

## Bow-Tie Maker Hanging Loose

*Victor Becerril turns to Kickstarter to raise money for his chained neckwear.*

Four years ago, **Victor Becerril** was getting ready for an Oscar party at private West Hollywood club **Soho House** when he had a fit of inspiration.

Becerril, the club's receptionist, decided to sew a chain to his bow tie to make it look more like a necklace than a traditional tie.

Partygoers were so fascinated that he started taking custom orders – even finding a fan in musician **Chris Brown**.

Now, Becerril's Hollywood company, **Low Bow**, has expanded its product selection and is looking to launch a Kickstarter campaign.

"I'm at a point where I need to just go 100 percent with my company," he said.

It helps that the designer works part time at Soho House, where he said many members and guests have ordered bow ties after seeing him wear his.

The items are made with cloth sourced from downtown L.A.'s Fashion District and feature silver or gold chains. Each tie is hand-made by Becerril, who produces about 20 to 50 a month. Prices range from \$80 for a Low Bow dog collar to \$375 for an organic cotton pique fabric featuring silver studs.



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**Chained Up: Victor Becerril at Soho House in West Hollywood.**

The ties, which can be worn by men and women, are sold on his website and at boutiques such as **Roseark** in West Hollywood and **Espionage** near the Grove in L.A.'s Fairfax District.

He also launched a clip-on bow tie earlier this year that comes in a more boxy shape.

Becerril said he would like to

expand his line to include traditional bow ties. But for now, he's happy creating his quirky items that can be paired with a T-shirt.

"On a chain, you kind of have to have a little bit of confidence in your style," he said. "But (you) can just put it on over a T-shirt and jacket."

– *Subrina Hudson*

## Professor Lets Kitty Out of Bag

*Keith Nishida puts love for Japanese icon on display with museum exhibitions.*

Hello Kitty is a global marketing phenomenon with the famous Japanese character appearing on more than 50,000 products in more than 70 countries. The brand reportedly is worth \$7 billion.

The character, a human girl who looks like a cat, originally was designed to appeal to kindergartners in Japan, but the fan base has expanded far beyond them. Included among the most devoted collectors of Hello Kitty merchandise is a local 31-year-old academic.

"It brings me so much joy," said **Keith Nishida**, an assistant profes-



**Hello: Keith Nishida at L.A.'s Japanese American museum.**

sor in fashion marketing at Burbank's **Woodbury University**, who seeks out rare Hello Kitty items and connects with fellow fans worldwide. Nishida was the key consultant for the recent Hello Kitty exhibit at Seattle's **EMP Museum** that originated from the **Japanese**

**American National Museum** in Little Tokyo.

He says there are business lessons to be learned from the 41-year-old, red bow-wearing feline girl and the Japanese firm that holds the copyright to it, **Sanrio Co. Ltd.**

"They've done a fabulous job of being able to acquire new customers while catering to the needs of the current market," he said. "Teens who grew up with Hello Kitty are now in their 30s and 40s, and while their needs have changed, there's still products on which to spend their money."

Earlier this year, the Japanese museum held a special exhibition devoted to the history and influence of the character, whose famous fans include **Lady Gaga**, **Britney Spears** and **Paris Hilton**, and whose image can be found on everything from guitars to underwear.

– *Olga Grigoryants*

## Planting Flag in Pacific Palisades

Soon after businessman **Jake Steinfeld** became honorary mayor of Pacific Palisades, friends at a party joked that one of his first acts should be to invade Malibu.

He immediately replied, "If we're going to invade Malibu, we have to have a flag."

While the invasion never happened, he liked the idea of a flag and so commissioned a contest for residents to design one.

Now as his three-year term winds to a close Dec. 31 he looks back on the creation of the flag as one of his proudest achievements.

Steinfeld, who is chairman of the **Body by Jake** brand, founder of **Major League Lacrosse**

and also an actor with a string of film and TV credits, said, "I always believed if you want to bring people together for a common cause you should do it in a fun way."

The idea attracted 250 entries and the winning design, voted for by residents, was of a blue, leaping dolphin. The flag can be now be seen all over Pacific Palisades.

Other highlights of his years in office include choosing the neighborhood's scariest house on Halloween, riding in the Fourth of July parade and crowning Mr. and Mrs. Pacific Palisades.

### Voltage Shocker

Orthopedic surgeon **Leonel Hunt** learned the hard way that when conducting business from afar, details can get lost in translation.

Hunt, 43, and brother neurosurgeon **Gabriel**, 44, both doctors at L.A.'s **Cedars-Sinai Medical Center**, have been upgrading a hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – adding an emergency room, intensive care unit and operating rooms – for the past couple of

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years. That means periodic trips to Africa and weekly phone calls to discuss loads of supplies being shipped there.

The Hunts recently sent the hospital about 50 intravenous pumps but later got an email saying none of them worked.

"What do you mean? They're practically brand-new," Leonel Hunt said he wrote back, confused and flustered.

But when his brother made a trip to the hospital last month, Gabriel Hunt discovered that the pumps just needed to be converted to a different voltage.

"We were about to throw away 50 pumps and thousands of dollars because they weren't using a converter," said Leonel Hunt, laughing.

In the end, he was happy there was a simple fix. And the Hunts learned they have to be explicit about things that might seem intuitive.



Steinfeld

### PAGE 3

CHARLES CRUMPLEY



**Helping Hand: Leonel Hunt with orphan in Ethiopia.**

"It's frustrating at times, but you can't get upset," Leonel Hunt said. "It's the first (hospital) of its kind in the country. We take things for granted."

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