

LOCAL STUDENTS HELP CREATE CAUSE-DRIVEN CHILDREN'S CLOTHING LINE

O'More College of Design and DAR Project Partner On "aDARable" Label

FRANKLIN, Tenn.— Fourteen months from now, there will be children on playgrounds around the Southeast wearing clothes designed by seven students in Franklin, Tenn., and hand-stitched with care by 10 women in Haiti.

This spring, the "Designing for a Cause" class at O'More College of Design is partnering with a local non-profit organization to produce a Spring 2014 children's clothing line that will give hope to Haitian women in extreme need.

The initiative is spearheaded by the Hendersonville-based DAR Project, which works with consignment sales around the country to collect items for distribution to low-income communities, both domestically and abroad. Founder Martha Montiel-Lewis said that they will use the College course as a springboard for a continuing program to propel long-term sustainability opportunities for the low-income participants.

"Through the DAR Project, I realized these women needed an on-going opportunity that teaches them the art of business. They have often been without resources, and because of that are naturally creative in order to make ends meet," she said. "I really, truly want this to be about the students and the women they are helping, and giving both groups a life-changing opportunity.

"The O'More students will be instrumental in providing these ladies with a sense of empowerment and a consistent livelihood."

Once the O'More designers have completed the "aDARable" children's label, the group will hand over the details to Montiel-Lewis. The Haitian women will then be responsible for the complete production of the line. Once constructed, Montiel-Lewis will market the clothing items to boutiques throughout Tennessee and in targeted online marketplaces. Proceeds will aid the Haitian women involved and their families.

The DAR Project leader said that while there may have been other concepts similar to the "aDARable" line, she believes this will be the first of its kind.

"A lot of purpose-driven organizations have started clothing lines, but there is nothing out there geared toward children," she said. "And that's special."

Montiel-Lewis approached O'More Fashion Design Department Chair Jamie Atlas about the partnership last fall. Atlas chose O'More instructor and alumna Annette Medcalf to lead the seven female students through the process because of her ongoing desire to help others. Medcalf also has a rich background in both the design and manufacturing industries.

“Life has so much more meaning when you can take your skill and talent, and give back to others in need,” Atlas said. “This adventure between the DAR Project and our students will change lives forever.”

The “aDARable” collection will be revealed during the Annual Eloise Student Fashion Show at The Factory at Franklin on May 10, 2013.

Founded in 1970, O’More College of Design is a four-year, non-profit institution offering bachelor of fine arts degrees in fashion design, interior design and visual communications. The college is located in the downtown historic district of Franklin, Tenn. To learn more, visit www.omorecollege.edu.

The DAR Project is a non-profit organization based out of Hendersonville, Tennessee. Founded in 2012, the purpose and mission of DAR is to empower less-fortunate communities abroad by teaching them how to sustain a successful small business model through the art of consignment.

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Contact information:

Jamie Atlas, O’More Fashion Design Department Chair
jamieatlas@omorecollege.edu

Annette Medcalf, “Designing for a Cause” Instructor
AMedcalf@omorecollege.edu

Martha Montiel-Lewis, DAR Founder
martha@darproject.org