Gustavson grad gets it

MGB alumnus Keenan Liss won PitchIt’s Social Venture prize this fall with his idea for Unified Planet, sustainable apparel with a social mission. As a social enterprise, Keenan explains, it aims to connect its customers with non-profits and charity organizations that are working to make the world a better place. Equally as important, Unified Planet strives to build a community through its customer base. Its customers are its greatest asset as they are encouraged to go out into the world, spread the word and open conversations with others about global issues (i.e., human rights, cancer research, climate change, etc.).

“I developed the idea for the PitchIt competition because I was confident in the business model and the notion that people would support the development of a sustainable apparel brand with a social mission,” he explains. “I truly believe the world needs more companies that care about creating positive change rather than simply increasing revenue and shareholder return. I was right! I landed up winning the $300 prize.

“The idea behind Unified Planet stemmed from a conversation I had with my friend as we drove past the Gaza Strip on a road trip in Israel. As my friend and I discussed the issue of borders in respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, we came to agree that borders not only tend to create conflict, but they also often foster disconnect and inequality. That evening, I said to my friend, ‘Wouldn’t it be amazing if there was a brand that said something about what we stand for? Imagine a t-shirt or something that tells the world that we value peace and equality. Something that says we believe that we’re all just global citizens who need to create positive change through discussion and action.’ “This,” he sums up, “is where the idea for Unified Planet began.”

Social innovation:
in your pocket and on the street

Privacy, fairness, trust…security, suspicion, or streamlining… Facial recognition will go mainstream in 2018, according to The Economist. The video’s here.

A TED talk to love

Janine Benyus has a message for inventors: When solving a design problem, look to nature first. There you’ll find inspired designs for making things waterproof, aerodynamic, solar-powered and more. In Biomimicry in action, she reveals dozens of new products that take their cue from nature with spectacular results.

Democracy in Practice

Gustavson Assistant Professor Simon Pek is one of the founders of Democracy In Practice, a non-profit that focuses on reinventing student government and has worked primarily in schools in Bolivia. They are part of a growing movement of democratic innovation that is challenging traditional approaches to governance all around the world.

Finance, international business, supply chain

Green finance for dirty ships: New ways to foot the hefty bill for making old ships less polluting. The article’s in The Economist.