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Mahler Wins Dallas Design Competition

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By Annabeth Miller, ShowMe Times Editor

As a young girl, Michelle Kinsey Mahler was as nimble with a needle and thread as some girls are with cheer stunts or dance steps or piano keys. And when she left Southeast Missouri to go to college, her sewing kit and design ideas were prominent on her packing lists.

Many young women dream of wearing “the” wedding dress.

But Michelle Mahler dreams of designing “the” wedding dress that every young bride wants to wear on her wedding day. She is taking those design and sewing skills to creating dreams.

Mahler is a senior at Missouri State University, just weeks away from receiving a degree in design from the university’s department of fashion and interior design. She recently was awarded first place and a scholarship for her original bridal gown at an international fashion career day in Dallas.

Mahler is the daughter of Linda and Carl Hill of Dexter. She attended elementary school in Dexter and graduated from Ellington High School before heading to Missouri State.

Her gown was presented as part of the fully staged runway show at Fashion Group

International's (FGI) 2011 Dallas Career Day. She walked the runway with her design, as a representative of the university.

Mahler's design, which she named the "Unrefined Diamond," features a removable top skirt for the reception.

"I entered it specifically because I had made my bridal collection," Mahler said. Her bridal collection now includes nine pieces, including the dress she made for her own wedding. Mahler and husband Brandon were married in July 2010.

"I made seven dresses from January through March," she said of her expanding bridal collection. "The other two dresses I made before, including one I wore at my wedding and a second one I wore for my wedding rehearsal."

She takes much of inspiration for her designs from her faith. The dress "Darling Dove", for instance, she said was inspired by the Song of Solomon.

Mahler will graduate in May from MSU, and she and husband Brandon will remain in the Springfield area. Both plan to work as interns for Campus Crusade for Christ to "give back to the students on campus."

In the long term, the young Southeast Missouri woman wants to build up her line of bridal wear. But for now, she settles on spreading word of her work through friends and family, and through the website, etsy.com.

"I have three brides now who want me to design their dress," she said. "I am hoping to open an online store sometime this next year. The dress I won for (in Dallas) has been the most popular with everyone so far."

This was the first year the bridal gown category, sponsored by Mon Cheri Bridal, was part of the student design competition. More than 1,000 design and merchandising students attended the 43rd annual event on April 1, which was held by FGI of Dallas at the Dallas Market Center.

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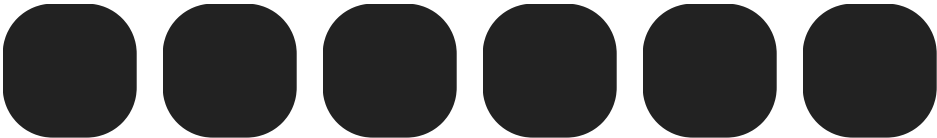
Photos Above: Top Photo: Michelle Mahler on the runway during the FGI 2011 Dallas Career Day Fashion Show. Collage: Michelle and two of her dresses in her Bridal

Collection.

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