



A STITCH TO REMEMBER

FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS PAY TRIBUTE TO LATE FASHION TEACHER

BY MAY NGUYEN

Allen-Holmes

It started with a bad stomach ache. Then, out of nowhere, a malignant tumor was found in the pancreas.

Within a year, **Bessie Allen-Holmes** was gone.

It almost seemed impossible.

It almost seemed like yesterday when she walked across these halls with her high heels tapping to an unknown beat and her jewelry swaying side to side, clanging lightly together, sending an echo down the corridor. It was astonishing how such a lively, high-spirited and dedicated woman who couldn't have taken better care of herself was seized away so fast, so young.

As teacher **Mary Carter** walks into the classroom with sewing machines and mannequins lined up, with newly cut fabric and stitches falling out from the hem, with silk and satin pieces assembling a dress waiting to be sewn together, she reminisces the 9 years teaching in the Housing and Apparel department alongside Allen-Holmes.

"We shared [previous] experiences and compared them to teaching and giving each other ideas in teaching. We had a lot in common, and we were a lot alike," Carter said. "She was a wonderful teacher."

The long tables. The chairs. Dust of fabric chalk. The smell of glue; of crisp magazine paper.

Everything remains the same. As if nothing has changed.

As if Allen-Holmes is still here, with her

sass, her charisma, and her passion for fashion.

"I miss her terribly," Carter said, tears slowly filling up her eyes.

Carter describes her memories about Allen-Holmes as not confined within the four walls of the classroom. It goes beyond just regular day encounters. She remembers all the fashion shows that they put up together. All the conferences, competitions, and

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meetings. All the personal stories, interests and philosophy they share. She remembers all the times Allen-Holmes stood up for her students even outside of the school environment. Looking back at 9 years, Carter can't help but to chuckle, as she wipes away the tear drop at the corner of her eye.

"[Allen-Holmes] was loyal, and sweet, and she would do anything for you," Carter said.

And her spirit lives on. Even when she's gone.

Allen-Holmes' influence on everyone she met, particularly her students, is

undoubtedly apparent, specifically in the case of **Theresa Ciccarelli**, 12. Ciccarelli came into Allen-Holmes' Fashion, Fabric and Design classroom as a shy and timid sophomore. Before taking the course, the senior considered sewing and fashion designing as something she loved to do with her grandmother as a hobby. She never truly thought about it as a career choice until Allen-Holmes introduced her to the industry.

"She taught me a lot about fashion, but also, she is very confident, and sassy, and in love with everything she did... She made me more confident as a designer," Ciccarelli said. "You can tell she really wanted to be there, and she wanted to teach us life lessons outside of the classroom. She wanted to be a friend as well as a teacher."

The news of Allen-Holmes' passing came as a shock not only to Ciccarelli, but also to her former student, **Courtney Young**, grad. As the Wando alumni was packing her bags and getting ready to leave Charleston for Auburn University, where she majors in Interior Design, Young received a call from her best friend to break the news to her.

"It was actually the day that I was leaving for college, and so that was hard. She was definitely the one who encourages me to go to Auburn," Young said. "One life ended, but it is the beginning of something amazing that she started in me."

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photographer m. chantepie

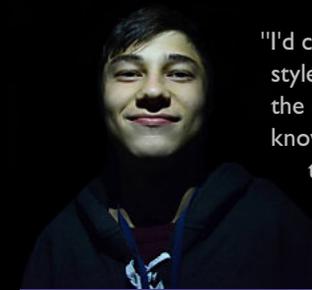


photographer f. jefferies

MOTHER KNOWS BEST: (above) Sabrina Dior, 11, poses wearing a striped black and white shirt. "My mom got this shirt and it's new, so I wanted to wear it," Dior said.

OVER THE RAINBOW: (left) Dylan Lentz, 12, shows off his bright personality through his clothes. "I like to wear jeans, and I don't own any black. I like to be colorful. I like to wear colorful clothes. I like sweaters, they're big and comfy. I'm a very introverted person, but with my friends I'm more outgoing... and that shows my style," Lentz said.

JADON MORRIS



"I'd call [my fashion style] a little bit on the left side... You know, a little different than everybody else."

SHELTON THOMAS



"The only way I know how to dress is like a homeless [person]."

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FASHION 83