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Industrial Design Student Creates "Good for Your Feet" Shoes

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Footwear for runners has been split into two distinct worlds: high-performance and stylish or health conscious and comfortable. Cedarville University senior Hannah Sitler, an industrial and innovative design major from Southwick, Massachusetts, is hoping to marry these worlds into a new high-performance shoe that's healthy for runners' feet. Cedarville's industrial design program is based in suburban Columbus at The International Center for Creativity (ICC) in Columbus, where Sitler spent her junior and senior years studying.

Sitler's project was inspired by the work of Nike designer Tinker Hatfield. Hatfield noticed how basketball players often end up with deformed, unhealthy feet because of their shoes and worked to develop self-tightening laces to give their feet more room to move naturally. Sitler is taking this idea further for runners by loosening up the rest of the shoe.

Her current prototype has no laces and slips on easily. It has a strap around the tallest part of the foot to keep the foot from sliding forward and a loop around the largest toe as security for the front of the foot. The design allows freedom of movement while safely securing the foot.

Sitler just completed her third prototype and is excited about receiving feedback from product testers such as Randy Kreill.

Kreill, from Beavercreek, Ohio, is a long-distance runner who recently completed his 10th 100-mile foot race in Tennessee. After beating cancer nearly 15 years ago, he was determined to find real-life answers. He found what he was looking for in ultra-running. He has completed more than 50 ultra-marathons, which is any race over 26 miles, in minimalist shoes. He has tested ideas for Xero Shoes, a minimalist shoe company in Boulder, Colorado, as well as for Sitler.

"Hannah's shoes are very creative," said Kreill. "She has brought designs with creative twists that I have never seen before. I can wear them for running and also hours at a time for casual use. Her focus on a flat design from heel to toe, thin outsoles, wide toe box areas and detailed and functional features is spot on and very needed in the industry. So many people, hundreds of millions perhaps, are suffering from the effects of being over shod."

"The ICC makes you think of things from an end-goal perspective," said Sitler. "They really changed the way I thought about shoes. I was taught to think critically and look past convention to see from an innovative perspective."

"Hannah's never been shy about bringing her passion for sustainability and total wellness into her work," said Gabe Pyle, instruction specialist and program coordinator for the ICC. "From the start of her

time at the ICC, she's been keenly aware of the potential negative impact an industrial designer could have on people and the planet. She's worked hard to turn that negative impact into a positive impact. She's been able to direct this energy into designing for healthier foot movement during demanding maneuvers in athletic activity. From the feedback she's gotten so far, she's been right on target.”

After graduation, Sitler hopes to find an internship with an innovative shoe company, such as Xero Shoes, that cares about foot health.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,193 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.