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Lice-Elimination Co. Goes Nat'l, Eyes More Growth

Ladibugs' products recently made their debut at about 1,650 Great Clips locations nationwide—and the company's owners are now exploring the idea of opening a second treatment facility in the Twin Cities metro area.

A local lice-elimination business has taken its products national—and its owners are itching for continued growth.

Rachel Knutson and Lisa Rudquist launched Ladibugs, Inc., in May 2010. Since then, their team has treated more than 4,000 cases of lice at a small treatment facility in St. Louis Park.

The pair also launched a Ladibugs-branded product line—and last month, it began appearing in Great Clips stores across the country.

The line includes all-natural, peppermint-scented products—some that treat lice outbreaks and some that prevent infestations—and a stainless steel comb with microgrooves that Knutson calls the “gold standard” for nit removal.

Prior to the Great Clips launch, the products were sold at the Ladibugs' treatment facility, at Kids Hair locations in the Twin Cities, and at various salons and co-ops in 12 states.

Knutson told *Twin Cities Business* that the products are now sold at more than 2,500 stores—including about 1,650 Great Clips locations. In about six weeks, they'll also hit shelves at Great Clips locations in Canada.

In conjunction with the national launch, Ladibugs has ramped up its customer service offerings with a free, 24/7 hotline for parents dealing with lice. (Callers can elect to speak with a “head lice specialist” or even directly with Knutson or Rudquist.)

On the heels of Ladibugs' recent successes, Knutson and Rudquist are already gearing up for more growth. In fact, they're looking to expand their brick-and-mortar presence in the upcoming months.

“We are flirting with the idea of opening another Ladibugs location on the other side of town,” said Knutson. She and Rudquist are scoping out possible locations in St. Paul and the eastern suburbs—and, should their plans come to fruition, they could open their second facility by the fall, their busiest time of year.

In 2011, Ladibugs' sales totaled about \$180,000. Knutson thinks that figure could approach the \$1 million mark this year.

Since Great Clips locations didn't previously have any lice-elimination or lice-prevention products on their shelves, it was hard to predict how much revenue they would generate. But so far, “we're kind of blowing everything out of the water,” Knutson said.

Ladibugs has 10 employees. Knutson and Rudquist are both registered nurses. After their own children contracted lice, they were frustrated about the lack of available options and resources for parents—and they turned that frustration into an opportunity by launching the business. Most of the customers who come to their treatment facility opt for a \$189 treatment involving a device that kills the bugs.

To learn more about Ladibugs, check out a story that appeared in *Twin Cities Business*' February issue by clicking [here](#).