



"There's not a moment I don't think of them," says Johnson (with her crutches at her Eagle, Colo., office) of her husband and son (below, in '02).

STEP BY STEP

Out of tragedy, Laurie Johnson creates a line of colorful crutches for those who need something to lean on



For more than a year, Laurie Johnson had been in almost unbearable pain. Not only had she lost her husband and 23-month-old son in a small-plane crash, but the same accident had left her on crutches with a broken left leg. By August 2003, "I was so depressed and discouraged," she says, when—as a lark—her older sister trimmed her crutches' arms and hand pads with leopard-print fabric.

"They were a ray of fun for me in an otherwise sad existence," she recalls.

Now Johnson, 45, hopes to do the same for others with LemonAid Crutches, which appears to be the first line of designer crutches. Sold on the Internet (for about \$140 a pair, although you can buy just the fabric covers for \$40), the crutches have proved a hit with customers like Georgiann LaRosa, 49, a nurse in Butler,

N.J., who has a physical disability. "I change the covers like other people change their shoes," she says.

But the crutches are no mere fashion statement: 50 percent of proceeds will go to establish Step with Hope, a nonprofit foundation for people who have lost multiple family members. "Recovery is a very difficult time to get through," Johnson says. "I want to offer encouragement." ●

COURTESY LAURIE JOHNSON; HAIR: ANDY MAXFIELD; TRACEY CORRIHER