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Oscar gift bags will have local flair this year

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SARASOTA - When stars hit the red carpet for the 80th annual Academy Awards Sunday night, hearts will pound here on the Suncoast. A Sarasota woman doesn't expect to receive an Oscar, but she hopes those who do will put her new company on the map.

For a while it looked like we wouldn't have the Oscars this year because of the writer's strike, but the show is on and it promises to be as glamorous as ever.

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Until last year, Oscar winners got horribly expensive gift bags from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts. Oscar swag bags used to contain gifts valued at more than \$20,000. Some companies even stuck in

\$80,000 diamond rings for the biggest stars. The Academy told us this afternoon they cut that out because the stars had to pay tax on those gifts, and it sort of took the fun out of it for them. Now the winners are presented with much less expensive, but very unique gifts. Some of those will come from Sarasota.

Michelle Young is getting some of her products ready to send to the Academy Award winners. "We have a line of children clothing and doggie fashions from 100% organic cotton, non PVC dyes, free trade practices."

Young and her sister Melissa Blanco started Obli Organics less than a year ago. "She was pregnant, I had two children, we wanted to do something we love, be good stewards of the environment."

Their organic outfits feature environmentally-friendly sayings like "I only ride hybrid". Even the doggie outfits sport messages. "For a girl dog: Queen of Green. For a boy dog: Green to the Bone."

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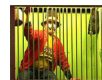
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These outfits made a big hit when they were featured at the Sundance Film Festival and were given as gifts to the winners there. A company called Baby Swags was so impressed, they decided to include them in gifts to Oscar winners. "The Oscars are on Sunday. On Monday they'll ship these out to the homes and they'll get them the next day."

So this year Oscar winners will get less expensive gifts, but gifts that this Sarasota woman says can make a big difference in the environment. "There are no chemicals. The typical t-shirt takes one pound of chemicals to make."



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