

# Madison Waldrop

## The World is Hers to Dress



BY JENNI FRANKENBERG VEAL

**T**hirteen-year-old designer Madison Waldrop's debut in the fashion world is the stuff dreams are made of. In 2010 alone, this Chattanooga teen's accomplishments have included collaborating on a gown featured in New York City, starting her own design company, and creating her first collection of evening gowns and cocktail dresses.

Creative yet down-to-earth, Madison credits her family and friends for helping her believe in herself and achieve success.

"I have so much support from my parents, teachers and other designers who are willing to help me break into the fashion design business," says the GPS eighth-grade honor student.

Madison's mother and business partner, Christine, first noticed her daughter sketching dress designs while the family was between flights at an airport last March. A creative spirit herself, Christine recognized Madison's talent and arranged a meeting with family friend and Atlanta bridal designer Annette Thurmon of Chaviano Couture. Annette, taken with the young designer's skill and creativity, invited Madison to become her first mentored student. The result: a collaborative bridal gown featured on the runway at the 2010 Bridal Fashion Week in New York City.



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Madison Waldrop



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"Annette gave me the confidence that my designs were really good and helped me realize that I can do this," says Madison.

While in New York, Madison had the opportunity to meet with the WeddingChannel Couture Show's director Jane Heflin, who provided the young study with insight and advice in navigating the fashion industry. She also toured



the Garment District, also known as the Fashion District, and met with several fabric vendors.

Madison's company, Designs by Malyse, will launch its first collection with a runway show in Chattanooga in early 2011 and in New York City in the fall. The collection, labeled "Naturally," will feature seven to nine cocktail dresses and evening gowns and one signature bridal gown. The company plans to create exclusive designs in limited supplies.

"Whenever there are unlimited supplies of one dress, you kind of lose the originality and uniqueness of that dress," explains Madison. "If you know it is exclusive, it makes you feel special." Her goal, she says, is to create dresses that make women feel confident, bold and beautiful – the tagline for her company and the way

she felt when she wore her first creation, her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday dress.

In today's risqué world of fashion, Madison also aims to create gowns that showcase women's beauty without revealing too much.

"When I design a dress, I ask myself if I could wear it, and if not, then I change it," she says. "I have been told by many of my mentors in the business to do it my own way, so I plan to pave my own path and go at my own pace."

"She is very much her own person," adds Christine. "As a parent, I am glad to see that she doesn't feel the need to conform to everything around her."

While the thrill of working in fashion capitals such as New York and Milan is enticing, Madison and Christine are determined to partner with design professionals in Chattanooga and the Southeast.

Madison says she looks forward to launching her first collection in her hometown of Chattanooga.

Designs by Malyse is also creating a foundation to support education and youth programs, which will be run by the Waldrop's younger daughter, 11-year-old McCall. A portion from the sale of each dress will be donated to the foundation.

"Each dress garment tag will include a pewter key charm to represent that when that dress is purchased, it will provide keys of possibilities for someone else," says Christine.

For Madison Waldrop, the world is hers to dress – and she is up to the challenge. Learn more about Designs by Malyse at [www.designsbymalyse.com](http://www.designsbymalyse.com). 

