

Clothing with a purpose

Pentwater cottager to showcase line designed with comfort in mind

Available for all, especially helpful for women who've had mastectomies

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After trying to figure out what to wear following her mastectomy and finding only hoodie sweatshirts and fleece jackets, Laurel Kamen had an idea the night before her surgery for what would become the Alloro Collection.

The clothing line was launched in March 2013.

The Alloro Collection is a clothing line for women — created by Kamen, her friend Christine Irvin and cousin Rodean Landeaux — with special features to accommodate women who have had mastectomies. They are also designed to be flattering for any woman.

"There was nothing beautiful, like the things I had worn before," Kamen said of what was already on the market.

On Friday she was wearing one of the signature shirts of the collection with a modified cowl neck and larger sleeves to prevent discomfort and a feminine three-quarter length sleeve that gets tighter closer to her forearm.

Kamen called her best friend of more than 30 years and presented the idea to her. The two recruited Landeaux, a designer in Greenwich Village in New York, and the rest is history.

Kamen and her family have owned a home on Lake Michigan in Pentwater for several years and she has been coming to the area since she was 2. She is a member of the Pentwater Yacht Club and was thrilled to show the collection while here for a few days.

The Alloro Collection will

be shown at a fashion show at the Pentwater Yacht Club from 1:30 to 2 p.m. Monday and then the pieces will be for sale at the Gardener's Folly for just that day until 8 p.m.

ABOUT THE LINE

Kamen, Irvin and Landeaux started work on the Alloro Collection three months after Kamen's mastectomy in early 2012.

"While recovering, I spent time reading blogs and reading

about issues women have while recovering," Kamen said. "I came up with a list of 20 issues women face and we worked on clothing to help with those issues."

Kamen said some of the issues included women not being able to raise their arms for too long, so they needed clothes that don't have to go over a woman's head. Women who have radiation sometimes lose feeling in their fingertips and Kamen said they needed clothing without buttons, maybe snaps. One other example of trying to help with the issues women have after surgery is having breathable and pretty fabrics. Kamen said the company uses cottons and linens and other breathable fabrics.

The three women together worked long hours to perfect the shape, color, fabric and details of every piece in the collection.

"In our signature jacket, we made pockets that women can put their drainage cups inside of," Kamen said. Another feature of



Laurel Kamen shows the signature jacket and how versatile it can be.

'This has been a real adventure.'

Laurel Kamen
co-founder Alloro
Collection

the collection is special features that make the clothing look good on women who may not have prosthetic breasts or have had reconstructive surgery, but also flatter a woman who has not had breast cancer.

"We want to recapture the joy for women," Kamen said. "This is a real depressing thing to face for women and we want to bring them color and joy as they recover. But these clothes are gorgeous for anyone."

Kamen said a lot of her friends who has purchased clothes from the line have not had breast cancer.

The name Alloro comes from the Italian word for Laurel and also a word for victory. Kamen said it has a positive and upbeat feeling.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Having just launched the line in March, Kamen said they are still trying to get word out about the clothing. The three have

been doing trunk shows and fashion shows around the country to gain exposure but realize it will be a slower process because they aren't in this for major profit but to help women.

They plan to give 25 percent of the profits to the Prevent Cancer Foundation. In addition, the company will look at some of the many other organizations that deal with breast cancer.

"This has been a real adventure," Kamen said, stating she and Irvin really had no idea how to step into the fashion business. But, she said, with the help of about 150 people, she learned all they needed to know to create the clothing that's now available for retail.

"It has been life affirming for me to plunge into something like this with my best friend," Kamen said.

Before the creation of the



Laurel Kamen holds up the signature dress in black to show how it flows in the back. The dress also has a cowl neck similar to the signature shirt she is wearing.

The Alloro Collection has 17 scarves, including the one shown here.

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Alloro Collection, Kamen worked as a vice president of American Express in both New York and Washington, D.C., for 33 years, and also worked as a senior advisor to the Postmaster General of the United States before she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She and Irvin are both in their 60s.

The two, looking forward, are hoping to keep

getting the word out about the collection by going to churches, hospitals and any other groups that are willing to let them, blogging and anything they can think of to reach more people about the clothing they've found so comfortable.

THE ALLORO Collection can be found online at www.allorcollection.com.