

Name _____



Kid Inventors

By Mary Lynn Bushong

Caption: K.K. Gregory, inventor of Wristies.

How old do you have to be to invent something? Could a ten-year-old be an inventor? If you don't think so, don't tell Robert Patch. He was only six when he invented a toy truck. It was meant to be assembled by kids. It had several different parts. When kids put the parts together in different ways, they could make different kinds of trucks. Robert was given a patent for his idea. He was the youngest person ever to hold a U.S. patent.

K.K. Gregory is another kid inventor. When she was ten (in 1994), she made her invention, a kind of finger-less gloves she called Wristies. She got the idea while playing outside in the snow in Bedford, Massachusetts. Her wrists hurt because they were cold. She made a warm finger-less glove that covered the gap between her mittens and her coat sleeve. It helped to keep her hands and arms warm. She could wear them under her coat and mittens and stay warmer. She shared her idea with a few other people, and they liked it.

She applied for a patent on her idea and also got the name trademarked. Perhaps Kathryn's biggest problem was that adults didn't take her seriously. They thought that the idea must have been her mother's. Some people gave Kathryn some good advice. They told her to wear her Wristies so people would see them and ask what they were. By telling people the name of her invention, she was building a brand. Starting her own business at age ten left Kathryn with some problems she did not see coming. Kids at school teased her and her family. Some even stopped being friends. Kathryn didn't let that stop her. She went on to get several awards for her invention. She didn't let other people's jealousy stop her from making the most of her invention.

Krysta Morlan also knows something about hardship. When she was three, she was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy. When she was in ninth grade, she had several surgeries that left her legs in casts. The heat in California made the inside of her cast feel like an oven. Krysta invented a cast cooler to make her casts easier to live with. The cooler uses a plastic tube and a modified aquarium pump to get cool air into the cast. Since it used a battery to power it, she was able to enter the Duracell/NSTA Scholarship Competition and win third place. Then she went on to win a Lemelson - MIT apprenticeship. During her apprenticeship she also invented a waterbike to help make water therapy more fun. Krysta used her own experiences to help others.



When Chester Greenwood was fifteen, he came up with an idea that changed the whole town of Farmington, Maine. What was this earth-shattering invention? It was ear muffs. Chester was allergic to wool and could not use his scarf to cover his freezing ears in the winter. He came up with the idea to make ear coverings. After making a wire frame for the ear pieces and a wire to go over the head, he asked his grandmother to sew on a covering. The inside was soft cloth and the outside was beaver fur. His invention was a success. The light spring steel band that attached the muffs would coil up when the ear protectors were not in use, easily fitting in a pocket.

Chester patented his "Greenwood's Champion Ear Protectors" and set up a factory to produce them. He supplied earmuffs to the soldiers in World War I and in 1936 sold a record 400,000 pairs. Chester's factory provided jobs for many of the people in his town for 60 years. He didn't just have that one invention, though. Over the course of his life, he was granted more than 100 patents.

You do not have to be grown up to invent things. As you can see, many children have come up with ideas that have made the lives of others a little bit easier. Do you have ideas that would make good inventions?

Kid Inventors

Questions

- _____ 1. What did six-year-old Robert Patch invent?
 - A. a toy truck
 - B. ear muffs
 - C. a waterbike
 - D. Wristies
- _____ 2. What did ten-year-old Kathryn Gregory invent?
 - A. a toy truck
 - B. ear muffs
 - C. Wristies
 - D. a waterbike
- _____ 3. Why did some kids tease Kathryn about her invention? They might have been _____.
 - A. sad
 - B. happy
 - C. angry
 - D. jealous
- _____ 4. Some people did not think that Kathryn came up with the idea herself.
 - A. false
 - B. true

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- _____ 5. Krysta Morlan invented things to make life easier while she was healing.
- A. true
 - B. false
- _____ 6. What simple invention of Chester Greenwood's made him rich and helped a town?
- A. a waterbike
 - B. ear muffs
 - C. Wristies
 - D. a toy truck
- _____ 7. What is the first step in inventing?
- A. making the invention as good as possible
 - B. building a brand
 - C. patenting the idea
 - D. coming up with an idea
- _____ 8. What is the last step in inventing?
- A. building a brand
 - B. coming up with an idea
 - C. making the invention as good as possible
 - D. patenting the idea