

**SPORTS / C1**  
UCSB WOMEN  
DRAW VIRGINIA  
IN GREENSBORO  
REGIONAL FOR  
NCAA TOURNAMENT



**NATION & WORLD / B1**  
**KOSOVO CLASH**  
SERB DEMONSTRATORS LAUNCH  
ATTACK ON INTERNATIONAL  
PEACEKEEPING FORCE



**LIFE / D1**  
**MAGNA CANE**  
PRODUCT DEVELOPED BY THREE LOCALS  
TO HELP PREVENT FALLS

# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



OUR 152ND YEAR

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2008

50¢

## Magna Cane - A walking stick that sticks

### Magnetic-handle cane was designed by three locals to help prevent falls

BETHANY HOPKINS, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER  
March 18, 2008 6:53 AM

At 89 years old, Helen Kelley is recovering from hip surgery she had in January. First, she used a walker. Then she moved on to a basic cane. But these days, she's using a cane with an unusual feature: When she places it against anything that's metal, it sticks. "I call this a magic cane. About every place you stand, if you're in the kitchen, you can connect it to a metal high stool or a stove. It's just marvelous," she said.

This is a Magna Cane, an ordinary looking cane with magnets embedded in the handle and shaft. The cane, which is for sale in two area drugstores, is the result of a collaboration between three locals: John Stump, Dr. Heather Terbell and her husband, Dr. Mark Wilson. The trio, all in their early 30s, gathered at Dr. Terbell and Dr. Wilson's house recently to discuss how the Magna Cane project came about. None of them has a physical need for a cane, but they saw a need among cane users to have a product that stays upright and within reach.

Each brought his or her own skills to the project. Mr. Stump, a mechanical engineer, had experience designing and creating products. Dr. Wilson, an endocrinologist, has worked with patients with osteoporosis and other conditions who need help with fall prevention. Dr. Terbell,

#### FYI

**WHAT:** Magna Cane

**COST:** \$34.95

**WHERE TO FIND:** Federal Drug Co.,  
3327 State St.; 687-7551. Also LM  
Caldwell Pharmacist, 235 W. Pueblo St.;  
682-7353 or [www.caldwellness.com](http://www.caldwellness.com)

**INFORMATION:** [www.magnacane.com](http://www.magnacane.com)



From left, Magna Cane creators John Stump, Mark Wilson and Heather Terbell started selling their new product locally this year.

an obstetrician, first thought up the idea for the cane more than a decade ago, back when she was working as a front desk receptionist at the Casa Dorinda retirement community.

"My grandmother was a resident, and I noticed how there were canes falling right and left," she said. "I was worried that someone was going to fall -- her cane was always falling."

Canes designed not to fall, either because they're self-standing or have a hook, never seemed to work well. "I had tried them all for my grandma ... they kind of teetered on the end of the table and always fell off."

Dr. Terbell didn't act on her idea to make an improved cane until the summer of 2005. That was the year she ran into Mr. Stump, an acquaintance of her husband, while assisting during the birth of his first child.

"We didn't recognize her at first because we were in the mode, you know, of delivering a baby," Mr. Stump laughed.

"I was about to say, 'Hey! I know you!' " Dr. Terbell said. Mr. Stump and Dr. Wilson had known each other through friends at UCSB, graduating in 1997 and 1996, respectively. After that chance meeting, Dr. Terbell and Dr. Wilson told Mr. Stump about the no-fall cane idea and the group started to work on a prototype.

"When we first started, we had a lot of ideas of clamping the cane, having retractable jaws, little hooks and latches, a tripod mount that would come out of the bottom. But we realized that magnets were probably the easiest thing to do," Mr. Stump said.

The final product, which sells for \$34.95, has magnets that allow it to stick to anything metal - refrigerators, mailboxes, car doors, washers and dryers are all spots around the house where the Magna Cane can stick.

The cane also comes with two steel plates with adhesives as well as a metal clip. The steel plates can be attached to areas where no metal is present but where a cane might need to be put, such as a bathroom. The metal clip was



Dr. Wilson demonstrates the Magna Cane's ability to pick up metal objects by its handle.

designed to be used on non-metal tables, especially those found in restaurants.

Ms. Kelley said she used the clip recently when she went out to dinner.

"Ordinarily, your waitress would stumble over (the cane). It's always a problem when you're out like that. So I just put the little clip beside me on the table and it was hooked up for dinner without being in anybody's way," Ms. Kelley said.

She also likes the way that the cane attaches to her grocery cart: "It's sticking way up, about 12 inches, in your basket, and you're not going to forget it."

Mr. Stump credited Dr. Terbell and Dr. Wilson for coming up with the idea to include two magnets, allowing those with the cane to use the handle to pick up dropped metal objects like keys.

As a safety precaution, the Magna Cane has a removable warning label for potential customers who have pacemakers.

"Within six inches of a pacemaker, (a magnet) could temporarily deactivate it," Dr. Wilson said. The cane is therefore not recommended for those with pacemakers.

The Magna Cane has only been available for about two months, Dr. Wilson added. It is sold locally at Federal Drug Co. on State Street and LM Caldwell Pharmacist on Pueblo Street, as well as at a pharmacy in San Luis Obispo. But the trio plan to market it to an even wider audience.

"We're going to some trade shows and really get it out there to big distributors. It's exciting. It's finally done. We just have to get the word out," said Dr. Wilson.

Since their target customers tend to be older, marketing the Magna Cane can be a challenge, Dr. Terbell said.

"It's kind of a hard audience to target if they have a cane they're already happy with." After getting feedback at a trade show that the cane looked too masculine, they made plans to sell wood and flower-print canes in addition to the standard black ones.

But for Mr. Stump, the true appeal of the Magna Cane is not only its magnetic properties -- it's also the simplicity of the design.

"The best part about it, when you look at the cane, aside from the sticker we put on it, is you can't tell (it's magnetic) -- it looks like a normal cane," he said. "I think sometimes people are intimidated by gizmos and gadgets. They don't want any flashy doodads on their cane."

[www.magnacane.com](http://www.magnacane.com)

Below, Dr. Terbell shows how the magnets in the handle allow the Magna Cane to stick to the refrigerator.





"MISS/GUIDED" POKES FUN AT THOSE AWKWARD YEARS

ENTERTAINMENT | D3

Dear Abby ..... D2 Diversion ..... D2 Comics ..... D4 Health Calendar ..... D7  
 Names & Faces ..... D2 Entertainment ..... D3 Television ..... D5 Our Time ..... D7

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2008

# Magna Cane: A walking stick that sticks

Magnetic-handle cane was designed by three locals to help prevent falls

By BETHANY HOPKINS  
 NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

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Each brought his or her own skills to the project. Mr. Stump, a mechanical engineer, had experience designing and creating products. Dr. Wilson, an endocrinologist, has worked with patients with osteoporosis and other conditions who need help with fall prevention. Dr. Terbell, an obstetrician, first thought up the idea for the cane more than a decade ago, back when she was working as a front desk receptionist at the Casa Dorinda retirement community.

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