



Sisters Ann Keller, Mary "MT" Thomson and Kathleen Parisi, in their Bensalem office with their new line of security bags. Kim Weimer/staff photographer

## Lock-A-Bye your baggie

By: JOHN ANASTASI  
Bucks County Courier Times

**A trio of sisters developed tote bags that are designed to foil thieves.**

It seems like everyone can recall a time when something was stolen from them, Ann L. Keller says.

Whether it happened at the beach or in the work break room, a hotel, a bar or even at a dog show, Keller calls them "Lock-A-Bye" stories because they come out whenever she and her sisters talk about their business.

"Everyone has a Lock-A-Bye story," Keller said. "We've heard some crazy ones."

Keller and her sisters - Kathleen Parisi and Mary "MT" Thomson - sell "Lock-A-Bye" tote bags. They feature slash-resistant lining and a patented locking mechanism that is designed to foil thieves. The bags don't just lock their pouches. A sturdy, cable-reinforced shoulder strap can lock it to furniture and stationary items as well.

It took about five years to develop the idea, design the bags, get the locking device patented and set up production and distribution channels but, since Lock-A-Bye LLC launched in late summer, the Bensalem-based company has sold about 1,000 totes, the sisters said.

CEO Keller and sales and marketing President Parisi live in Bensalem. Chief Operating Officer Thomson lives in Maryland. Each year the sisters vacation together.

It all began five years ago, when they were lamenting that the three of them couldn't walk on the beach together without leaving behind a sister - usually Thomson, they said - to guard their

belongings. The idea of creating a tamper-resistant bag took hold that week and wouldn't let go, Thomson said.

"That was our vacation," said Thomson. "We were drawing on napkins."

What they eventually came up with was a bag that included a layer of slash-resistant, high-performance aramid synthetic fiber lining and a patented dual-locking mechanism with a key-operated tumbler that secures a galvanized cable sewn into the shoulder strap. The bags are also waterproof.

By the time the locking mechanism got its patent in July 2009, the women had completed design work on the bags. The business now has a website - [www.lockabye.com](http://www.lockabye.com) - plus office and warehouse space in Bensalem and a network of 150-commission based sales representatives.

"We have a large group of friends and family and it seemed like all of them would buy a bag," said Parisi, who has eight brothers in addition to her sisters.

So far the company's website sells five designs, ranging from professional all-black totes to casual totes with colorful designs. All sell for \$149.95.

Parisi brought the company's business plan to the SCORE chapter in Jenkintown, where a former colleague from her years in property management was volunteering. SCORE is an association of retired executives who provide free, confidential advice to people starting their own businesses.

"I'm optimistic about the business," said Bill Hackenberg, who has known Parisi for about 20 years. "With Kathleen's drive and ambition, it's going to work itself out."

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Contact Lock-A-Bye LLC at [www.lockabye.com](http://www.lockabye.com) or at 1-877-LOCKBAG.

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