



JESSICA VITULLO/VAUGHAN TODAY

FASHIONISTA: Joanne Dice, founder of Haute Couture Fashion, Arts and Design, tries a new creation on "Judy".

Passion for fashion

BY JESSICA VITULLO

Joanne Dice says you don't have to be a professional fashion designer to learn high fashion skills.

You just have to have passion.

Dice, a fashion designer and teacher, started her own fashion arts and design school to give people the opportunity to learn. She believes fashion is not just for those in the industry, but people who want to learn a new hobby.

Haute Couture Fashion, Arts and Design in Woodbridge offers courses in pattern-making, sewing garments, and tailoring to name a few. The classes are semi-private, making it easier for the design teachers to pay equal attention to each student.

Fashion interested Dice from a very young age.

"The earliest moments of my life is me sitting down designing, working with needles, pins, and machines as young as four years old," she said.

When Dice was just 10 years old, she was designing and making tops, skirts and dresses.

"I figured it out on my own," she said. "I just loved it. I didn't even care if they came out horrible."

She soon realized fashion was indeed her calling. After graduating from Sheridan College in 1986, she began a two-year apprenticeship with a Canadian bridal designer. She later started her own company and designed bridal gowns, communion dresses, as well as entire wardrobes.

Teaching was not the focus of her

career at this point. It happened to fall into her lap when her mentor fell ill and needed someone to take over her classes. This inspired Dice to open her own school and provide even more education and learning to students.

"So many kids are starving for the arts," she said. "They are gifted and need that creative output."

The school, now open for over 10 years, also specializes in art and fashion portfolio development, giving students a greater chance of getting into very difficult design programs offered by universities and colleges in North America.

Students in each class work hard to finish garments and portfolio pieces throughout the course. At the end of the year, Dice organizes a gala for the parents of students to see what their children have accomplished.

This year's gala is set for Wed., July 14 at Le Jardin Banquet Hall. At the event, guests can check out student-designed pieces of artwork showcased in the hall lobby. Custom-made awards are given to students in each age group.

For Dice, it is just another way to show how hardworking and deserving her students are.

Designers then model their own creations for the crowd in a fashion show after dinner.

Dice says she's always so proud of her students and how much they accomplish.

"Maybe I've just been really blessed because I've had the most amazing group of kids," she said. "It's not impossible because I see something beautiful in them." 