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PREPPED FOR LIFE

Hub BFFs launch clothing line for coeds

By JILL RADSKEN

NEW YORK — Any Vogue-loving coed at a small-town school will tell you: Shopping options are limited to a single boutique servicing hundreds of girls. Showing up to a formal in the same dress as several other students is more than probable.

Enter Emma Mahon and Jackie Graham, founders of the new label Emma Graham Designs. The childhood friends from Winchester just launched the clothing line featuring dresses, skirts and silk shorts on campuses throughout the country.

Gift with purchase: beer koozies and car fresheners.

"Our goal is to be in every college and university in the country," said Graham, who moved with Mahon to Manhattan in October.

Mahon, 24, got the idea while at the University of South Carolina. "In a sorority there, 450 girls were going to the same event," she recalled. "You'd see five other people in the same dress."

She began making dresses for friends and sorority sisters to wear to formals, parties and even local horse races.

"We were at an advantage because we were living the lifestyle," she said.

After graduating in 2009, Mahon and Graham (who has



a degree in entrepreneurship from Babson College) sold their dresses on road trips across the country. They hit the trifecta last spring with the Carolina Cup, followed by the Foxfield races in Virginia, and Keeneland in Kentucky.

"Every girl in the state attends these in the preppiest, most colorful dresses and hats," Mahon said.

They will set out again this spring, but, in the meantime, opted for a more comprehensive business approach. They tapped more than 30 enthusiastic design consultants/students to sell the clothes, which cost from \$65 to \$212, on campuses in exchange for commission.

The bright colors, short hemlines and frilly details (ruffles and floral prints

about) have been selling swiftly, and the early success has allowed Mahon and Graham to set up shop in the Garment District. The women run additional manufacturing and distribution in Fall River, and are poised to deliver a less-expensive Campus Collection of pieces in school colors (University of Georgia's color-block tank dress, for example, is red and black) this fall.

But Emma Graham isn't exclusive to the coed. The e-commerce site (emma.grahamdesigns.com) debuts this week, and local stores including Mint Julep in Brookline and Cambridge, and Island Outfitters on Martha's Vineyard have also picked up the line.

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STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS: Emma Mahon and Jackie Graham, from left, model their clothing line. The line's colorful dresses, at top, are aimed at college students.

