



Jane Charmelo **OUT AND ABOUT**

# Enterprising resident starts own clothing line

As the saying goes, "Necessity is the mother of invention," and one inspiring entrepreneur believes there is a necessity in our world.

A necessity that is, for men's and women's clothing, the very fabric of life. "Chicago," without being of the same-or-better variety, according to Paul Sarno, who, along with partner Chris Martini, founded the Chi Clothing Co. about a year ago.

Sarno, 22, a 1999 graduate of Glenview East High School and a Leeland resident, said he likes to stress a line of clothing for Chicago that came about quite accidentally, yet not without a little intention.

The entrepreneurial pair, started Sarno, first from a conversation he had, with a manager, on a trip to Acropolis some time ago.

During the phone call, he happened to notice, as did Martini, the "sweater had 'I Love New York' shirts," and he was being talking about their beloved city, Chicago.

Sarno said that he and Martini talked about their plans for being in the South Side. The pair agreed that Chicago is "one of the best cities, not of the state, but of the world."

One of their shared passions, a new "branding," an idea for a company and a partnership was born. Sarno, Martini, and their partner

started with their plan.

And the pair continued to talk "some ideas we got back here," added Sarno.

Sarno works for Spectrum Distribution as an electronic buyer, having earned a degree in Design and with Level 270, Martini is an Illinois state trooper. The unexpected part of the whole story, though, is that Sarno's background, and other job, involves the manufacture of clothing.

An Sarno said, he has family's business of silk-screening and embroidery apparel goes back to the 1970s, when his grandfather founded Air Flow Products in Glenview, along with Robert, Sarno's dad, as a child before moving to Leeland.

The company, which has been work for the Chicago "Cable" manufacturer, with names: Mighty Field, Super Star, Cosmic and others, has employed Sarno's parents, as well as his uncle, cousin, and other relatives, including Sarno himself.

Emphasizing that there are over 30 family members working in the business, Sarno said with a chuckle that "We have a huge family."

Sarno said he has been with the company since he was 15 years old, when he would come out and see the finished product. Today, he works as a salesman for Air Flow products.

Sarno recalled how he



Photo courtesy of Rich Sawto

**RICH SAWTO** let that other than customers, there wasn't any clothes that express the "Chicago" feel, so he started a line himself, with the help of Chris Martini. Sarno says Chi Clothing Co. will take off "anything when the company starts their dress shirts in its selection, as well as online shopping."

and all others have known him or seen, such as Al Capone and Frank Sinatra.

Sarno is confident that there's something for everyone, whether it's hip-hop, punk or casual attire, a customer is looking for.

Whether it's a tailored look, light-colored T-shirt or more understated and subtle, a look, Sarno says, "it's everything in between. The answer when you say, 'you can't tell me no,'" he added. "It's not just in the

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are in Chicago as much as we."

The process has not been without its glitches, though, as Sarno has discovered. Trying to get the company Web site ready for online shopping, he said, "the whole e-commerce thing" has been an eye-opening experience.

And, finding manufacturers in Chicago has proved to be a challenge, especially when "necessity is so much cheaper."

There aren't the day-to-day operations of the business of manufacturing clothing items and Martini is largely in charge of promotion and marketing with Sarno usually in charge of everything else.

"We're taking a piece of fabric, sewing it into a shirt, putting a design on it, packaging, marketing and selling it. There there's shipping it, then collecting the money. It's not doing it," he chuckled. "I'm every part of it."

"We've learned that there's a real market in this," he added, saying that silk-screening and embroidery is done at Air Flow.

Looking ahead, Sarno said he is looking to find a broader market for his clothing in Leeland, but emphasizes that his plans are "not a guarantee."

Sarno said he has used his contacts as an Air Flow salesman to get the word out about Chi Clothing Co., and has three prescriptions in state and

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## NIGHTCRAWLERS: SEEN ON THE SCENE



### Runway rehash

The clothes were sexy and the moves were smooth at NY Lounge (1206 N. State Pkwy) for Friday's Fashion Week event. Did we snap your stylish self? Peruse our online photo gallery at [metromix.com](http://metromix.com)—and don't forget to submit your own weekend event photos to [metromix@tribune.com](mailto:metromix@tribune.com).