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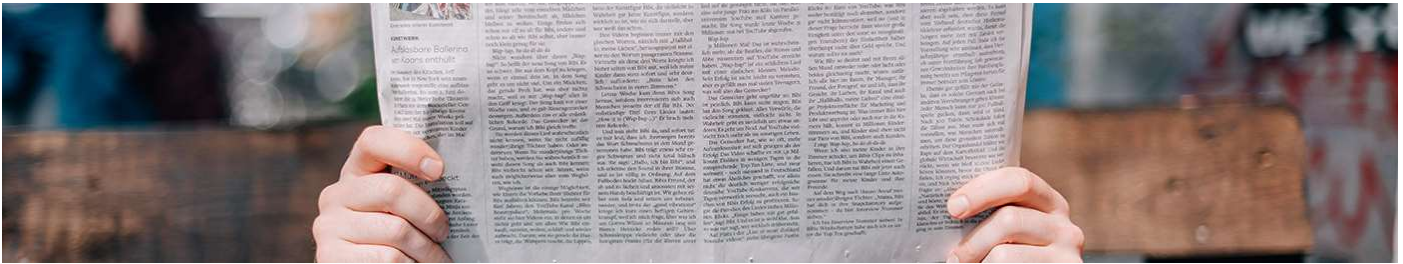
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# Carrying a Culture: Huntsman Entrepreneur Brings Guatemala Home with Hand-woven Wallets

January 22, 2018

Andy Thunell's eyes gleamed with passion as he recounted his recent visit back to Guatemala.

During that visit, Thunell was approached by a mother and her 3-year-old daughter, who had just finished her very first weave. The little girl proudly held up the art piece for Thunell to see.

"She was holding onto it and was so, so proud...I just imagined my 3-year-old son and just thought 'no way that he can do that,'" Thunell said.



Thunell, program coordinator for the Huntsman School of Business, has had many experiences like this one, ever since he made it his mission to preserve the culture and art of weaving -- a practice that is central to Guatemala.

He regularly travels to Guatemala to collect colorful wallets and laptop sleeves handwoven by female artisans. The textiles are then brought back and sold as a product of his startup company, WeaveSleeve.

Thunell started WeaveSleeve after graduating with a dual major in business and Spanish from Utah State University. He said it was all just a matter of figuring out how to take the raw materials and make them into something that people can use on an everyday basis. Thunell had previous experience starting another company, Rapid Progression Kayaking School, but WeaveSleeve was another entrepreneurship endeavor that he wanted to pursue. He saw it as a way for him to give back.

"I realized that I might not be able to make a huge difference, but I can still make a small difference in the world with the people within my reach," Thunell said.

He's already making that difference, as this important part of Guatemalan culture is now being passed on to the next generation of female artisans.

*Left: A mother teaches her two daughters how to weave. The girls' father died more than five years ago and the girls never had the opportunity to learn to weave since they focused their time on things that would provide income for their family. Weaving wasn't something that they could make money doing at that time.*

*Below: WeaveSleeve Wallets and Laptop Cover*



