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Restyle Runway displays recycled duds



Jihaeng Lee (left) transformed thrift-store finds into five dresses for Friday's Restyle Runway fashion show competition.

SARAH BENSON { ink }

by **Sarah Benson**

Jihaeng Lee walks into a Goodwill in Olathe and beelines to the men's shirts.

Her eyes and hands move quickly over the rows and rows of button-ups, hunting for the perfect color and size of plaid.

The fashion student at Johnson County Community College fills her cart with about five extra-large plaid men's shirts, a little black dress that laces up the back and a mod shift dress that looks like it was once worn by a stewardess in the '60s or by anime character Sailor Moon.

Lee was gathering the garments for Friday's Restyle Runway, a fashion-show competition for Friends of Johnson County Developmental Supports, which benefits people with developmental disabilities. This year's Restyle Runway has a green theme: The 20 competitors create high-end looks out of clothing and fabric from local Goodwill stores.

Lee won last year's Restyle Runway competition and used her \$1,000 prize money to buy a new sewing machine, which she used to transform oversized Western shirts into five structured mini dresses with feminine details such as frills, rosettes and ruching.

Lee, who plans to go to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York this fall, buys most of her own clothes at thrift stores and is a pro at making old clothes feel new.

Her best thrift-store shopping tips:

•**Seek one-of-a-kind pieces.** “Find unique items like sequined sweaters, animal-print jumpsuits or leather pants that you can’t find in stores.”

•**Save big on leather.** Thrift stores sell authentic leather bags and belts at insanely low prices, Lee says. “I think leather looks so much cooler when it’s old.”

•**Don’t be afraid to cross-dress.** Lee feminizes men’s blazers by rolling up the sleeves and belting the waist.

•**Sometimes bigger is better.** Lee suggests wearing an oversized T-shirt or colorful men’s plaid shirt as a dress. Wear alone, or with a belt and/or leggings.

•**Look for long skirts with elastic waistbands.** “This can be a great summer dress,” Lee says. She likes tube dresses paired with wide belts. “So cute.”

•**“Vintage-inspired accessories** are really in now. Earrings, necklaces, bracelets ... and don’t forget scarves. There are so many great scarves (at thrift stores) and you can find them for two or three dollars.”

More tips from Restyle Runway designers

•“You don’t have to be a seamstress to recycle clothing,” says Shivani Desai of Olathe, who found a Christian Dior blazer at Goodwill that needed no nips or tucks.

•“You may have to dig a little bit, so be prepared to spend some time there. But patience and a keen eye pay off.” says Lisa Demaree of Olathe.

•Don’t go to a thrift store looking for something specific. Keep an open mind and you could find something even better than you’d imagined, says Laurie Wilson of Bern, Kan., a small northeast Kansas town near the Nebraska border.

Restyle Runway

What: Annual fashion-show competition that benefits Friends of Johnson County Developmental Supports, which benefits people with developmental disabilities.

When/where: 6 p.m. Friday at the Sheraton Overland Park Hotel, 6100 College Blvd.

Tickets: \$75 includes drinks and appetizers

Info: friendsofjcds.com, or on [Facebook](#)