



**Kim R. Gerard**, Inventor.  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
360 Rotating Electrical Outlet, 2001  
Inspiration: Frustration  
[www.360electrical.com](http://www.360electrical.com)

If you've ever tried to plug in the charger cords for your cell phone and your digital music player in the same outlet at the same time or your hair dryer and a curling iron you'll know what Kim Gerard was feeling when she pitched her cell phone charger across a hotel room. The space hog plugs on the two cell phones she traveled with for business would not play together in the electrical wall outlet.

That incompatibility triggered a frustration driven temper tantrum. It also inspired a revolutionary idea that finally updates electrical outlets to accommodate today's appliances. Motivated, Kim, who has a background in civil and environmental engineering sat down and designed an alternative outlet. "I sketched out the idea on a napkin," she said. The invention is plug outlets that rotate 360 degrees. You plug in one appliance and swivel the plug in the turning outlet and make room for the plug from your second appliance. In 2001, Kim received the patent and bought out the partner she had at the time.

Since its initial iteration, Kim has perfected the 360 rotating outlet and successfully put it through its paces at the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) the century old concern which scrupulously tests products for public safety. Getting her invention on shelves for public consumption is the next big step.



**Shirley Ann Hayden**, Inventor.  
(1968 - )  
Clinton, MD  
Unique Seat, 2002  
Inspiration: Hauling bulky beach gear  
[www.theuniqueseat.com](http://www.theuniqueseat.com)

The beach is a great place for inspiration – the sun, the sand, the surf. That is where Shirley Ann Hayden was in the summer of 2002 when her idea took flight. She was people watching, fascinated with their arrival and departure rituals. They were hauling all their creature comforts - beach chairs, towels, food, their kids, other people's kids. The production looked exhausting. As a wife and mother of a son, she felt their pain. She thought "There's got to be a better way." Then, an idea blew in on a breeze and stayed with her and she stayed with it until she created the Unique Seat, what she describes as a total lounging system for two. The invention makes hauling beach and stadium accessories a compact affair.

Unique Seat features a connecting blanket with weights on the corners to keep it anchored against the wind in a sports stadium or at the beach. What's more, the Unique Seat folds into a lightweight 8 pound hands-free back pack with an adjustable shoulder and chest strap and also can be carried with handles. The seat as an extended back and the blanket pockets can be used as hand warmers.

Both seats convert into soft pillows and the seats and blanket can be used separately. The Unique Seat is Shirley's first venture as an inventor. She made one prototype, and awaits patent approval before moving it along.



**Tabitha Babbitt**,  
Inventor. (1784-1853)  
Harvard, Mass.  
Circular "Buzz" Saw, 1813  
Inspiration: Wasted  
Energy

Ironically, Barbara's invention brought another invention full circle. The circular saw tool was actually invented by a woman in 1813. Twenty-nine-year old Tabitha Babbitt was a member of the Shaker community. From her spinning wheel she watched as the men cut wood. It took two men, lots of sweat and exhausting back and arm power to operate the awkward straight saw hand tool they used. She probably was thinking "What a waste of energy." She observed that half the motion was lost in sawing wood with that tool. She experimented and made a thin disk, notched it around the edge, positioned it on the spindle of her spinning wheel and tried cutting a sample piece of shingle. It worked. The buzz or circular saw was born. Tabitha never sought a patent but she is widely acknowledged as the tool's inventor in the U.S. The first circular saw made under her instructions is on exhibit in the Geological Building at Albany, NY.