

Alum creates custom graduation dresses

Elena Victoria's custom designs help girls in their search for unique dresses

by Amelia Lytle

Finding a graduation dress that's affordable, unique, and fits school requirements can be a challenge, so instead some seniors are getting custom dresses rather than buying one from a store.

New Trier alumna Elena Victoria started her company EV around creating custom dresses for graduation.

Her start in dress designing began in high school where she would design and sew dresses for school dances.

"When I graduated in 2010, I made my own graduation dress and decided that I would pursue a career in fashion design."

Victoria faced the same problem many seniors continue to deal with, finding a unique graduation dress. With around 500 girls graduating, having the same dress as another person, or struggling to find one at all, is a challenge.

"I knew that with the sewing



Victoria's graduation dresses are made specifically for each order | **Victoria**

skills I had at the time, I could probably make a simple strapless gown that I could wear to the graduation ceremony. I think I made it in 2 hours after school one day," Victoria said.

Senior Rani Mehta said, "I can never find dresses that fit me and it's really frustrating to shop for them, so getting a custom dress seemed a lot easier and I

know it would fit right away."

Victoria has a background in fashion design, as she graduated from Purdue University with a degree in Fashion Design & Technology. She also has worked with brands including Gucci and Vera Wang.

When it comes to designing the dresses, Victoria keeps her customers very involved. "I was definitely

pretty involved because she asked for my own ideas first and then gave me some input and suggestions," senior Natalie Marsh said.

Mehta said she had a lot of input into the design of her graduation dress.

"She showed me some pictures of what styles she thought I'd look good in and I also had an idea of what I wanted so we worked together to create the dress," she said.

This is the second year Victoria has created custom dresses for New Trier and her business is beginning to take off.

"My business runs on word of mouth. Clients also see previous work from girls that have graduated in the past and discover that it is an EV dress."

Marsh has been planning on a custom dress from Elena Victoria for a while.

"She is my cousin, so I didn't really consider other dress options because I think it's important to support your family members and to support small businesses in general."

Victoria also said social media is a huge outlet for her brand. "People enjoy seeing the construction process and seeing their dress in the making."

Social media benefits girls in their hunt for a graduation dress in many ways. Senior Sophie Dable saw a past senior's graduation

pictures and fell in love with her dress. "A girl last year had a great dress, and when I tried looking for other dresses in stores none of them compared. I ended up asking the girl where she got it, and decided that would be my graduation dress."

Another major consideration girls have is price. Gowns are often priced significantly higher than an average dress, so finding one within a budget can be difficult.

Victoria custom graduation dresses start at \$400.00 and include a consultation, two fittings, and the dress.

"From there, the price goes up depending on style and fabrics selected," Victoria said.

"I'm definitely spending more than what I could be spending on a store bought dress, but high school graduation is a fairly special occasion, so I think it's worth it to spend the extra money on a dress that fits me well and reflects my style," Marsh said.

Mehta agreed that a custom graduation dress was worth the higher price point.

"I'm probably spending more money in the end, but I figured I'm only going to graduate once and I worked hard to get to this day, so it would be nice to walk and get my diploma wearing a dress that's made specially for me."

Science Olympiad team prepares for state after regionals win

Being consistently ranked near top, the team is optimistic going into state

by Emily Wong

While high school hockey and football games are often attended by hundreds or even thousands of students, the achievements of equally competitive academic teams can tend to be overlooked.

New Trier's Science Olympiad is one of those teams, having ranked at the top two in Illinois for the past five years. After winning their regional competition Sat., Mar. 18, they're looking to surpass their record as they prepare for state in April.

With the level of competition within the program, Science Olympiad doesn't quite fit under the umbrella of a club. Although it's not officially recognized by the IHSA, members of the team see it as more of a sport. "It's like track but with science," co-head and senior Jason Yang said.

Co-head and senior Jason Lee described it similarly in terms of its level of intensity. "It's a very competitive and team-oriented activity," he said. "We can't succeed if even one person fails, so we need everyone on the team to get with the program."

Sponsor Alex Howe agreed, "It's like a sport, but it's academic and building. It's maybe a little less physical pain and more mental pain, but there's still blood, sweat, and tears that go into it, just like any other sport."

Members of the team also undergo similar bonding experiences to high school sports teams. This year, at the annual MIT invitational, in addition to winning 6th place against some of the best teams in the nation, the co-heads took the opportunity to build camaraderie between members by playing a game of Pictionary.



New Trier Science Olympiad team poses after taking first at Loyola | **Howe**

According to Yang, the cohesion of the group has led to improved performances. "It helps that the seniors this year are really helping everyone, especially the newer, younger members," he said. "In previous years, I think there was some division, and people didn't necessarily spend a lot of time making sure that younger members were getting included."

The team's stronger unity is reflected in the team's results, as they are on a much more promising trend than the past few years. "This has been a particularly exciting season in my history of being a coach," Howe said. "The top two teams in the state right now-- us and Stevenson-- are very close right now."

"Stevenson has been first the past two years, and we've been second," Yang said of the state competition.

However, the results for this year indicate that this trend might change. "If you look at the Loyola and Huntley results, we beat Stevenson by ten points," he said. "It's definitely very promising looking ahead."

As the New Trier's stats from the past few years place them as one of the strongest in the country, the co-heads have looked at what differentiates them from other schools.

"Other schools are arguably more intense about Science Olympiad. It's a cut sport where they set their teams at the very beginning of the year with a tryout," Lee said. "At New Trier, initially, it's no cut, and we try to

schedule as many people as possible at invitationals so that everybody has an opportunity."

He also noted a disparity in the time commitment required. "We only really meet on Tuesdays. Other teams probably have a lot more practices," he said.

However, it seems that most members of Science Olympiad enjoy the activity enough to prepare outside of their scheduled practices. "I like that it focuses on other subjects that you don't necessarily learn in school, and this is a chance to do self-guided research," sophomore Penelope Tir said.

Junior Mason Rodriguez Rand also expressed his appreciation for the competition. "It's really cool in build events when you spend a lot of time making and remaking something and it won't work. Then finally when it works, that's a really great feeling," he said.

While the team sees their season of hard work paying off, they now aim to stay focused as they compete for first place at state. "The trick is to not get too cocky, because we have some tough competitions where we really want to shine and do our best," Howe said.

However, Howe is still proud of the team's performance no matter how they do at State. "Regardless of what happens-- win, lose, or draw-- I already know it's been a great season," he said.

17th year of Habitat for Humanity almost complete



New Trier seniors help in building a house for Habitat for Humanity | **Pettas**

House being built in Waukegan for the Brown family by senior class nearly finished

by Robert Pettas

In its 17th year, New Trier's Habitat for Humanity is nearing the completion of a Waukegan home for the Brown family.

The funds required for the house are provided by community events such as the Tom de Luca show, Feast Week, and Winter Carnival.

These events are organized by project leaders Chloe Jacobs, Sophia Holt, Georgia Caras, Annabel Weyrich, Cole Maizel, and Amelia Lytle.

At this point, the walls and roof are up, and "it's starting to look like a house now," Senior Advisor Chair Chris Pearson said, who oversees the project leaders.

He also said that things like painting, insulation, and flooring still need to be completed on the interior of the house before it's finished.

At the completion of Brown's house in Waukegan, New Trier will have built 33 houses, both locally and internationally.

This year's Winter Carnival, which is an essential fundraiser for New Trier's Habitat for Humanity, raised over \$22,000.

Senior Daniel Pickard, who

helped run the stock car racing booth, said, "Winter Carnival is a great community event for a great cause. I've had been going since I was a little kid, and now I'm helping raise money for Habitat for Humanity. It is a great way to give back to the community."

On April 10, New Trier Habitat for Humanity will have an online auction that will feature donations from local businesses that community members can bid on, with all funds going toward the charity.

While a lot of funds have been raised to this point, continued funding is essential.

On the Chicagoland Habitat for Humanity website, part of the mission statement says, "There is a staggering need for housing support in the Chicago metro area and an opportunity for Habitat to do even more than it does. CHFH was created to leverage capacity building, growth, marketing and advocacy by working in collaboration with the eight affiliates across Chicagoland."

For those who went to the construction site, and help with construction, have reported that it was a great experience.

Senior Matt Underwood, of the Silvers Advisory, said, "I had a ton of fun. The contractors working with Habitat were really helpful, and gave us good direction. It felt fulfilling to help such a good cause along with bonding with my fellow advisees. I'm thankful to those that help set up New Trier's Habitat for the opportunity to help out with a great cause."