



Photo by Allison Ballard

A mind for design

Wilmington resident catches eyes of contest judges with his outside-the-box approach

By ALLISON BALLARD
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If you hate it when your coffee cups leave unsightly rings on your papers and desktop, Toby Keeton has an idea for you.

Keeton, who moved to Wilmington a year ago to work with the Michael Ross Kersting Architecture firm, recently won a Dwell Magazine design contest. The Innovate It! competition asked people to rethink one of three problem items – the ironing board, the clothes hanger or the coffee cup. Keeton's design, for a sleeve that would fit over mugs and divert errant drops from making their way to the bottom, won a \$750 cash prize and two VIP tickets to Dwell on Design, a design conference held in Los Angeles in June.

How did you come to enter the contest?

Design competitions are kind of a nerdy hobby of

mine. It's something I like to do when I'm not working 60 hours a week. I look at these competitions and if something comes to me right away, then I'll enter it. So far, I've only entered two. But I was lucky enough to win both.

What was the first design competition you won?

That was for Architecture for Humanity, a relief organization that works for design development in third world countries. This contest was for mobile recreation centers for the slums of Brazil. And, well, that's what it was. It was a trailer that would deploy into a mobile soccer field. The name would translate to Soccer Everywhere.

Tell me about your design for Innovate It! It's something called the Efuso?

It's essentially a koozie for a coffee mug. Sustainability is a big part of the competition so this would be made from pleats of tire rubber

that has canals and grooves, so when a drop rolls down the side, it follows those canals. There's a reservoir in the bottom so that the liquid doesn't drop onto your shirt when you tip it to take a sip.

What sets your design apart to win the competition?

There was some discussion about my design online, because it didn't involve actually redesigning a cup. Dwell liked the idea that I thought outside the box. Cups themselves are designed about as well as they can be. And you're not going to throw away all of the coffee cups in the world.

So you won a trip to L.A.?

Yeah, but I didn't get to go. We've been moving our office. (Michael Ross Kersting Architecture recently moved its office to a renovated space call the Switchyard Workshops at 4022 Market St.) So there was a lot of work to do. I gave up the tickets to someone else.