalled.

But that quickly gave way to excitement and eager acceptance, and subsequent meetings led to an agreement for a test run at the new Milton store, which began last month and will be expanded with a few new rods and clothing items Friday.

### Thrilled with agreement

"I would never have imagined this so soon," admitted FisherGirl's creator, who got hooked on fishing six years ago by boyfriend-turned-husband Andre MacKinnon. "Our target was to perhaps be in a big-box store by 2007. This is way bigger and faster than what we planned. Wal-Mart's been very supportive and I just hope it (line) catches on."

Because Milton is considered a rather low-interest fishing market, FisherGirl products aren't exactly flying off the shelves. But Ms MacKinnon adds that the line is moving, which offers a lot of promise for what it could do in other areas of the country.

"I've told my family and friends not to buy the stuff," she explained, after holding a demonstration of her products at Wal-Mart Saturday afternoon. "I want this to be a true test of how it will fare."

In more fishing-friendly parts of Northern Ontario like Sudbury and Thunder Bay, FisherGirl has already made its mark on the industry — with credible sales figures in fishing and hardware stores.

The appeal, Ms MacKinnon stressed, is that the line is made by women for women — with rods coming in all sorts of attractive colours and made to be easily handled by female anglers of all ages.

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And the fact that 10 per cent of all sales go directly to the Breast Cancer Society of Canada shouldn't hurt either.

Remarked Ms MacKinnon, "I really want the stuff to sell on its own merit, but honestly if you know that part of the proceeds are going to breast cancer I think many women are going to be more willing to buy it."

The ideal situation, she said, would be women not only buying FisherGirl products but investing in the line as well — which would give Ms MacKinnon and company the opportunity to break into the U.S. market.

"That's the real challenge, that you need money to make money. It's one of those Catch-22 situations."

But Ms MacKinnon is hardly complaining — not after taking her line further than most would have expected in just a few short months.

"We haven't been turned down by anybody," she said. "Things are going great and we're still hoping to have our Cast for the Cure tournament in Orillia sometime in September."

Female anglers can check out FisherGirl products at the local Wal-Mart or by visiting FisherGirl.com.

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**Terri MacKinnon displays one of her FisherGirl rods that are currently on the shelves at the local Wal-Mart, just in time for summer fishing.**

*Photo by GRAHAM PAINE*



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